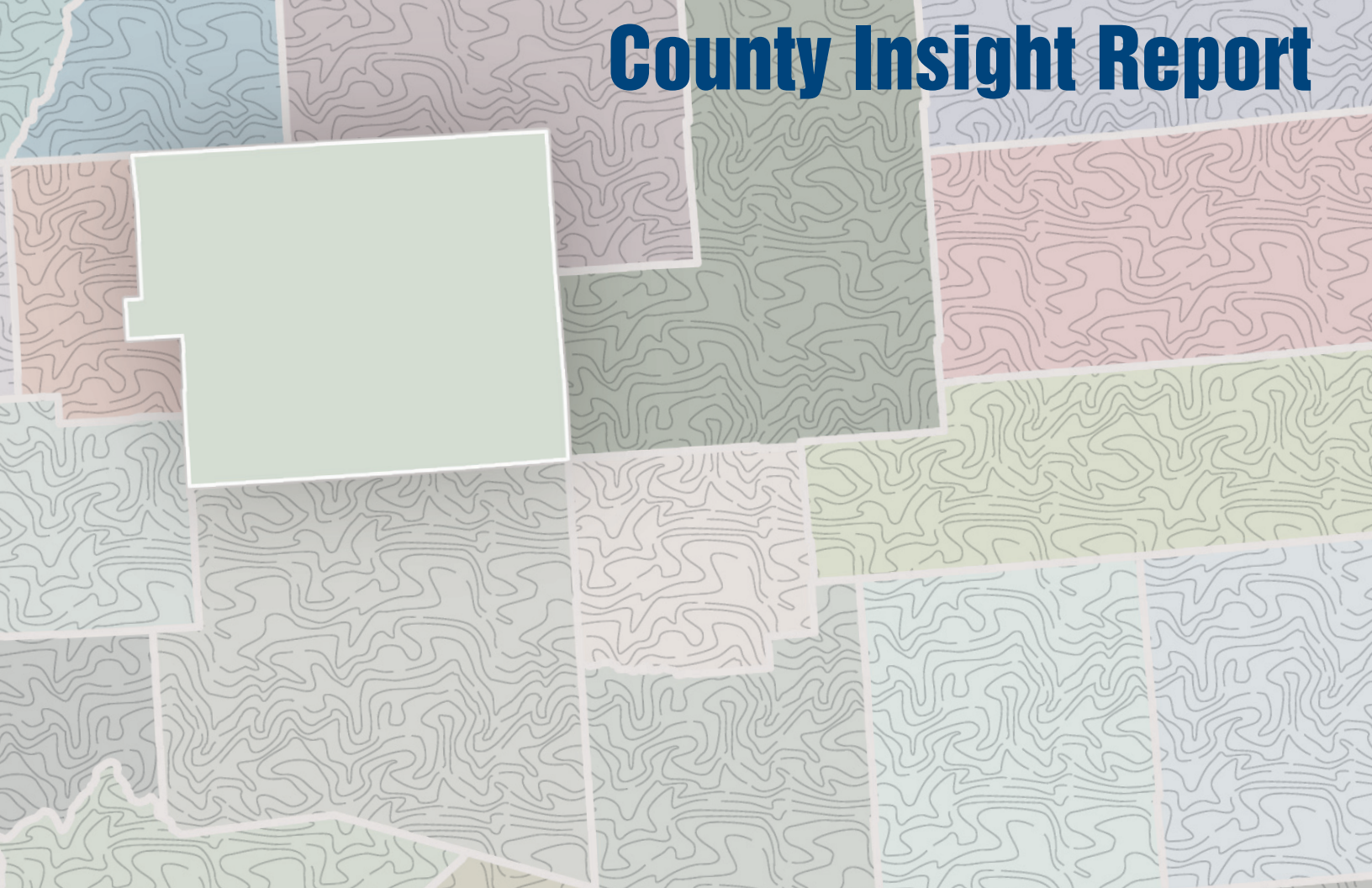


Colorado Housing Connects

El Paso

County Insight Report



Overview:

El Paso County

Access to safe, stable housing is not just a matter of shelter but a fundamental right. Yet, for many individuals and families across El Paso County, the quest for affordable and secure housing remains an ongoing struggle.

