

Memorandum



Date: November 19, 2025

To: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(8)
January 21, 2026

From: Daniella Levine Cava *Daniella Levine Cava*
Mayor

Subject: Report on Status of County's Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program

Executive Summary

This report is in response to Resolution No. R-769-24, sponsored by Commissioner Roberto J. González, and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on September 4, 2024 directing the County Mayor or the County Mayor's Designee to provide a report on the status of the County Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program. This report provides the number of loans and the status of the County's Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program (Program) administered by Housing and Community Development (HCD or Department).

Each fiscal year, Documentary Stamps Surtax (Surtax) or State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) funds are used to provide funding between \$4 to \$8 million for the Program. Interest-free loans for up to \$35,000.00 are provided to each borrower (homebuyer). Payments are not required until the end of the term or at the point of sale/refinance. Loans have been made in all districts, with the Department having closed on a total of \$11,032,815 for 316 loans from August 2022 to October 2025. A total of \$4 million has been earmarked in the County's FY 2026 budget. HCD aims to launch a comprehensive outreach campaign that builds on past successes and brings together participating lenders, realtors, financial experts, housing counseling agencies, and County departments—all aligned with the one-stop service model championed by the Mayor's No Wrong Door initiative.

Background

To assist and encourage home ownership, the Board, through Ordinance No. 15-127, created and tasked HCD to administer the Homebuyer Loan Program. The Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program was a natural progression to the County's home ownership efforts. It allowed the County to assist buyers that needed additional mortgage assistance or buyers who needed funds for the down payment. The Program was established so that eligible homebuyers could receive an interest-free loan of up to \$35,000.00 to cover the down payment for their first home. The department closed on a total of \$11,032,815 for 316 loans from August 2022 to October 2025. The Program provides Surtax funds for income-qualified homeowners earning up to 140% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Current income thresholds to qualify include:

- Individuals earning less than \$121,520
- Couples earning less than \$138,740
- Three-person households earning less than \$156,100
- Four-person households earning less than \$173,460

HCD has worked with community-based organizations that provide homebuyer education and counseling services. The department works with lenders and brokers that are familiar with our programs and align them with their loan products. The department has been able to create opportunities from various programs, such as Infill and the ongoing Dream Homes Program, where HCD is building on County land. While home buyers are not required to use the County's financing, it certainly has become a valuable tool for most applicants.

To address the availability of income-producing properties, HCD contacted lenders previously vetted and approved to participate in the HCD Homebuyer Loan Program and the Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program. Several of these lenders have approved mortgage loans for duplexes as owner-occupied properties, allowing the second unit to be used as a rental. This represents a change from past practice, as lenders had not permitted such purchases even when code allowed them. HCD is also reviewing the policies of the Infill Housing Program and other homeownership initiatives to ensure consistency.

Plan of Action 2025

HCD aims to launch a robust campaign to build upon its June 2024 virtual homeownership fair and October 2024 in-person homeownership fair held at the Marshall L. Davis, Sr. African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, which attracted 800 and 400 persons, respectively. Both fairs included participation from participating lenders, realtors, financing experts, housing counseling agencies, and County departments adhering to the one-stop shopping exemplified by the Mayor's No Wrong Door initiative. HCD will survey fair participants to determine their needs and adapt ongoing assistance programs accordingly. The goal is to provide events throughout the County.

The campaign will include a digital application offering technical assistance to stakeholders. A strong, clear message will headline the campaign, and success stories will be highlighted via video on the HCD website and other platforms. All advertising venues will be tapped to promote the homeownership message in English, Spanish, and Creole. HCD will also rely on our County departments, community, and lending institutions, as well as the Commissioners' offices, to become our partners in helping our eligible residents become homeowners.

HCD will conduct one more outreach event before the close of 2025:

- In-Person Homeownership Fair scheduled for December 6 at the Main Library with an expected attendance 450–500 participants.

Four similar outreach events were held in 2025:

- **Homebuyers Program Roundtable (May 21):** Participants: More than 20 County partners including MDC approved lenders, homebuyer counseling agencies, MDC departments, title companies, and HCV service provider. Focus: Loan program application processes, underwriting alignment with down-payment assistance, and potential areas for improvement.
- **Virtual Homeownership Fair (June 26)**
Attendance: 500+ prospective homebuyers. Format: Live Q&A sessions, vendor presentations, and digital resource toolkits.
- **In-Person Homeownership Fair (July 26)**
Location: Westchester Regional Library; attendance: 400+ prospective homebuyers.
Promotion: Outreach by vendors, partner organizations, flyers to public housing residents, various e-mail blasts, and CASHD outreach team. Participation: 30 vendors (lenders, banks, real estate professionals, county partners, housing counselors, credit repair specialists, MDC Commission District 10).
- **Virtual Homeownership Fair (November 12)**
Attendance: 500+ participants. Format: Live Q&A sessions, vendor presentations, and digital resource toolkits.

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