A Home of One's Own: 
Postwar Residential Development in Rapid City, 1945-1972

Executive Summary
The end of World War II ushered in a period of rapid and dramatic change in Rapid City and the nation that lasted until the early 1970s. For millions of Americans, the single-family home was at the heart of a new vision of the nuclear family—mom, dad, and a handful of children—living in a new neighborhood built with new materials and techniques that allowed for mass production homes made affordable by a partnership between the federal government and private industry that sought to make homeownership ubiquitous throughout the United States.

In Rapid City, this revolution in mortgage finance and home construction converged with an expanding economy fueled by the growth of government spending (especially via the Rapid City Air Force Base), tourism, and trade. Economic opportunity during and after the war brought a wave of migrants. Combined with the baby boom that followed the war in western South Dakota and across the nation, the growth in population created a powerful demand for new housing that pushed the boundaries of the community outward in all directions.

Postwar residential construction focused initially on new neighborhoods south and north of downtown and in the West Chicago area, with some development in the Canyon Lake neighborhood as well. In the late 1950s, builders continued to erect new housing tracts in these neighborhoods, as well as along Jackson Boulevard and to the south along what is today Sheridan Lake Road. Through the 1960s, construction slowed as infill development in the postwar neighborhoods continued combined with some greenfield development at the edges of the city.

The Rapid City Flood of 1972 marked a turning point that aligned with other factors signaling the beginning of a new era in residential construction. Changes in federal policy combined with a credit crunch and rising interest rates pushed homeownership beyond the reach of households with more modest incomes. A greater emphasis on community planning, multi-unit master-planned developments, coordinated infrastructure development combined with a shift in consumer tastes and expectations gave the neighborhoods of the late 1970s and 80s a different look and feel. After the flood, the effects of urban renewal and the development of additional subsidized housing introduced new components to the housing stock. Today, nearly 50 years after the flood, the homes and neighborhoods constructed in the postwar era communicate an abiding sense of an important era in Rapid City’s history that should not be forgotten.

To help the RCHPC document and preserve the history of postwar residential development in Rapid City, this essay explores the history of neighborhood planning and construction between the end of War II and 1972. It builds on the excellent 2017 report prepared by Cultural Resource Analysts for the State Historic Preservation Office, and readers should refer to that report for greater detail and analysis of the scope and scale of construction, architectural styles, and guidelines for historical significance.

1 NOTE: This is a working draft of a research essay developed for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Committee. Please do not cite without checking with Vantage Point Historical Services. Images included are for reference only and should not be published or reused without permission of the copyright holder.

Historical Research & Narrative

Across the nation and in Rapid City, the shortage of housing made headlines after World War II. Through the Great Depression and the war, many Americans had postponed building new homes. First, the sagging economy made it impossible for many families to afford homes. Then, during the war, shortages of supplies and building materials made construction difficult. Immediately after the war, many Americans got their finances in order and waited for supplies, labor, and services to catch up with the demand. During this nearly 20-year lag in homebuilding, new federal programs and policies, launched first under President Herbert Hoover and then expanded during the tenure of President Franklin Roosevelt, revolutionized the process of mortgage finance. At the end of the war, loans written by savings and loan companies and banks, backed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran’s Administration (VA), made homeownership accessible to millions of American households.

These programs and the prosperity they delivered were not distributed equally throughout the American populace. Race and economic status often determined who benefited from these federal programs and who did not. In Rapid City, for example, housing discrimination against Native Americans and African Americans was documented in the press and by the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s. These conditions did not improve until the 1970s when new fair housing initiatives pushed back against discrimination. (See essays on Indigenous Presence and Diverse Rapid City.)

A Revolution in Home Construction

Prior to World War II, most single-family residences in Rapid City and the US were constructed for individual customers by builders who erected homes one at a time. On the eve of the war, however, many people predicted a revolution in home construction. A banner front-page headline in the Rapid City Journal on March 15, 1941, for example, suggested “Low-Priced Home Now An Established Building Fact.” The paper featured an image of the Hillcrest Terrace development behind the high school and claimed it was “the largest private housing job in the country.” The article also pointed to new developments in the area between Baken Park and Canyon Lake. Lumber dealers in the city, however, dismissed the idea of a radical change in the homebuilding industry. They soon changed their minds.