In response to this pressing need, the Colorado Housing Connects El Paso County Insight Report emerges as a beacon of understanding and action. This report is not merely a compilation of statistics; it serves as a testament to the thousands of El Paso County residents with whom we interacted with in 2023. Each data point represents the unique circumstances and challenges faced by individuals and families in the county, shedding light on their diverse housing needs and aspirations.

At its core, this report is a call to action — a call to recognize and address the diverse and complex housing needs within El Paso County. It serves as a vital tool for policymakers, community leaders, and advocates, providing valuable insights into the underlying factors driving housing instability and the urgent interventions required to alleviate it.

Through the lens of our real-time data and firsthand accounts, the report illuminates the interconnected web of issues — from eviction risk and affordability concerns to the growing demand for affordable and accessible housing among older adults. By understanding these challenges, decision-makers can empower themselves to craft targeted solutions that uplift and empower our community members.



In the past year, Colorado Housing Connects has assisted over 34,000 Colorado households in accessing housing resources. Our dedicated housing navigators provide guidance through non-emergency housing services, offering valuable information on topics ranging from rental assistance to fair housing concerns. We serve a diverse range of individuals, including renters, landlords, first-time homebuyers, older adults, and people with disabilities.

Our Partners



Colorado Housing Connects: Solutions Across The Housing Spectrum



HOMELESSNESS

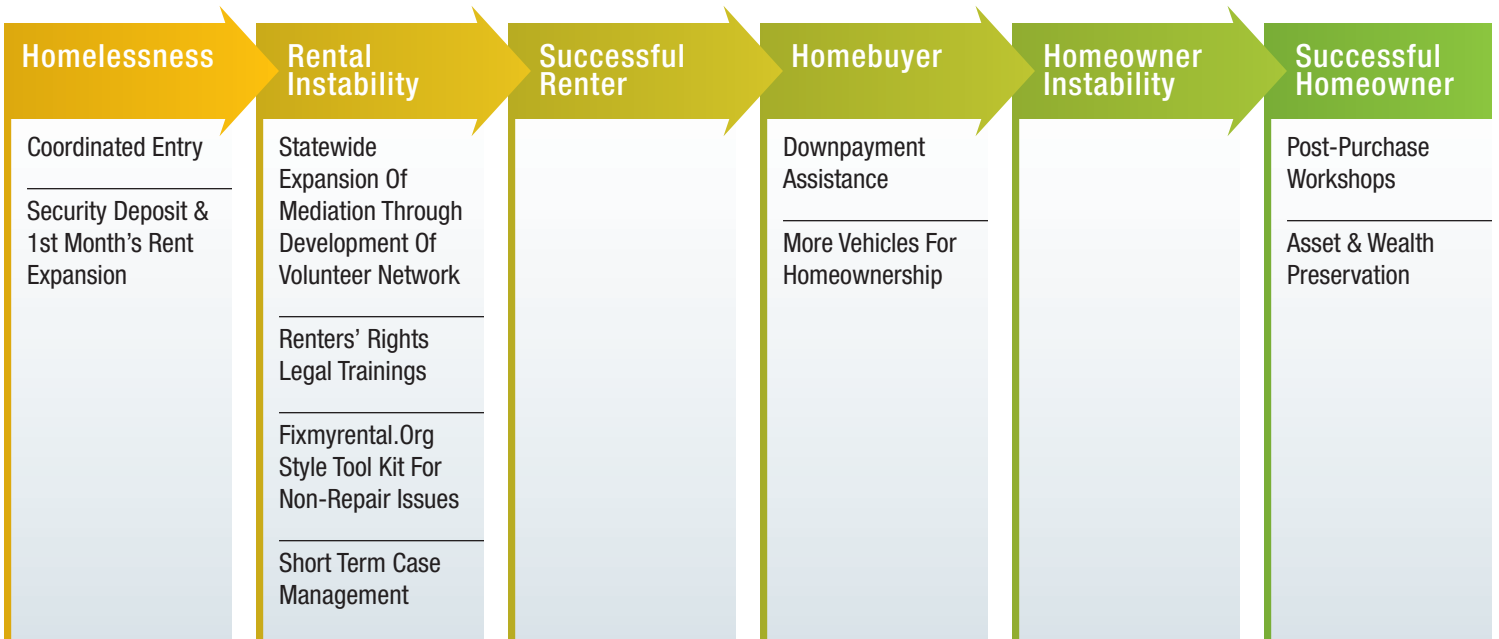
HOMEOWNERSHIP



CURRENT SERVICES



GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



El Paso County Specific Data

Number of Individuals and Families Served

2717

Colorado Housing Connects Households

73

Homebuyer Class Households

57

Eviction Prevention Legal Workshops Attendees

100

Affordable Housing Search Workshop Attendees

