



TALKING POINTS

What is Underwater Georgia?

- Underwater Georgia is a limited-time, federally funded state initiative to help Georgians who owe more than their homes are worth through a one-time principal reduction.

Why is this program necessary now?

- While the housing market has strengthened in recent years, many homeowners and neighborhoods continue to experience the lingering effects of the housing crisis.
- According to CoreLogic, 152,000 homes in Georgia were underwater as of the first quarter 2016.
- A large concentration of properties with negative equity puts a community at risk and can delay a housing recovery.

How is the program funded?

- Underwater Georgia is funded through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund®, which was first announced in February 2010 to provide an initial \$7.6 billion to the 18 hardest hit states, plus the District of Columbia.
- Additional funding was allocated to the program on February 19, 2016.
- In Georgia, the program is administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) as part of DCA's HomeSafe Georgia program.

Who is eligible?

- This program is designed to help the most in need Georgians across the state who have been negatively impacted by the housing crisis.

Is there a cost?

- No. There is no cost to apply and no costs if you are approved for a principal reduction.

What is the process?

- Visit www.underwatergeorgia.org to learn about **eligibility requirements**.
- Complete a brief **pre-qualification quiz** to help determine eligibility for the program.
- From September 28 to October 18, submit a **pre-application**.
- Pre-applications will be sent to a third party for a blind **random selection process**.
- **Outreach to eligible homeowners.** DCA representatives will review pre-applications in the order randomly selected and contact eligible homeowners to complete a **full application**.

Where can people get more information?

- Visit www.underwatergeorgia.org
- Call toll free: 1-877-519-4443. Customer Service representatives will be available 24/7 from September 28 to October 18.
- Email underwatergeorgia@dca.ga.gov



MISCELLANEOUS

- We are constantly evaluating the state of housing in Georgia and working with partners, like the U.S. Department of Treasury, to create and evolve programs to meet the needs of Georgia homeowners.
- These resources can make a real difference, and we're committed to putting them to the best use possible.
- We take our responsibility to help communities seriously and are dedicated to bringing assistance to those areas that need it the most.
- To date, we've been able to help nearly 9,000 homeowners avoid foreclosure and stay in their homes. But what's equally important is that more than 90 percent of the people we've helped through our HomeSafe program are still in their homes. Our focus is long-term solutions, not band-aid reactions.
- This program will help homeowners who have stayed current on their mortgages, but continue to struggle to make mortgage payments years after the crisis. When these homeowners go into foreclosure, it creates a strain on low- and moderate-income communities. Underwater Georgia is focused on helping these responsible homeowners who are less likely to be able to recover on their own.
- We are expecting tremendous interest in the program, and likely will have more applications than resources. To ensure a fair opportunity for consideration, all pre-applications will be assigned a number, which will be sent to a third party for a blind random selection process. Next, the randomly selected applications will be reviewed, in the order selected, for eligibility and those deemed eligible will continue through the process.
- Based on current funding, an estimated 2,700 to 3,000 eligible Georgia homeowners will receive assistance through the program.
- We are hiring additional staff and have engaged a customer service call center to ensure we are able to work through this process as quickly as possible. Still, this is a loan underwriting process and it will take time to gather documents and information. For each successful applicant, the entire process from application to closing will take several months.
- We are undertaking a very aggressive earned and paid media campaign across the state to ensure awareness of Underwater Georgia. Georgia zip codes with a higher than average number of homes underwater are being targeted for additional outreach.
- Anyone who believes that they may be eligible is encouraged to submit a pre-application. After the pre-application period, the selection for consideration is completely random and our housing specialists will reach out to homeowners to walk them through the application process.