After the war, a new generation of builders, appropriating techniques for factory-style production, dominated homebuilding in America’s largest metropolitan regions, including Rapid City. In Rapid City local builders leveraged these techniques to create new neighborhoods as early as 1946 when the Robbins and Stearns Lumber Company began construction of 28 new homes on Franklin Street east of Fifth. The following year, the company’s former manager, Cecil Urban, founded Private Homes Inc. and began building 50 new houses along St. Andrews and St. Patrick.

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Thirteen streets between Fifth and Third streets. Using “mass production methods,” the company offered four basic designs with ten exterior variations. Most of the homes had four rooms, including two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bath and were offered via a rent-to-buy program with priority given to veterans.

While Private Homes and Robbins and Stearns led the first building boom, smaller developers also jumped into the market. The L&L company, launched by C.W. Laws and J.A. Lamper, built five homes on Fifth Street and St. Andrew. Using steel frames and walls and partitions made of fabricated panels, the Knecht Lumber company also built a series of houses on St. Patrick Street. As the market exploded, even Al Costello’s Highland Beverage company erected a series of homes along Rapid Creek near the fairgrounds, and Rushmore Life Underwriters broke ground on a 12-unit project in the Canyon Lake district. In the immediate postwar years, new residential construction focused south and north of downtown and in the West Chicago area, with some development in the Canyon Lake neighborhood as well in the first decade after the war. In 1952, the Signal Heights Corporation began construction of 200 rental units on the top of Reservoir Hill.

High volume builders played a major role in residential construction over the next 10 to 15 years. Of the 5,672 single-family residences erected between 1950 and 1964, for example, nearly a quarter were built by one company—Private Homes, Inc. Other major builders included Robbins & Stearns; Marcoe Construction; Gale Goodwin; Walter Quinn Construction; Lee Arnold Construction; Martin Hoefer Construction (700 units; 12.1 percent of total construction in the period; Midwestern Homes; Myhren’s Cashway; and RECO Master Craft (450 units; 8 percent).

Tract home developers took advantage of new materials and new standardized, prefabricated building materials. They also relied on methods of construction that had been invented or refined during the war to bring mass-production techniques to homebuilding. Extruded aluminum, pre-formed concrete blocks, pre-cut plywood sheets, fiberboard, and tempered glass products all lowered costs, accelerated the speed of construction, and created opportunities for new home designs. Utilizing these products and systems, builders could reduce construction time and the cost per square foot for construction to meet the demand for homes.

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9 “Temporary School Buildings Studied for Southeast Area,” Rapid City Journal, April 4, 1952, 12. The builder Sheldon Reese, president of Acme Construction Company, was sued by the project's architect, Ursa L. Freed (147 East Franklin Street) who asserted that he was never paid for his work. “Architect Sues Acme for $12,804,” Rapid City Journal, April 13, 1953, 3.
11 This study refers to these builders as merchant builders, borrowing terminology from Marc Weiss’s study Rise of the Community Builders. It should be noted, however, that these projects were much smaller than the typical merchant builder in major metropolitan areas, diminishing opportunities for economies of scale in construction and finance. As the authors point out, in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, “the homebuilding industry was more complicated in its reliance on a variety of players,” and South Dakota had the “fourth lowest number of merchant builders in the country.” Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975: A Thematic Context Study,” August 2017, prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Society, 101-102.
Matters of Design
When they were involved in the development of these new communities, architects created a limited set of plans that the builder would mix in a particular development. Most of these new homes were very modest. In 1954, the average new home was 1,080 square feet.\textsuperscript{13} They included few design amenities. For families with more resources, however, the influence of national design ideas was substantial. In 1954, for example, \textit{Better Homes & Gardens} launched its “Home for All America” campaign, promoting ranch house architecture as a concept that could be adapted for various climates and reflected the character of “modern” life with large windows and easy access to the outdoors. The following year, the magazine introduced its “Idea Home” as a template for builders, who constructed models based on the plan all across the country, including South Dakota. In Rapid City, builder Dallas Smith constructed an Idea Home in the Strathavon Addition. More than 10,000 people toured the home in the late summer of 1956, including home economics classes from Rapid City High School who traversed its linoleum floors and marveled at the wonderful, modern kitchen.\textsuperscript{14}

In the immediate postwar years, affordable homes came with few amenities. By the mid-1950s, however, carports and even garages were added by builders to meet the demand of middleclass families and their automobiles. The idealization of the rustic or western way of life was reflected in antique brick fireplaces and stained pine walls or beams. Larger homes featured split-level floor plans to separate entertaining from the privacy of the bedrooms. But in 1959, in the middle of the Cold War, amenities could also include fallout shelters as well.\textsuperscript{15} As the children of the baby boom aged, families looked for finished basements or recreation rooms as well.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14} Picture and caption, \textit{Rapid City Journal}, September 16, 1956, 29.