Client Demographics

Income Levels

0-30%	60%
31-50%	25%
51-80%	11%
81%+	4%

Average Household Size: 2.3

Age Groups

18 – 59	73%
60+	27%

Race/Ethnicity

White/Hispanic	19%
White/Non-Hispanic	52%
Non-white/Non-Hispanic	25%
Non-white/Hispanic	4%

Veteran 12%

Homeless: Couch Surfing 7.1%

Homeowner 9.5%

Landlord 0.5%

Literally Homeless 4.6%
(Street, Car, Shelter, Motel Voucher, Transitional Housing)

Living in Institutionalized Setting 0.1%

Motel (self paid) 0.1%

Other 1.7%

Renter 76.4%

Spanish speakers served: 1%

Geographic Breakdown:

Neighborhood	%	Freq.	Top Zip
Colorado Springs	92.02%	2389	80909
Fountain	3.85%	100	80817
Peyton	1.46%	38	80831
Manitou Springs	0.81%	21	80829
Monument	0.77%	20	80132
Calhan	0.42%	11	80808
Palmer Lake	0.19%	5	80133
Cascade	0.12%	3	80809
Ramah	0.12%	3	80832
Yoder	0.12%	3	80864
Green Mtn. Falls	0.08%	2	80819
Rush	0.04%	1	80833

Reasons For Seeking Help:

Eviction Risk, Foreclosure Risk, Affordability Issues, etc.

Affordable Housing	22.6%
Aging In Place	1%
Buying a Home/Pre-purchase	0.1%
Default/Foreclosure Prevention	6.4%
Emergency Housing	0.3%
Eviction Prevention (Non-Monetary)	0.3%
Fair Housing	0.1
Homeowner: Home Repair	0.5%
Homeowner: Other Questions/Post Purchase	0.7%
Other/Unidentified (Voicemail w/o info)	1.5%
Rent/Utility Assistance	51.5%
Tenant-Landlord	14.8%
Utility Assistance-Homeowner	0.2%

Education Customers Served

Total classes offered

32

Key Takeaways From Data

In our commitment to addressing housing challenges, the Colorado Housing Connects El Paso County Insight Report offers real-time data that provides valuable insights into the diverse housing needs within the county.

This snapshot reflects the housing situations faced by thousands of El Paso County residents seeking assistance, underscoring the urgency of tailored interventions and dedicated resources such as Colorado Housing Connects to address the challenges the county is facing. In the midst of record inflation rates, high rent prices, a substantial housing shortage, an aging population, and formidable obstacles for first-time homebuyers, it is imperative for decision-makers to address these pressing issues.

