

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
HOUSING AND WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**

**FIRST TIME HOME BUYER (H.O.M.E.)**

**Down Payment Assistance Program**

GENERAL INFORMATION



This brochure is intended to provide a general overview of the Riverside County First Time Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program for prospective first-time home buyers, real estate agents and other interested persons. After reviewing this material, if you feel that you qualify for the program, please contact a participating lender. A list of participating lenders is included with this information packet.

**July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024**

*This information does not constitute full program guidelines and is subject to change without notice.*

**For more information.** If you would like to apply for the FTHB HOME Program, please contact one of the participating lenders. They will review your qualifications and assist in applying for the program.

If you have any questions or need additional information about the FTHB HOME Program, please contact:

**Riverside County**  
**Housing and Workforce Solutions**  
First Time Home Buyer Program (HOME)  
PH: (951) 955-0784  
FAX: (951) 374-3098

Located at:  
3403 Tenth Street, Suite 300  
Riverside, California 92501

[www.rhomelink.com](http://www.rhomelink.com)

<https://rivco.org/Departments/Housing>

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND WORKFORCE  
SOLUTIONS  
FIRST TIME HOME BUYER PROGRAM (HOME)  
INFORMATION PACKET**

**What is the First Time Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program (FTHB HOME)?**

The Riverside County FTHB HOME Program is designed to provide assistance to lower income persons in the purchase of their first home. Assistance may be provided for the down payment in the purchase of a home. The amount of assistance available depends upon the buyer's qualifications and the price of the home. In general, a buyer may only receive what they need, up to 20% of the purchase price of the home. The maximum down payment cannot exceed \$75,000.

**Who qualifies for the FTHB HOME Program?**

The four basic qualifications for the FTHB HOME Program are (1) the buyer must be a first time homebuyer; (2) the buyer's annual income must be eighty percent (80%) or less of the area median income as determined by HUD; (3) the home being purchased must be located in a qualifying location and the purchase price must be within the program price limit; and (4) all household members must be either a US Citizen or a qualified alien as per Section 431 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity reconciliation Act (PRWORA). All household members must provide documentation of a valid social security number. Priority is given to Housing Authority Section 8 Voucher Program participants who participate in the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program.

**What is a first-time homebuyer?**

In order to qualify as a first-time home buyer, the purchaser and purchaser's spouse cannot have had ownership interest in improved-upon, residential real property nor claimed mortgage or real estate related tax deductions for the previous three years from the date of application to the FTHB HOME program. The purchaser and their spouse must attest that they have not owned improved-upon, residential real property during the past 3 years and provide the last three years tax returns for review for any mortgage or real estate related deductions. If tax returns show evidence of mortgage or real estate related deductions, documentation must be provided evidencing that the deductions are not related to improved-upon, residential real property and acceptable documentation must also be provided establishing the value of the property. Asset "income" from the property must be imputed using the HUD passbook rate and added into the household's total qualifying income. Also, the household's total assets (including property) must be equal to or less than FTHB HOME annual income limit based on household size for the current fiscal year. If the total assets exceed the program's annual income limit for their household size, the assets must be spent down accordingly. Assets (including property) disposed of for less than fair market value during the most recent 2-year period are counted as if the household still owned the asset. Displaced homemakers and single parents, as defined by Appendix D, must also meet the first-time buyer requirement. For the purposes of determining home ownership, a dwelling unit that was not permanently affixed to a permanent foundation (i.e., a mobile home) shall be not included in the three-year requirement.

**What are the qualifying incomes?**

In order to be eligible for this program, the buyers' annual income shall not exceed 80% of the area median income, as determined by HUD, adjusted for family size. In addition, assets shall not exceed these limits. Currently, the income limits are as follows:

Maximum Annual Household Income Adjusted for Family Size Effective July 1, 2023	
Household Size	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$ 52,200
2	\$ 59,650
3	\$ 67,100
4	\$ 74,550
5	\$ 80,550
6	\$ 86,500
7	\$ 92,450
8	\$ 98,450

**What are the other buyer requirements?** The buyer must have enough income and creditworthiness to qualify for a first mortgage through one of the participating lenders. In addition, the buyer must accept the highest loan-to-value ratio first loan for which they qualify. In order to be eligible for participation in the FTHB HOME Program, prospective purchasers must complete eight hours of education in a Home Buyer's Seminar through a HUD approved homebuyer education provider. Online homebuyer education is not accepted.

**What is the maximum home price?** Note that the appraised value of the property cannot exceed these limits. The down payment assistance will be based on a percentage of the home sales price which shall be justified by an appraisal. The maximum home purchase price under this program is currently:

Maximum Property Purchase Price Limits Effective July 1, 2023	
New Construction Single-Family	\$521,550
Existing Single-Family Residence	\$521,550
New/Existing Condominium or Townhouse	\$467,875
New Manufactured Home	\$313,500

**What are the qualifying locations?** This Program may be utilized to purchase a home in the following locations: (1) all unincorporated areas of Riverside County (areas outside of a city limit), such as Cabazon, Glen Avon, Highgrove, Mira Loma, Mead Valley, Mecca, North Shore, Nuevo, Pedley, Quail Valley, Romoland, Thermal, Thousand Palms, Valle Vista or (2) within the City Limits of the following jurisdictions: Banning, Beaumont, Blythe, Calimesa, Canyon Lake, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Eastvale, Indian Wells, La Quinta, Norco, San Jacinto and Wildomar.

Please note that the following cities are **not eligible** for the FTHB Program and assistance **cannot** be given to purchasers of homes located within the City Limits of these cities: Cathedral City, Corona, Hemet, Indio, Jurupa Valley, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Perris, Rancho Mirage, Riverside and Temecula.

