



Matthew Homes Frequently Asked Questions

Who Can Apply? We currently are working only in North Chicago, but anyone can apply for a Matthew Home even if you do not live in North Chicago. Some Matthew Homes are existing homes that have been renovated, and some are new building construction. Applicants must satisfy certain program criteria, including have a need for housing, satisfy age, income and legal residency requirements, be qualified for a mortgage, and complete volunteer service requirements.

What is the First Step? The first step is to review the Matthew Home – Working Together Family & Community Service Pledge. After reading the Pledge, if you are interested in the next step, please email info@renewcommunities.org for more information and a copy of the Matthew Home Application. You must complete and submit both the Pledge and the Application to be considered.

What is the Matthew Home – Working Together Pledge? Home ownership is an important step. We want you to share in the blessing of making a home ready to live in, so that you develop skills and knowledge about how to take care of your home and have pride in your home ownership. This means that approved Matthew Home applicants are asked to volunteer at least 150 hours to help build or rehabilitate a home. Family members and even your friends may volunteer service hours to help you complete 150 hours of service. Also, Matthew Homes encourages families to get involved in their community, therefore, up to 50 of your 150 hours may be satisfied by volunteering for an approved school or community event in North Chicago. Additionally, time spent attending an approved home ownership, financial or budgeting class counts too.

What are the program criteria? The Matthew Home Program is designed for those who have a need for affordable housing, have an ability to pay a mortgage (employed), are 21-years or older, are legal U.S. residents, and meet all eligibility criteria and requirements. Approved applicants also must be willing to engage in the community, get to know their neighbors and partner in volunteering 150 service hours.

Are there any other program criteria? Yes, applicants must first be pre-qualified by the Matthew Home Program which includes an initial review of your completed application by a committee and a follow up phone interview (or in-person meeting) with a Matthew Home representative. All applicants are subject to the same income criteria. Additionally, in the event there are more qualified applicants than homes available, qualified applicants who live or work in North Chicago are considered to have a “local preference” and are given priority over other qualified applicants who do not live or work in North Chicago. Similarly, if you work in a public service industry, such as a teacher, healthcare worker, EMS, law enforcement, firefighter, military or Veteran, you are considered to have a “public service preference” and, if qualified, have a priority over other qualified applicants who are not in a public service industry.

How do I purchase the home? In addition to satisfying the income and program criteria, applicants must qualify for a conventional, 30-year fixed rate residential mortgage and be pre-approved by a participating partner lender. The market fluctuates quite a bit and sales prices have been rising over the last few years. Homes generally range between \$195,000 and \$235,000 and typical monthly mortgage payments may range from \$1450 to \$1750 per month; however, these figures are only examples and they may vary widely depending on current interest rates, taxes, size of home and mortgage, etc. If you qualify for the Matthew Home program, a Matthew Home representative will help you navigate this process and also help you explore financial counseling programs with a Matthew Home partner organization.

What is the Borrower Contribution? Matthew Home Applicants must contribute a minimum of \$1,000 which will be applied as a down payment toward the purchase of the home at closing. In some cases, approved applicants may qualify for different forms of down payment assistance or grants from participating lenders, or other community organizations and these organizations may have higher down payment requirements. If you qualify for the Matthew Home program, a Matthew Home representative will discuss these options with you.

What is the Matthew Homeowner Financial Assistance Program (“FAP”)? Some pre-qualified Matthew Homeowner applicants may be eligible to apply for financial or down payment assistance offered through Matthew Homes and participating lenders or other organizations. Qualification depends on need, income limits, borrower capacity and other underwriting criteria. Grant assistance varies but typically is in the form of a no-interest (zero interest) loan which is recorded as a lien or second mortgage on the home. There are no monthly payments on these types of secondary loans and the loan is typically forgiven evenly over the agreed upon term, as long as the homeowner uses their home as their primary residence, makes timely payments on the first mortgage, and meets other criteria. Matthew Home representatives and lending partners are available to assist qualified applicants in determining if you qualify for FAP assistance. They will review with you the type of grants that might be offered under the FAP program and those offered by participating lenders or other nonprofit organizations.

Do I need to be a first-time home buyer? No, however, all approved applicants are asked to attend a HUD certified home-ownership class (or equivalent) offered by an organization approved by the Matthew Home Program. The HUD home-ownership class is designed to help you familiarize yourself with home ownership and the process of becoming a homeowner. Qualified applicants will receive volunteer service hour credit for attending the HUD home-ownership class.

If I have poor credit, can I still qualify for a home? Poor credit will not disqualify you, but it must be repaired before you can apply for a mortgage and be pre-qualified. A Matthew Home representative can refer you to one of our partner Financial Counselors who will work with interested applicants to provide credit repair counseling and budget planning.

How long does the entire process take? Generally speaking, it takes about 6 to 18 months for most applicants. The amount of time it takes largely depends on your financial readiness for

home ownership and whether we have suitable inventory (homes) available. For some applicants, it will take longer than others to repair credit and develop a sound financial profile. Matthew Home representatives are happy to introduce you to counselors who will work with you to repair credit and develop a sound budget and savings plan.

Where Can I Find More Information? Matthew Homes is a program of ReNew Communities, NFP, a 501(c)(3), faith-based, tax-exempt charitable nonprofit organization. More information about the Matthew Home Program as well as volunteer opportunities and ways to support the work and mission of ReNew may be found on the ReNew Communities web site at: www.renewcommunities.org, under "What We Do". Complete the "Contact Us" web page if you would like more information about Matthew Homes or you may directly e-mail a request for information and an Application to: info@renewcommunities.org. U.S. mail inquiries may be sent to ReNew Communities, NFP, Attn: Matthew Homes, P.O. Box 1078, North Chicago, IL 60064. If you are interested in supporting our work and mission, donations to ReNew Communities are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.