Below, we delve into the key takeaways from this report, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities to make a meaningful impact on housing stability.

Low-income individuals and renters dominated our clientele

The data in this report underscores a stark association between income levels and housing instability. A significant 60% of our clients are in the 0-30% income bracket, emphasizing the critical need for targeted support for our most economically vulnerable residents. This suggests that a significant portion of the community is grappling with financial constraints that directly impact their ability to secure stable housing.

Meanwhile, renters in the county overwhelmingly accounted for the majority of housing-related inquiries, comprising 76.4%. This highlights that renters, spanning diverse income levels, are turning to us for assistance as they navigate the challenges posed by the rental market.

The median gross rent in El Paso County stands at \$1,507 per month, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau — a figure that can be daunting for a substantial number of El Paso County residents. Coupled with escalating prices of goods, shifts in safety net programs, such as the conclusion of the pandemic-born Emergency Rental Assistance

Program, and diminishing support options for struggling renters, multiple factors are converging, making it increasingly challenging for the average person to make ends meet.

Why we hear from renters

Efforts during the pandemic to keep people housed, like eviction moratoriums, and emergency rental assistance from federal funds, have come to a halt as rent prices skyrocketed, leaving many Colorado renters on the brink of housing instability. A 2023 study from Moody's Report found that the average American renter is paying more than 30% of their income on housing. The government describes being rent-burdened as paying more than that 30% threshold.

While emergency rental assistance has proven to be a vital resource for thousands of Coloradans, the availability of other rental assistance programs can vary significantly between communities. Several reasons contribute to the limited rental assistance in various Colorado communities, including funding shortages, a lack of resources and organizations dedicated to providing rental assistance, particularly in rural areas. While some federal and state funded programs exist, many communities have little or no local funding to help meet the significant need.

El Paso County residents who experience rent cost burdens typically manage elevated rents by allocating a greater portion of their income to housing expenses. However, when the costs of life's other necessities are concurrently on the rise, these competing financial pressures often culminate in a breaking point.

In response to these challenges, Colorado Housing Connects received inquiries from over 1,400 El Paso County residents seeking financial aid for rent and utilities. This high demand highlights the urgent need for support in addressing housing insecurity.

Why finding affordable housing is difficult in Colorado

El Paso County residents routinely contacted Colorado Housing Connects searching for affordable housing or guidance on how to find affordable housing in 2023.



A Colorado Housing Connects housing counselor leads a homebuyer education course, providing attendees with essential knowledge about the homebuying process. Colorado Housing Connects offered 35 homebuyer education courses in 2023, empowering community members with the tools and information needed for successful homeownership.

Key Takeaways From Data Continued

Research from the Colorado Springs Community Development division found that 32% of households in El Paso County pay more than 30% of their income on housing, making them housing insecure. More than 22% of El Paso County residents who contacted Colorado Housing Connects sought guidance on finding affordable housing, reflecting the Colorado Springs Community Development division's findings.

Gaining access to affordable housing poses challenges for numerous El Paso County residents due to prolonged waitlists and the scarcity of housing choice vouchers, often distributed through infrequent lotteries. Furthermore, accessibility issues extend to specific types of affordable housing, such as tax credit housing and private market housing. The competition is heightened for tax credit housing, primarily sought by residents with higher incomes, whereas private market housing lacks affordability limits, creating additional barriers for those seeking affordable options.

When owning a home becomes a financial burden

While acquiring a home remains out of reach for numerous El Paso County residents, affording the home afterward can also present challenges.

In the past year, Colorado Housing Connects received inquiries from around 174 El Paso County households seeking resources for default and foreclosure prevention. This highlights the financial difficulties experienced by some homeowners and underscores the imperative for targeted interventions to assist individuals in retaining their homes during challenging periods.

Homeowners grappling with financial constraints encounter challenges stemming from surges in property taxes and homeowners' insurance, exacerbated by additional inflationary pressures.

