



**GET ON THE
RIGHT TRACK
TO
HOMEOWNERSHIP**

**Georgia Department of
Community Affairs**

What's Your Dream?

To own a home of my own!

More than 67% of Georgians own their own homes. But some people still believe that homeownership is out of their reach.



Could this be you?

Maybe you're not sure you can afford to own a home. Or you worry that your credit isn't strong enough. Or you can't imagine how you would save enough for a down payment. Maybe you don't think you would even qualify for a loan.

Why not you?

The dream of homeownership could be within your reach. The Georgia Dream Homeownership Program has helped over 33,000 Georgians own homes of their own. We provide the information to help you determine if homeownership is right for you, the way for you to prepare to own your own home, and the financing to make homeownership affordable.

Follow along and we will show you how to get on track toward a home of your own!



#1 – GET READY!

WARM UP:

Counseling For Homeownership

Get the facts!

Homeownership counseling will help you learn how your income, employment history, on-time payment of rent, credit, savings, and expenses affect your ability to own a home.



Review your money management habits!

Homeownership counseling will help you create a realistic plan that will allow you to:

- manage your monthly bill payments,
- review your employment history and stability of your income,
- balance your budget,
- decrease your expenses, and
- save for your goal of homeownership.

Understand your credit history!

Homeownership counseling will provide you with information regarding your credit standing that will help you:

- review all the accounts listed on your credit report and correct any errors,
- identify credit references that may not be reported to the credit bureau,
- find out your credit score and review the information that determines your score, and
- make a workable plan to help you improve your credit standing.

READY,

FACT - It's the Law!

Did you know that you can get a FREE copy of your credit report twice a year from all three credit reporting agencies?

Equifax	1-800-685-1111
Experian	1-888-397-3742
Trans Union	1-800-916-8800

Saving for homeownership

Once you have “balanced your budget” be sure to set aside some of your income to help you with the cost of purchasing a home (down payment, closing cost, and other housing related costs - maintenance and repair costs). Demonstrating your ability to save and having funds on hand will help you in the mortgage approval process.

- Even if you can only save a small amount each month, try to do so consistently.
- If you have credit issues that prevent you from opening a savings account, talk to several financial institutions (banks and/or credit unions) until you find one with flexible requirements.

Partners that can help you save toward homeownership

Georgia Saves is a supportive program to help you with saving and other financial goals.

- Check on the *Georgia Saves* website for their bank partners; many have agreed to waive fees and minimum amounts to open a saving account.
- The program also has “wealth coaches” trained to help you develop a plan which includes debt reduction and saving for a goal.

Contact Georgia Saves at
1-888-244-9092
www.georgiasaves.org

IDA Programs (Individual Development Accounts) are matched savings accounts designed to help you to save for education or job training, purchasing a home or starting a small business.

- Check to see if there is an Individual Development Account or IDA program in your area of the state and whether or not you meet the program requirements.
- The Georgia Alliance for Individual Development Accounts (GAIDAS) can provide information about local IDA programs.

For Information on IDAs Contact
United Way by Dialing 211

#2 – Get Set!

INSIDE TRACK:

Coaching you through the process



The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) supports a network of nonprofit agencies that provide two types of homeownership education (1) group home buyer workshops and (2) one-on-one (individual) homeownership counseling.

The home buyer workshops

- Provide a general overview of the home buying process, with presentations given directly by real estate and mortgage professionals.
- You will learn:
 - the steps you need to take to purchase a home,
 - the personal benefits of homeownership,
 - about the special programs in your area that provide financing and assistance to home buyers, and
 - what to expect from lenders, real estate and other housing professionals.
- You will receive written materials to guide you in preparing for and completing the purchase process.

SET,

Individual homeownership counseling sessions

- One-on-one counseling gives you a chance to freely discuss any issues you have with a housing counselor.
- Counselors can discuss which programs best meet your individual needs and outline the steps you need to take to purchase your home.



Resources

- Programs such as the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program can assist you with down payment funds and reduced mortgage costs.

- Special programs are also available through local governments and nonprofit organizations to help you purchase a home of your own.
- It is important to get information on income guidelines, property location, and other special requirements to identify the programs that will benefit you the most.

**Contact 1-800-359-HOME (4663)
for information on the
Georgia Dream Homeownership Program and
other resources available in your area.**

Keeping in touch

- Follow-up sessions and support will be available as you advance toward your goal.
- All of these services are confidential and free of charge.
- If you take advantage of them, the education and advice you receive will be well worth your time.

FACT - It's the Law!

The Georgia Fair Housing Law prohibits housing discrimination because of a person's race, color, national origin, sex, religion, familial status, or disability. If you think that your rights have been violated, contact the Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity at (404) 656-1736 or 800-473-OPEN.



#3 – GO!

Advancing to the finish line

Your dream of homeownership is within your reach! When you have managed your income and spending, established a record of paying bills on time, saved a portion of your earnings, addressed your credit issues, and learned about each of the steps to homeownership, it is time to begin the process of purchasing your home.



First, review the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program information and information on other programs that are available to assist you with the purchase of your home. It's important to find the programs that are right for you.

Second, select a lender who can help you apply for the programs and mortgage products that will benefit you most.

Do your homework

Talk to more than one lender.

- A lender should be willing to give you information about affordable mortgage products without requiring an application fee.
- Compare mortgage costs among lenders including interest rate, closing cost, and fees.

Get pre-approved.

- A lender can provide you with a pre-approval based on information you provide on your income and debts. This will help you know how much house you can afford; confirm your ability to qualify for a mortgage based on your credit, financial, and employment information; and strengthen your position to make an offer on a home.

Note: the information you give the lender will be verified through a completed mortgage application before the approval is confirmed.