\textsuperscript{15} “Development Home With Fallout Shelters to Open,” \textit{Rapid City Journal}, August 23, 1959, 17. This article profiles a new tract development in Denver where fallout shelters were included. At least one house in Rapid City built on Clark Street during this time period was equipped with a fallout shelter. See also, “First Two of 100 Family Fallout Shelters Opened,” \textit{Rapid City Journal}, February 9, 1960, 9.

Planning Challenges
While many of these new developments were within the city’s limits, others were built beyond the city’s incorporated borders. A great deal of this new construction was unplanned and uncontrolled. “Hundreds of homes were constructed in the Canyon Lake area, for example, “without benefit of adequate street design, proper grading, sewers, or virtually any controls,” according to one newspaper publisher in July 1947. As a result, he said, water contamination in Canyon Lake had become so bad that airmen stationed at the Rapid City Army Air Base were told not to swim there.17

To tackle these planning issues, the city annexed the Canyon Lake area that fall, as well as the Greenacres subdivision to meet the demand for city services and provide for the health and safety of these rapidly expanding new suburbs.18 It also established a new planning and zoning committee to coordinate development in a way that would protect residential areas and provide for industrial and commercial development.19 In 1948, the city contracted with the A.C. Godward Company of Minneapolis to develop the city’s first comprehensive plan.20 When it was delivered, Rapid City Journal editorial writers exclaimed that “Rapid Citians of 1999 Should Appreciate Today’s Planners” and predicted the document would lead to the development of a “beautiful, well-planned metropolis” by the end of the century.21 Indeed, with Godward’s plan, the city improved streets, revised its zoning ordinances, and began developing Sioux Park.22 An effort to win voter approval for the creation of a statutory planning commission in 1952, however, failed with 81.5 percent voting against the measure.23

![1949 proposed zoning plan based on Godward plan. RCJ.](image)

18 “Assessor Explains Taxes for New Residents Again,” Rapid City Journal, November 4, 1947, 4. A number of residents of the Canyon Lake area were not happy about the city’s annexation. They sued the city, but the court upheld the city’s action. “Taxation and Services Included In Study of Annexation Possibilities,” Rapid City Journal, February 12, 1963, 3.
19 Brad Slack, “Planning Committee Must Study Sites for Erection of Multiple-Dwelling Units,” Rapid City Journal, November 23, 1949, 4.
Water, sewer, and roads, meanwhile, remained a basic necessity. As the city expanded, new infrastructure for water (particularly after the Pactola Reservoir was completed in 1956) and sewers allowed postwar neighborhoods to continue to grow. The completion of Interstate 90 to the north also spurred residential and commercial construction between downtown and the interstate.

Developers frequently preferred what would later be called “greenfield” development in areas outside the incorporated limits of the city. There, they were not subject to the city’s zoning ordinances and building codes. Once homeowners moved in, many pressed for annexation to receive city services. In the spring of 1958, a frustrated city planning engineer named Douglas VanEykkeboach told members of Rotary Club that there were more than 2,200 acres of vacant land in the city limits that should be developed first before the city agreed to extend water and sewer services to areas proposed for annexation.

Battles over infrastructure and development standards also reflected the tension between builders’ efforts to keep costs low and the city’s desire to avoid future remediation costs for substandard infrastructure. In 1962, for example, Mayor Bill Raff vetoed the Rapid City Common Council’s decision to allow the developer of a 200-unit low-cost housing development northeast of the city to finish his development with gravel, rather than hard surface, streets. “If street standards are good for wage earners,” the mayor said, “they are also good for large building development corporations.”

Further Expansion
In the early 1950s, private builders expanded the city in every direction. Private Homes continued to build affordable single-family homes south of St. Patrick, erecting 184 units for sale or to rent in 1952 alone. The company boasted that it built more than 100 homes a year between 1945 and 1954. The biggest building boom, however, came in the middle of the decade. In 1954, 175 acres were platted for new housing developments. Marcoe Brothers developed a series of affordable homes in the Meadowwood addition in the South Canyon area in 1954, while Quinn Construction began work on the Canyon View Subdivision near Horace Mann School, which was destined to include 169 new homes. Meanwhile, builder Gale Goodwin launched two developments—Palo Verde Heights above West Boulevard, and a development in the Brookside Addition on the west side of town.

