



Home Access Program

Frequently Asked Questions

General Program Information

1. **What is the Home Access Program?**

The Home Access Program is a down payment assistance program offered by **Housing Trust Silicon Valley** (Housing Trust), funded through CalHome Reuse Funds. It is designed to help lower-income, first-time homebuyers purchase homes (single-family home, townhome, or condominium) in **Alameda** or **Contra Costa County**.

2. **Where can I find all the details and information about the program?**

The Home Access Program Policies and Procedures provides all of the important information and details about the program and requirements. The Policies and Procedures can be found on the Home Access program webpage under Program Resources.

3. **Where can I find a list of the required documentation I will have to submit if I can apply?**

The Housing Trust Application Checklist and Document Tips handout can be found on the Home Access program webpage under Program Resources.

4. **Who is eligible for the Home Access Program?**

Interested Homebuyers:

- Are First-time Homebuyers (defined below) purchasing a primary residence in Alameda or Contra Costa County.
- Have a combined annual gross household income that does not exceed the 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) by household size and for the respective county where they are purchasing a property.
- Have available funds equal to a minimum of 3% of the home's purchase price for down payment, 2% of the purchase price for closing costs, and reserves equal to one month of mortgage payment, property tax, hazard insurance, and homeowners' association dues (if applicable).
- Have completed a HUD-certified 8-hour Homebuyer Education class through a designated agency.
- Have obtained a pre-approval letter from a program participating lender for a first mortgage.

5. **Which counties are covered by this program?**

The program is currently **available for purchasing homes in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties**.

6. How do I get started?

- i. To get started, visit Housing Trust's Home Access website to learn more and begin the process.
- ii. Begin by completing the online Homebuyer readiness **Self-Assessment**. The online Homebuyer Readiness Self-Assessment provides you with a preliminary self-evaluation of your readiness for the program and helps you be better prepared in your pursuit of homeownership or you will be directed to the online Interest Form.

Note: The self-assessment is not an application, does not place you on a waitlist, and does not guarantee funding or approval.

7. How do I apply for the program?

- After you have submitted an online interest form Housing Trust staff will contact you and discuss the information you have provided, the overall application process and your specific next steps.
- Based on your overall readiness, available program funding and our staff capacity Housing Trust staff will invite you to apply.

Note: The online Interest Form is not an application, does not place you on a waitlist, and does not guarantee funding or approval.

8. What documents are required for the application?

Applicants need to provide various documents, including proof of income, 3-year tax returns, transcripts, bank statements, and completion certificates for the Homebuyer Education course. The Housing Trust Application and Document Checklist are available to assist in gathering the necessary paperwork.

Financial Assistance Details

9. How much down payment assistance can I receive?

- Up to **40%** of the purchase price
- Maximum loan amount of **\$200,000**

10. Is this a grant or a loan?

- This is a **30-year deferred loan** with **simple annual interest** (accrues annually).
- Repayment of the loan and accrued interest is required.

11. Do I need to make monthly payments on this loan?

- **No. Monthly principal or interest payments are not required.**
- The total loan (principal + accrued interest) is due at the end of the 30-year term, or due upon sale, transfer, or refinancing of the home, whichever happens first.

12. How much do I need to contribute as a down payment?

- A minimum of **3% of the purchase price for the down payment**
- Gift funds are allowed. The minimum borrower contribution with gifts funds is 1.5% of the purchase price. Allowable gift funds sources are gift funds from an immediate relative or an acceptable and approved entity.

13. Besides down payment what other funds do I need?

- **2% of the purchase price for estimated closing costs**
- Additional funds to cover **one month of reserves which includes one month of principal and interest payment for the first mortgage, one month payment of taxes, insurance, and an HOA fee (if applicable).**

Lender Requirements

14. Can I work with any lender for a lender pre-approval letter?

- No. The Senior Lender providing a pre-approval letter must be a program participating lender.

15. How do I know if the lender is participating in the program?

- A list of participating lenders will be provided when Housing Trust staff discusses next steps with homebuyers.

Credit Requirements

16. What Are the Credit Requirements?

- Credit score: The borrower(s) including a non-borrowing spouse must have a middle FICO credit score of 620.
- Credit reports from all three bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) are required.

Rental/Lease Documentation

17. What rental documentation will I have to provide if I apply?

- Lease/Rental Documentation - The ratified standard lease or rental agreement must be included and signed by the applicants and all adult household members.
- Documentation of one (1) months of rental payments (e.g., cancelled checks).

18. I live with my parents who own their home, and they don't charge me regular rent.

- An informal rental agreement will be required when you apply. It must be signed by all parties including your parents as the landlord/property owners.
- Documentation of one (1) months of rental payments (e.g., cancelled checks).

Income Limits

19. What is the Maximum Gross Annual Household Income Limits for the Home Access Program?

- The Maximum Gross Annual Household Income Limits by household size refers to the income limits for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, as determined by the California Department of Housing and Community Development and updated on an annual basis.
- The Maximum Gross Annual Household Income Limit for the program is 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- The household is required to maintain income limit eligibility during the pre-approval process until the closing of a purchase transaction.