- Get a good faith estimate of closing costs within three days of submitting your application.

Third, remember to review the preliminary information received on the mortgage product terms and fees with your housing counselor prior to making a decision to work with a particular lender or program.

Fourth, find your dream home and make an offer.

To receive a list of approved lenders for the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program call 1-800-359-HOME (4663)



GO!

Final Stretch - It's time to select your home

Working with a real estate professional



Select a real estate professional to be your buyer's agent. The buyer's agent will:

- help you find the best home to meet your needs,
- work on your behalf and ensure that your interests are considered throughout the purchase transaction, and
- help you submit a sales contract which shows that both you and the seller of the house have agreed on your offer.

In most situations your agent will be paid by the seller through the sales commission on the sale of the home.

The contract you sign for buyer's agent services should specify how the agent will be paid and how the contract can be terminated if you are not happy with the services.

Remember, as with the lender, you should get referrals and talk to several real estate professionals prior to making a decision to work with someone.

Making an offer

Your buyer's agent will help you through the process of making an offer. Get everything in writing. Verbal agreements may not be binding and enforceable.

Don't forget!

- Two very important conditions, or contingencies, should be included in any real estate contract when you make an offer on a house:
 1. loan approval with the mortgage financing that you have chosen to finance the purchase of your home, and
 2. a satisfactory home inspection. Get a professional home inspection. It can be used to negotiate any repairs you may ask the seller to make.



This will assure that unless you are able to get financing at terms that are favorable and are satisfied with the results of the home inspection, you may withdraw from the contract and keep your earnest money.

Contact the Georgia Association of Realtors at www.garealtor.com or the National Association of Real Estate Brokers at www.nareb.com

THE FINISH LINE: Close your transaction.



Read all documents before signing them. Try to get documents in advance so that you can carefully read them. Be sure you understand all the terms. Don't be afraid to ask for an explanation. Keep copies of all loan documents.



Congratulations! You've reached your goal!

Remember! You are not alone.

- Just as free counseling and support was available to you before your home purchase, it is also there for you after you buy your home. Don't wait! As soon as you realize you need assistance or are having difficulty with your payments or credit, call a housing counselor.
- The same nonprofit agencies that offer pre-purchase counseling also offer post-purchase counseling and classes for:
 - home maintenance
 - new budget and other financial concerns
 - questions about home equity or refinance decisions
- Don't forget to continue to make use of this valuable resource as you begin life as a homeowner.

Post purchase counseling is available throughout Georgia from one of the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program counseling partners listed on the last page.

Congratulations, you are on track to becoming a successful homeowner!



Home Buyer Education Agencies

To get on the right track to homeownership, contact the agency nearest you.

ALBANY

CCCS of Southwest Georgia**
229-883-0909/ 800-309-3358
www.cccsalbany.org

City of Albany Department of Community &
Economic Development*
229-430-5283

ATHENS

East Athens Development Corp.
706-208-0048***
www.eadcinc.com

Housing & Economic Leadership Partners**
706-549-5200

ATLANTA

CCCS of Greater Atlanta***
404-527-7630/ 866-255-2227
Spanish line 866-616-3716
www.cccsinc.org

The Atlanta Urban League***
404-659-1150
www.atlul.org

Center for Pan Asian Services***
770-936-0969

Cooperative Resource Center*
404-521-9092
www.cooperativeresourcecenter.org

The D & E Group*
770-961-6900
www.depover.org

DeKalb Metro Housing Counseling***
404-508-0922

Georgia Mutual Assistance Association
Consortium***
404-296-5400
www.gmaac.org

Latin American Association***
404-638-1800
www.latinamericanassoc.org

AUGUSTA

CCCS of the CSRA**
706-736-2090

East Central Georgia Partners in
Homeownership*
706-210-2785

CSRA EOA*
706-722-0493

BRUNSWICK

Totally Free, Inc.***
912-265-1515

CARTERSVILLE

Housing & Development Corporation of Bartow
County*
770-382-1414
www.hdcofbartowco.org

CHATTANOOGA

CCCS of Chattanooga**
423-490-5620
www.debtmasters.org

* workshops
** counseling
***workshops & counseling

COLUMBUS

CCCS of West Georgia**
706-327-3239/ 800-757-2227

Columbus Housing Initiative***
706-324-4663
www.columbushousinginitiative.org

Urban League of Columbus***
706-323-3687

DUBLIN

Dublin-Laurens County Community &
Economic Development*
478-272-2450

EASTMAN

Heart of Georgia CAA*
478-374-4301

FORT VALLEY

Fort Valley State University*
478-825-6954

GAINESVILLE

Gainesville-Hall County Neighborhood
Revitalization***
770-297-1800

HINESVILLE

City of Hinesville*
912-876-3164

JC Vision & Associates***
912-877-4243
www.jcvision.com

LAGRANGE

DASH of LaGrange***
706-298-2408

MACON

CCCS of Middle Georgia**
478-745-6197
www.cccsmacon.org

Macon Housing Counseling Center*
478-751-7058

MONTEZUMA

Flint Area Consolidated Housing*
478-472-8209

ROME

Appalachian Housing Counseling Center*
706-378-9917

SAVANNAH

CCCS of Savannah**
912-691-2227
www.cccsavannah.org

Neighborhood Improvement Association*
912-447-5577
www.niacdc.org

VALDOSTA

Project Change*
229-245-3872
www.projectchange.org

WARNER ROBINS

Middle Georgia CAA***
478-922-4464

WAYCROSS

CCCS of Jacksonville**
912-284-2261

* *workshops*

** *counseling*

*** *workshops & counseling*



Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South NE,
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-2231
1-800-359-HOME
www.dca.state.ga.us



An Equal Opportunity Employer

