

Mortgage program available for those working in Carteret looking for their first home

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CARTERET -- Families trying to buy a home may benefit from the borough's new participation in a state-wide program that gives low-interest mortgages and helps with down payments.

The borough is partnering with the Live Where You Work program, which helps people purchase homes in the municipality where they work.

The program could help first-time homeowners, who work in the borough, secure low-interest mortgages and could help supply funds for down payments, Mayor Daniel Reiman said yesterday.

"When you promote this program, you promote low-interest loans, single-family homeownership and you help provide housing for middle-income residents, who are the backbone of our community here," Reiman said. "I'm glad we can now better help provide the opportunity to own a home, which for most of us is the single most important and largest investment we will make in our lifetime."

The program offers to help with a down payment and closing costs equal to 5 percent on a first mortgage loan. Through the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency — which determines eligibility — buyers can get a 30- or 40-year fixed-rate mortgage.

The guidelines in Carteret state that a family of three or more would have to earn less than \$111,205 annually to qualify, and could consider buying a single-family house for up to \$429,000.

Joseph V. Doria, commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs, said the program will help residents who work in the community get through the tough economy.

"This program is meant to help individuals who work within the community, whether they work in public entities or private entities," Doria said. "It gives them the benefit of the mortgage through the HFMA, working with local lending institutions, but also the chance for a down payment to be covered as well as closing costs."

The Live Where You Work program was launched about a year ago with the support of Gov. Jon S. Corzine.

Carteret is the 11th municipality in the state to join the program and the second in Middlesex County, said Edward Collins, Lender Outreach and Marketing Coordinator for N.J. HFMA. Woodbridge was the first Middlesex County municipality.

Doria said no towns in Somerset or Hunterdon County currently participate in the program, but two in Union County do — Rahway and Elizabeth.

Reiman said that because Carteret is linked with the Middlesex, Somerset and Hunterdon County region, more families are eligible for the program.

"In other counties, your max income might be \$69,000 or \$70,000 for a family of four (to qualify), but because we are grouped with Somerset and Hunterdon Counties, a family of four can make up to about \$111,000," he said.

Reiman did not know how many Carteret residents currently work in the borough.

Kathleen Shaw, the borough's director of economic development, said the program should help attract employers to Carteret.

"For our (Urban Enterprise Zone) business and Carteret Business Partnership businesses, this a fabulous marketing tool for attracting new employees," she said. "With all of these dynamics, we will be working to let all the UEZ human resource affiliates be aware, and all our real estate professionals know, that Carteret is in the groove with this program."

Additional Facts

Maximum income limits to qualify for Live Where You Work program in Carteret

1-2 person household ? \$96,700

3-plus person household ? \$111,205

Maximum purchase price limits to qualify

New 1 family home ? \$429,619

Existing 1 family ? \$429,619

Existing 2 family ? \$550,005

Existing 3 family ? \$664,828

Existing 4 family ? \$826,218

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