Compounding these challenges, many homeowners find themselves struggling to meet ongoing maintenance needs and unexpected expenses.

While in the past, homeowners with mortgage payment difficulties could explore downsizing or relocating, this approach is less viable today for those who secured low-interest rates in earlier periods. Consequently, these homeowners find themselves caught in a predicament — unable to keep up with bills and facing limited options to transition to a more affordable home.

Can we meet the housing needs of El Paso County's aging population?

As El Paso County's senior population continues to increase at historic rates, along with the rest of the country, demand for housing that is affordable and able to accommodate an aging population's needs is also on the rise.

Last year, nearly 750 of our El Paso County clients were adults aged 60 and up — highlighting a demand for services catering to the unique needs of our aging population and emphasizing the importance of supporting individuals who wish to age comfortably in their own homes.

Callers sought to be connected to affordable housing, eviction prevention resources, home modifications and repairs, and Brothers Redevelopment's Aging in Place Program — which connects clients to government services

and resources like Social Security, food assistance, transportation, and other federal and state benefits.

Housing is an expense many older adults cannot afford because their incomes are often fixed or decline over time. When housing becomes a challenging expense for older adults, it becomes even more difficult to afford basic needs like food and healthcare. Combine property taxes and utilities and insurance fees, and there are even more hurdles for El Paso County's aging population.

There is an urgent need for affordable housing for seniors due to the increasing number of older adults in the county. While the need is strong, housing assistance like public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, project-based Section 8 vouchers, and Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly do not fully meet demand. This is because many older renter households who are eligible for federal housing assistance face waiting lists that can last for years.

Meanwhile, because older adults' incomes are typically fixed or declining, financial assistance for rent is also imperative — especially for those with very low incomes — which is defined as less than or equal to 50% of the area median income. Unfortunately, demand for government-funded rental assistance outpaces supply. This is because the number of income-eligible households will increase with population growth, widening economic disparities, and rentership rates rising.

Outside of a need for senior affordable housing and funds for rental assistance, there is also a need for services that help the aging population like home modifications and repairs.

Older adults are much more likely than other age groups to report challenges entering, navigating, and using their homes. Accessible features like ramps and walk-in showers can promote an older adult's independence, sense of autonomy, prevent injuries, and provide an opportunity to age at home. But despite there being available resources for modifications and repairs, many older adults do not qualify because programs have income limits and require a documented disability. With more funding for modifications and repair programs, the county could address the gap between the supply and demand for accessible housing.

Finally, services like Brothers Redevelopment's Aging in Place Program — which is operated through Colorado Housing Connects — will be vital for providing older adults with the resources they need to thrive.

During this time of escalating costs, our staff has learned that many older adults do not know that there are benefits that they are missing or are eligible for, along with community resources. By providing resource navigation, financial burdens can be alleviated while also building a sense of community support and connection.

Upstream Services

Grounded in the belief that everyone deserves a secure and thriving home, our core principles focus on providing upstream housing services. We aim to ensure that renters never face eviction in the first place, and homeowners can navigate the challenges of homeownership successfully.

In El Paso County, where economic relief is crucial for the most vulnerable residents, we go beyond short-term solutions. Our approach centers on economic mobility and financial empowerment as the catalysts for pulling people out of difficult housing situations. Through comprehensive education and targeted services, we strive to empower individuals and families to achieve lasting housing stability.

The following information outlines the fundamental pillars of our approach, each designed to address different facets of housing stability and economic empowerment.

Eviction prevention education

When the pandemic upended lives and put many El Paso County residents at risk of eviction, we responded by launching Eviction Prevention Webinars.

In partnership with Colorado Legal Services — a nonprofit legal aid program that provides civil legal assistance — Colorado Housing Connects has offered monthly Eviction Prevention Webinars since December 2020. Alongside attorneys from Colorado Legal Services and our housing experts, our Eviction Prevention Webinars have taught thousands of Coloradans about the legal eviction process, what late fees tenants can be charged, resources someone can turn to if they are behind on their rent, and tenant rights if they do fall behind on their rent.