Altogether, these efforts set a record for single-family home construction in the city and served the city’s growing population, which was estimated at 35,000 by January 1955. After

26 “Planning Commission Goals Told To Rotary,” Rapid City Journal, April 24, 1958, 3.
29 “We Have Made Great Strides But Still Have Far To Go,” Rapid City Journal, January 3, 1955, 9.
builders added an estimated 650 new homes the following year, developer Martin Hoefer observed that on a per capita basis, the pace of Rapid City’s construction of new houses was among the fastest in the nation.32

The rate of population growth in Rapid City, however, began to fall in the late 1950s. It declined from 67.5 percent in the 1950s to 3.4 percent in the 1960s. Despite this decline, some new development continued south of Canyon Lake Dam and up onto the ridges. New homes were also built on the north side with the creation of the Sioux Addition in 1954. As this predominately Native neighborhood grew, residents lobbied local and federal officials to support an expansion that came to be known as Lakota Homes, which opened with FHA assistance in 1969.33

More Planning Challenges
By the early 1960s, the city’s population growth continued to be focused on the eastern side of the city. The 1960 Census showed that 32,401 people lived east of the hogback that divided the city; 9,246 lived to the west.34 In 1961, Martin Hoefer filed a master plan for the 40-acre Parkhill subdivision on the south side of town.35 The following year, developer Glenn Marcoe began a 400-home development in the Northern Heights subdivision just south of Interstate 90 along West Boulevard North.36

This growth prompted concerns. In 1959, a national leader in the field of urban planning visited Rapid City and told nearly 600 members of the Chamber of Commerce that the city desperately needed an updated master plan to eliminate blight, promote the development of infrastructure and community facilities, and improve transportation.37 Following up on this admonition, in 1961 the city applied for and was chosen as one of five cities in the country by the US Chamber of Commerce for its Community Development Action study.38 The project entailed a citywide self-study. It quickly ran into problems because of its complexity. The study did, however, revive efforts to create a statutory planning commission with legal powers to implement a master plan for the city and a three-mile contiguous area.39 In April 1962, voters in the city were once again asked to approve this move, but once again the measure failed. This time, however, supporters were able to garner 47.4 percent of the vote.40

In 1964, the city hired Wilbur Smith & Associates to create a planning study. The consultants’ report noted that a third of the developed land in Rapid City was devoted to residential use. Eight out of ten housing units were single-family homes. Streets accounted for 36.4 percent of the developed land. Meanwhile, 47.3 percent of the city’s total area, or 5,352 acres, remained undeveloped. A large percentage of this undeveloped area was on the hogback ridge where steep slopes posed challenges to construction. Some of this land, along with parks accounted for the

32 With sites platted for 300 new 1,000-square foot homes in his Knollwood Heights development, Hoefer was among the leaders in the industry. “Hoefer Ranks City High in Home Building,” Rapid City Journal, September 16, 1956, 33.
38 “City is One of Five in Nation Chosen for Development Study,” Rapid City Journal, April 25, 1961, 3.
roughly 11 percent of the developed area of the city that was devoted to recreational use and open space.

The Smith report and a study of the downtown area conducted in 1968 by Hodne Associates, Inc. in Minneapolis set the stage for urban renewal. Some of the consultants’ recommendations, including the zoning ordinance, were adopted by the Rapid City Common Council. But the need for comprehensive planning was clear to many people in city government. In 1969, the council brought the issue back to the voters, and this time they approved it, setting the stage for a series of urban renewal efforts that led up to the eve of the flood.

**Trailer Parks and Affordability**

As the city wrestled with long-range planning issues, the development of new housing slowed considerably in the late 1960s along with the pace of population growth. In 1970, the *Rapid City Journal* featured the 15-unit Paradise Valley development off Nemo Road in the South Canyon area calling it “one of the larger housing developments built in several years.” This was a far cry from the hundreds of new homes built annually in the heyday of the building boom in the 1950s.41

In the late 1960s, as affordability became a larger issue for many working families and prefabricated or mobile homes became increasingly popular in Rapid City. Local manufacturers like New Moon Homes and Rushmore Homes (established in 1956), as well as Champion Home Builder Company and Rapid Travelers (established in 1958) fabricated for the local market as well as for distribution to other parts of the US.42 In some cases, trailer parks were also developed to meet an immediate demand for housing. The Boeing Company, for example, funded the Northern Heights Mobile Park in the early 1960s to house workers associated with the Minutemen II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Launch Facility.43