Maximum Household Income Table for 80% AMI by Household Size

Household Size	Alameda County	Contra Costa County
1 Person	\$95,050	\$95,050
2 Persons	\$108,600	\$108,600
3 Persons	\$122,200	\$122,200
4 Persons	\$135,750	\$135,750

Household Size	Alameda County	Contra Costa County
5 Persons	\$146,650	\$146,650
6 Persons	\$157,500	\$157,500

** The Maximum Annual Gross Household Income Limits are established annually
by California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)*

20. What if I have more than six people in my household?

If your household size is **greater than six**, please refer to the Home Access Program Policies and Procedures or contact homebuyer@housingtrustsv.org

Property Requirements

21. Where can the home be located?

- The property **must** be in Alameda County or Contra Costa County.
- The applicant borrower's primary place of employment must be within a reasonable commuting distance from the home being purchased.

22. What types of homes are eligible?

- Single-family detached home
- Townhome
- Condominium

23. Are there any property types that are NOT allowed?

- Mobile homes
- Manufactured homes
- Homes with an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

24. Does the home need to be vacant?

The home must be vacant or owner-occupied when you buy it.
You cannot purchase a home that is tenant-occupied at the time of sale.

Owner Occupancy, Refinancing, and Repayment Requirements

25. What is the Owner Occupancy Requirement?

- The owner must certify that he/she will be an owner-occupant and must maintain homeownership during the term of the loan.

26. Can I rent out my house once purchased?

- No. The home, or any parts thereof, shall not be leased or rented by the new homeowner to any person or entity.

27. What happens if I refinance?

- You must **notify Housing Trust** if you plan to refinance.
- Housing Trust may agree to subordinate its security interest on a real estate loan when the following conditions have been met:
 - Refinance due to hardship** - the purpose of refinance is to lower the interest rate of the senior mortgage thus lower the mortgage payment. The total indebtedness shall not exceed ninety percent (95%) of the appraised value of the property; and

- ii. **Cash out refinance is not allowed.**

28. Can I pay down or pay off the loan before the 30-year term ends?

- There is no prepayment penalty. A borrower may pay the Home Access Principal Loan amount and any accrued interest, in part or in whole, at any time without penalty.
- Payment is first applied to any accrued interest. Any remaining amount is then applied to the principal loan amount.

29. What happens if I sell my home before the 30-year term ends?

- Original HOME ACCESS principal and any accrued deferred interest is due according to the terms of repayment.
 - i. The unpaid Home Access Principal Loan is the loan amount borrowed by the borrower and applied as down payment towards the purchase of the property.
 - ii. The deferred simple interest of 3% per annum accrues based on the unpaid Home Access Principal Loan amount.
- For example: \$100,000 (Home Access Principal Loan Amount) X 3% (Simple Interest per annum) = \$3,000 (Interest Accrued per year)

Home is sold in Year 5 of loan:

- HOME ACCESS loan: \$100,000
- Home Access Loan Deferred Interest = \$100,000 (Home Access Loan) X 3% (Deferred Simple Interest Rate) = \$3,000 per year
- Total Deferred Interest Accrued = \$3,000 X 5 (Years) = \$15,000
- **Total Payment due: \$100,000 (Home Access Principal Loan) + \$15,000 (Total Deferred Interest Accrued) = \$115,000**

DEFINITIONS

30. First-time Homebuyers Status definition: *“A first-time homebuyer, according to Title 25 of the California Code of Regulations §8201(l), is defined as an individual or individuals, or an individual and his or her spouse, who have not owned a home or had an ownership interest in a home during the three-year period prior to the date of application. Furthermore, the individual cannot have held or shared title to a home (whether in Alameda County or Contra Costa County or elsewhere) for three years prior to Home Access Program Application submission. (This would mean that a buyer who had previously owned a home but no longer owns one (whether through divorce, sale, foreclosure, etc.) is eligible for the program so long as they have not owned a home during the prior 3 years.)”* **This First-time Homebuyer Status applies to All borrowers including non-borrowing spouses.**

31. What is the Household Definition?

- A household is defined as: “A household is comprised of ALL individuals who occupy a housing unit. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements, regardless of actual or perceived, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.
- All adult household members will be required to meet eligibility guidelines and must present all the required documentation.

32. What is Household Income?

The definition of Household Income is the following:

Gross annual income is all income earned before any deductions.

- i) All adult household members who are earning income are required to include all earned gross wages as part of the combined gross annual household income.
- ii) Income (W2 or self-employment) includes salary, hourly or monthly wages, overtime, bonuses, commission, tips, and any upcoming vesting Restricted Stock Units (RSU), etc. Please refer to the Home Access Program Policies and Procedures for more details about income inclusions and exclusions.
- iii) Other forms of income that will be included are Social Security (SSI), disability, child support (received), unemployment, etc. See all other forms of income in the Home Access Program Policies and Procedures

33. Who is defined as an Applicant?

- A program applicant or co-applicant is any household member over the age of 18.
- The Primary Applicant is the first-named party on the application form
- Co-Applicants are all adult household members over the age of 18, including spouses, parents, siblings, and adult children
- They may or may not also be considered a borrower.

34. Who is defined as a Borrower?

- A Primary Applicant who is the first-named borrower on the senior lender's first mortgage is considered a Borrower
- Any Co-Applicant who is a co-borrower for the senior lender's first mortgage is considered a Borrower
- A non-borrowing spouse for the senior lender is still considered a Borrower for the Home Access program loan.

Disclaimer

Information in this FAQ is for general guidance only and may be subject to change. Always verify the latest program details and requirements through the Home Access Program Policies and Procedures on the Housing Trust Silicon Valley website.