Tenants are often unaware that they need to take proactive measures to safeguard their rights and that they are exempt from certain fees. Unfortunately, many tenants only seek eviction-related legal aid or information when they find themselves in court due to a summons. However, this is not the case for 89% of our workshop attendees.

By participating in our monthly workshops, tenants gain access to crucial information about their rights and financial assistance without the necessity of a scheduled court appearance. Many aren't facing eviction but attend our webinar to learn about the eviction process.

Moreover, each webinar features nonprofit or government representatives, various case managers, policy makers, social workers, and other professionals in the field. The insights gained from our eviction prevention webinars have had a positive impact not only on the attendees but also on their clients, constituents, and renters far beyond the individual participant.

Empowering financial futures through financial counseling

Financial counseling also provides tools to empower individuals with knowledge to manage their finances effectively, promoting long-term economic stability and preventing housing crises.

Since 1981, Brothers Redevelopment/Colorado Housing Connects has been a stalwart provider of financial counseling to Coloradans across the



A Colorado Housing Connects housing navigator assists a Coloradan with applying for rental assistance. Efforts during the pandemic to keep people housed, like eviction moratoriums and emergency rental assistance from federal funds, have come to a halt as rent prices skyrocketed, leaving many Coloradans on the brink of housing instability.

state. Our financial counseling and coaching services offer personalized plans to navigate financial crises, develop strategies for self-resilience and stability, build credit, and identify resources for budget relief.

Financial coaching can empower El Paso County residents to make smart decisions with money, overcome financial obstacles, and build a secure financial future. Customized to individual needs, financial counseling strategies are culturally sensitive, focused on outcomes and data, and administered by skilled professionals.

Earlier this year, Brothers Redevelopment was awarded a \$400,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Law to support financial counseling services through Colorado Housing Connects, by pairing financial coaching and counseling with existing programs that provide funds for rental and mortgage assistance.

A 2020 study from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, found that after receiving financial counseling, participants were less likely to experience eviction or forced relocation due to rent arrears. Other research has shown that financial counseling can lead to increased savings and debt reduction, improved credit scores, and increased confidence and control over finances.

Colorado Housing Connects' comprehensive HUD-certified housing counseling services

Thanks to our U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified housing counselors, Colorado Housing Connects' housing counseling services have helped homeowners through crisis after crisis.

Whether it was during the foreclosure challenges of the 2012 housing crisis, or the continued housing relief and recovery results from the COVID-19 pandemic, our housing counselors have provided support to

Upstream Services Continued

families in making critical housing choices and equipping themselves for the future.

As a HUD approved housing counseling agency, Colorado Housing Connects provides services to address a full range of housing counseling needs — including assisting homeowners in evaluating their readiness for a home purchase and navigating the homebuying process, helping clients find affordable housing, offering financial literacy training, and providing foreclosure prevention counseling.

It's easy to overlook just how involved housing counseling can be. When we hear from a family facing foreclosure, it isn't just about preserving an asset — it's about fighting for their home, the place where they meet their basic needs, raise their family, and build their life.

Our housing counselors respond to a client in crisis with empathy and compassion while pouring hours into finding resolutions for a homeowner facing displacement.

Several studies have shown that housing counseling can lead to reductions in mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures. This is likely due to improved budget management, credit score growth, and awareness of public resources.

A 2019 study by HUD found that participants in housing counseling programs saw average saving increases of \$2,800 and debt reductions of \$5,700. This translates to more stable financial footing and better preparedness for housing-related expenses.

Other research has shown that pre-purchase counseling can increase homeownership rates, reduce risk of default, and create greater satisfaction with homeownership.