The real growth of the prefabricated home market, however, depended on access to credit and insurance. As new modular concepts were introduced, manufactured homes took on qualities that made them seem more like conventional real estate. Units produced by Rushmore Homes and Kenwood Homes, for example, provided up to 1,450-square feet of living space and often came with a one-car garage. Installed over a full basement and attached to a foundation, these units were treated as “real estate” by lenders and insurance companies, particularly after changes in federal regulations allowed thrifts to make federally-insured loans on these units.44

The growth of trailer parks and the decline in demand for stick-built new construction in the late 1960s raised concerns among the city’s business leaders. As demand for new housing faltered, so did investments in maintenance, especially in properties serving low-income families who were increasingly priced out of homeownership by increases in land and construction costs.

In 1969, civic leaders pushed plans forward for a major new urban renewal project, which they hoped would qualify for federal funding. Studies had shown that there were 2,300 sub-standard housing units in Rapid City. In July, the Rapid City Housing and Development Commission was

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established to focus on “the removal of blighted areas, and the development or replacement of sub-standard housing.” The common council hoped that the commission would develop a plan that would be funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop low-cost housing and parks, especially along Rapid Creek. Over the next two and a half years, these plans would slowly take shape.

The Flood and the Future
The Rapid City community explored new opportunities to revitalize its core and improve the quality of housing in the early 1970s. But it was a natural disaster that would spark a new wave of construction and land use in Rapid City. In June 1972, an historic flood ripped through the downtown core, killing hundreds of residents and tearing up homes and businesses along its path. Over the course of several years, with a massive infusion of federal, state, and charitable dollars, Rapid City would undergo a slow recovery effort that reformulated the downtown core, removed homes, and created additional pressure on a community that would continue to grow into the 1980s and beyond. As Rapid City approaches the 50th anniversary of the flood, the RCHPC is well-positioned to explore ways to document and commemorate the largest boom in residential construction in the community’s history.

Bibliography/References

In recent years, the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office has begun to focus on documenting the postwar era. In 2007, SHPO commissioned a study of “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota” by Michelle L. Dennis.46 This report provided a much-needed overview of the history of the era, its dominant architectural trends, and a preliminary guide to assessing the condition and importance of historical resources from the era. Dennis’ report was followed ten years later by a study of “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975” completed by Cultural Resource Analysts. This report provides an outstanding overview and should be used for deeper background on architectural styles, structural significance, and aggregated development data.

For this report, we searched and reviewed articles associated with “housing development” in the Rapid City Journal from 1945-1972. Prior to the mid-1960s, this search term yielded large numbers of articles. After 1965, there were far fewer related to Rapid City.

Sources:


Preliminary Documentation

Maps/Photographs

Maps TBD

South Rapid City

RCJ
A departure from conventional houses are these four built on St. Patrick street by the Knecht Lumber company for sale on the open market. They are steel framed, and walls and partitions are made of fabricated panels, making the units highly fire-resistant. They have a full basement, living room, dinette, kitchen and bath on first floor and two bedrooms upstairs. Outside variations are incorporated in the standard floor plan.

Knecht Homes on St. Patrick between 7th and 8th Streets, 2021.

Hillcrest Apartments on Reservoir Hill, 2021.
A house becomes a home! These are four of the Private Homes, Inc., project being located on Fifth street between St. Charles and St. Andrews streets that are completed and occupied. Awnings add a honey touch and when the area is landscaped it will be one of the most desireable residential areas in the city.

An example of the mass production methods employed by Private Homes, Inc., are these basements for homes along St. Patrick street. The steel forms have been removed from the basement second from right and are set up for the pouring of concrete for the foundation of another house.

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Homes in the Flormann Addition, 2021.

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PRIVATE HOMES, INC. has built and sold over 1,200 homes in Rapid City since the corporation was formed in January, 1947. Officers of the corporation, including Charles N. Brown, president, and Cecil Urban, secretary-treasurer, realized the need for homes to fit the needs of the times and the community. At present the Private Homes building project is located on Robinsdale Terraces, lower left corner of above photo, with an outstanding view of Rapid City and the Black Hills. Available sites are close to the proposed South Junior High School, new corner store (1/2 way up area left of center). Robinsdale Elementary School, right corner, and Robinsdale shopping center. Annual payroll of Private Homes and subcontractors is $50,000.