**What kinds of properties are eligible?** The FTHB HOME program may be used to purchase

any new or resale home that is: (1) permanently fixed to a permanent foundation, (2) has a minimum of two bedrooms, and (3) is currently occupied by the Seller or vacant (tenant occupied homes are not eligible unless the tenant is the purchaser of that property). Homes with in-ground pools or spas are not eligible. The home must be in sound condition and meet the Housing Quality Standard as determined by HWS. The purchaser must reside in the home as his or her principal residence within sixty (60) days of purchase and the home shall not be used as a business nor as a vacation (second) home.

A home shall not be eligible for purchase under this program unless it is in standard condition and suitable for occupancy upon purchase. The County will require that a Home Inspection be performed for all existing homes, and repairs may be required. The County will not make nor pay for repairs to homes at any time. The borrower shall agree to maintain the home in standard condition for the term of the HWS assistance. To this end, the purchaser shall be required to obtain a one-year home warranty as part of the home purchase.

### **What is the process to apply for the FTHB HOME Program?**

- (1) If you are a first-time homebuyer and/or Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency Program participant whose income is within the Program limits, the first step is to contact a participating lender for eligibility screening. The lender will take a loan application and simultaneously pre-qualify you for a first loan and the FTHB HOME Program. The lender will determine the maximum home price that you can afford and will also determine whether you are eligible for assistance under the County of Riverside FTHB HOME Program.
- (2) After the lender has determined if you are eligible for the program, you will need to attend an eight-hour Homebuyer Education class by a HUD approved provider. The lender will provide the names and phone numbers of approved homebuyer education providers, and you will need to call one of the providers to schedule a class. There may be a minimal charge to attend this class, please inquire with providers for details.
- (3) Once you are pre-qualified for the program and have a maximum home price, you may locate a home to purchase. If you are interested in an existing home, it is recommended that you contact a Realtor to assist you in locating a home to purchase. Note: homes must be located in FTHB HOME eligible locations.
- (4) Once you have located a home, you will need to make a purchase offer and start escrow. Your real estate representative or new home salesperson and your lender can assist in this process. You must provide a Homeownership Notice (FTHB-3) to the sellers as an addendum to the purchase contract (your lender can provide you with a copy of this Notice). Once your purchase offer is accepted and escrow begins, your lender will assist you in completing the application materials for the FTHB HOME Program.
- (5) During escrow your lender will process your loan application for the first mortgage and FTHB HOME Second mortgage. You will be required to sign

forms authorizing the lender to submit a FTHB HOME Reservation on your behalf and disclosing your current income from all sources. Prior to the close of escrow, you will sign loan documents and both the first and second mortgages will be funded.

- (6) When escrow closes, you will become a homeowner and will be responsible for maintaining the property in sound condition. You will begin making monthly payments on your first mortgage. The FTHB HOME Second Mortgage will not require payments until you sell your property or a cash out refinance on the first mortgage. After the 15-year affordability period, the FTHB HOME assistance is converted to a grant with no repayment of funds.

**What are the first loan terms?** The purchaser shall apply for a first mortgage from a participating lender. The first loan must be a fully amortized, fixed rate, thirty-year mortgage and the HWS Down Payment Assistance will be a deed recorded in second position to the first mortgage. The purchaser must accept the highest first mortgage amount (principal amount at going interest rate) for which they can qualify. Loan terms and qualifications (interest rate, creditworthiness, etc.) in addition to those specified above will be determined by the participating lender.

**What costs can be paid by FTHB HOME Program?** The FTHB HOME financial assistance can be provided as down payment assistance. The amount of assistance available depends upon the buyer's qualifications. The FTHB HOME assistance absolute maximum is the lesser of \$75,000 or 20% of the home's sales price.

Closing cost assistance is not available currently.

**What are the terms of the Down Payment Assistance?** The minimum amount of assistance that may be provided is \$1,500 per home purchase. The maximum amount of assistance is 20% of the purchase price of the home not to exceed \$75,000. However, this assistance amount may be further reduced if the buyer does not need the full amount to purchase a home. The FTHB HOME assistance is recorded as a second mortgage on your home. This deferred second mortgage does not require any monthly payments and is not interest bearing. In exchange for receiving funds to assist in the purchase of a home, the purchaser must agree to a fifteen (15) year affordability period. If the home is sold during the term of the affordability period, the full amount of the assistance must be repaid.

**Is there a deadline to apply for this program?** The County will accept Reservations as long as funds are available. It is anticipated that additional funds will be allocated to the Program in the future, depending upon fund availability.

**Who are the Approved Lenders?** There are participating lenders, with multiple branches throughout the County and elsewhere in Southern California, who participate in the First Time Home Buyer (FTHB HOME) Program. The current list of participating lenders and branch offices may be found at [www.rchomelink.com](http://www.rchomelink.com). **Purchasers must use one of these lenders and are encouraged to compare prices and loan terms among these lenders.**

**How were the Approved Lenders selected for the FTHB HOME Program?** The County of Riverside Housing and Workforce Solutions published a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for qualified lenders. The RFQ was published in a newspaper of general circulation, and invitations were sent to lenders participating in other homebuyer assistance programs administered by HWS as well as lenders requesting to be placed on the mailing list. All lenders were invited to submit materials detailing their qualifications for the program. All submittals that were received prior to the deadline were evaluated and ranked according to the criteria in the RFQ. Lenders that demonstrated in their submittals that they met all the program requirements were selected as participating lenders.