Preparing the next generation of homeowners

For those embarking on the journey of homeownership, our homebuyer

education courses offer comprehensive insights into the process. Offered monthly throughout the Denver metro area, our homebuyer education workshops are designed to teach attendees the ins and outs of the homebuying process. Topics discussed include steps to homeownership, like financial preparation, working with a mortgage loan officer, house hunting, budgeting, credit, fair housing, finding a real estate agent and a lender, the costs of homebuying and the approval process, and what to expect after closing.

Classes are offered in English and Spanish and are taught by government-certified housing counselors.

Homebuyer education is crucial for potential homeowners because it teaches current market trends to help prospective buyers make good decisions with home investments and promotes sustainable housing and successful homeownership.

According to a study by the Urban Institute — a nonprofit research and analysis organization — homeowners who participated in homebuyer education were 31% less likely to be delinquent on their mortgages and 40% less likely to foreclose on their homes than those who did not participate. Other research has found that homebuyers who participated in education programs saved an average of \$1,500 more on their down payment than those who did not participate, according to a study by the National Endowment for Financial Education — a nonprofit dedicated to improving financial well-being in the country.

The role of post-purchase counseling in informed decision-making

Navigating homeownership is a delicate balance between your home as a shelter and an asset for wealth building. For homeowners, decisions like major repairs, buying a car, settling debt, or funding a child's education may prompt consideration of tapping into equity. However, our post-purchase counseling provides impartial guidance on refinancing, home equity lines



Colorado Housing Connects staff poses for a photo at the Consumers United Association's Right on the Money Award event where we were awarded funding for our housing counseling services. As a HUD approved housing counseling agency, Colorado Housing Connects provides diverse housing counseling services, including homeownership readiness, affordable housing assistance, financial education, and foreclosure prevention.

Future Work Continued

of credit, managing major expenses, and leveraging homeownership for wealth building.

In consultations with our post-purchase housing counselors, homeowners can explore unbiased options to safeguard their homes while pursuing financial goals. Many homeowners find themselves bombarded with unsolicited ads, urging them to “maximize their home equity.” Our focus is on ensuring homeowners make informed choices without jeopardizing the security of their homes.

Research from the Urban Institute found a 20-50% reduction in mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures among homeowners who participated in post-purchase counseling. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation found that homeowners who enrolled in post-purchase counseling were 2.83 times more likely to receive a loan modification and were 70% less likely to re-default on their modified loan.

Navigating the affordable housing landscape through education

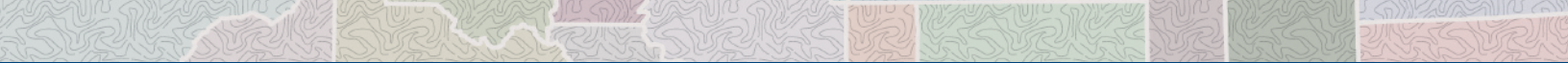
Navigating the rental market can be a formidable task, especially when financial constraints are not the only concern. For Coloradans grappling with the soaring cost of rent, our affordable housing search workshops serve as a valuable resource to demystify this complex and overwhelming process.

In these workshops, we provide insights into effective strategies for navigating affordable housing, identifying housing options that align with client needs, understanding crucial protections throughout the housing search, and guidance on taking proactive steps when the search feels overwhelming. Our goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools to navigate the affordable housing landscape with confidence.

Topics covered at the webinars include types of affordable housing, challenges of affordable housing, income levels for affordable housing, and teaches community members how to access affordable housing.

Education around affordable housing is a beacon of empowerment, illuminating pathways to stable and secure living for individuals and families alike. By fostering understanding of the rental market, housing options, and essential safeguards, education equips individuals with the knowledge to make informed decisions, reducing the stress associated with housing challenges.

Moreover, this knowledge instills a sense of confidence, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of the housing landscape with resilience. Ultimately, an informed community is better positioned to access affordable housing, fostering a stronger foundation for overall well-being and community stability.



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