DON’T MISS SEEING THIS BEAUTIFUL HOME IN ROBBINSDALE 235 E. Idaho WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE SUPPLIED THE MATERIALS FOR ITS CONSTRUCTION.
RCJ

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Strathavon

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Better Homes & Gardens – IDEA Home

IDEA Home on Central Blvd, 2021.
Strathavon homes, 2021. Note original front door.
Updated Strathavon home preserves much of the original presentation to the street, 2021.

Rear view shows presentation to the park, 2021.
South Canyon

Pleasant Valley home on Philip Drive. Rear additions tripled the square footage of the home while leaving the original profile of the house facing the street, 2021.
Meadowwood Addition

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Meadowwoods Addition, 2021.
Knollwood Heights

WHY PAY RENT?
Check Our Beautiful Homes IN

Knollwood Heights
Ideally Situated in Northeast Rapid
Now Ready TO HERMOSA

3 - BEDROOMS
$400 DOWN

954 sq. ft. — Built with finest materials and workmanship. Has Curtis Flairwood birch cabinets. Now is your chance to move into a fine clean new home with payments much less than rent.

3 - BEDROOMS
$900 DOWN

1072 sq. ft. — Full basement. Flairwood birch cabinets. Hi-Fold mahogany closet doors, vanity, beautiful large living room. Two beautifully tiled baths with shower, master bath has full vanity. Plus built-in electric range, oven and Patent hood, parquet hardwood floors throughout.

Sales Office
1202 Racine
FI 3-6666
OPEN DAILY TILL 6 P.M. & SUNDAY AFTER NOON
Evenings Call Curt Ireland FI 2-1131

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Lakota Homes / Sioux Addition

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Cooperative Home Ownership for modest income families
OPEN FOR INSPECTION

The model home and sales office is located at Northeast corner of Minn. Ave. Drive and
Northrup St., located in Northern Heights Subdivision, Turn North, all Avenue, on
North 7th Street in Minn. Ave. Drive.
Sundays 11 to 7
Weekdays 10 to 6

for information
363-6736

A Home of Your Own Costs Less at Lakota Community Homes
Each person in your family is a stockholder. A stockholder's share is
worth $100. This makes it possible for you to purchase
your home at the lowest price without
a large down payment. You may borrow
from your savings, and make payments
over a monthly period. Each month
you own more of the home, and get
closer to owning it outright.

AN EQUITY OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM—built by Midwestern Homes,
division of Buckingham Wood Products

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Lakota Community Homes Inc., provides modern homes

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Annexation unresolved

Lakota Community Homes Inc., a portion at left in photo, request for annexation failed to get council approval Monday night because of failure of other groups to reach agreement. Sioux Addition is to the right in photo and Lakota Sanitary District includes both Sioux Addition and Lakota Homes. Haines Avenue can be seen running lower foreground from left to right. Aerial photo by Don Polович is looking to the west northwest. See story page 1.

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BIG CROWD JAMMED COUNCIL CHAMBERS MONDAY NIGHT AND GAVE ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE WHEN LAKOTA WATER REQUEST WON APPROVAL

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Potential Projects
The RCHPC could lead or partner in the following community history and historic preservation projects related to the history of the postwar residential development in Rapid City:

Housing Airmen and Their Families
The development of Ellsworth Air Force base over many decades has had an enormous influence on Rapid City and the community’s demand for housing. While a significant number of airmen and their families have been housed on the base and in the nearby community of Box Elder, a number of housing projects in Rapid City were undertaken specifically to meet the needs of the base. RCHPC could undertake an effort in cooperation with Ellsworth to research and document this story.47

Postwar Neighborhoods – Preservation and Updates
Working with local architects and preservationists, RCHPC could develop a workshop for homeowners in the neighborhoods that were built during the postwar boom (1946-1964). The workshop could provide context on these years of construction, highlight prevalent elements in design and materials, and showcase what some homeowners in Rapid City have done to update these homes while preserving a sense of the original architecture.

National Register Eligibility
TBD

Resources
The following is a list of existing public and private community groups, organizations, and institutions who would make strong partners on any RCHPC initiative focused on exploring and understanding the history of Rapid City’s residential development in the postwar years.

Rapid City Public Library
Journey Museum and Learning Center
Black Hills Homebuilders Association
Black Hills Association of Realtors
Pennington County

47 See for example, “Revised Figure,” Rapid City Journal, October 18, 1962, 30; “Newest Base Housing About Ready,” Rapid City Journal, February 27, 1963, 2.