



Matthew Homes FAQs – Program Criteria

Who Can Apply? Anyone can apply for a Matthew Home, however, applicants must satisfy certain program criteria, such as have a need for affordable housing, meet income and residency requirements, as well as complete a volunteer service requirement. Our current affordable housing efforts are focused in the City of North Chicago.

What is the First Step? The first step is to review the Matthew Home – Working Together Pledge. After reading the Pledge, if you are interested in the next step, the Matthew Home Care Team Member will connect you with a Matthew Home Financial Counselor who will work with you to complete a financial assessment and go over the process.

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 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, up to 50 of your 150 hours may be satisfied by volunteering for an approved school or community event in North Chicago or attending approved home ownership, financial counseling, or budgeting classes.

What are the program criteria? Many Matthew Homes in North Chicago are homes that have been rehabilitated and some are new building construction. The Matthew Home Program is designed for those who have a need for affordable housing, have an ability to pay a mortgage (employed), are legal U.S. residents, are willing to engage in the community, and are willing to 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 meeting with a Matthew Home Financial Counselor. 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 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 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 lender. The market fluctuates quite a bit, but homes generally will range between \$155,000 and \$195,000 and typical mortgage payments may range from \$1250-\$1700 per month, depending on interest rates, taxes and size of home, etc. A Matthew Home Financial Counselor is available to help you navigate this process and also help you explore financial assistance programs. There is no charge for this service.

What is the Borrower Contribution? Matthew Home Applicants must contribute a minimum of 1% of the net purchase price of the home or \$1000, whichever is less, which will be applied as a down payment toward the purchase of the home at closing. In some cases, applicants may qualify for different forms of down payment assistance, grants or financial assistance from participating lenders, other organizations or from the Matthew Homeowner Financial Assistance Program.

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 remains in the home, makes timely payments on the first mortgage, etc. Matthew Home Financial Counselors are available to assist you in determining if you qualify for FAP assistance and the amount of grants that might be available or 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 familiarize yourself with home ownership. You receive volunteer service hour credit for attending home-ownership classes.

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 become pre-qualified. A Matthew Home Financial Counselor or one of our partner Financial Counselors will work with interested applicants to provide free 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 available. For some, it will take longer than others to repair credit and develop a sound financial profile, however, Financial Counselors will work with you every step of the way.

Where Can I Find More Information? Matthew Homes is a program of ReNew Communities, a 501(c)(3), faith-based, charitable nonprofit organization. More information about the Matthew Home Program may be found on the ReNew Communities web site at: www.renewcommunities.org, under “What We Do”, or complete the “Contact Us” web page if you wish to be contacted by a Matthew Home representative or to volunteer for a project. U.S. mail inquiries may be sent to ReNew Communities, NFP, Attn: Matthew Homes, 100 N. Waukegan Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045. If you are interested in supporting our work and mission, donations to ReNew are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The Matthew Home Program fully supports and follows the Equal Housing Opportunity guidelines, U.S. Fair Housing Act, Illinois Fair Housing Act, and the Illinois Human Rights Act.