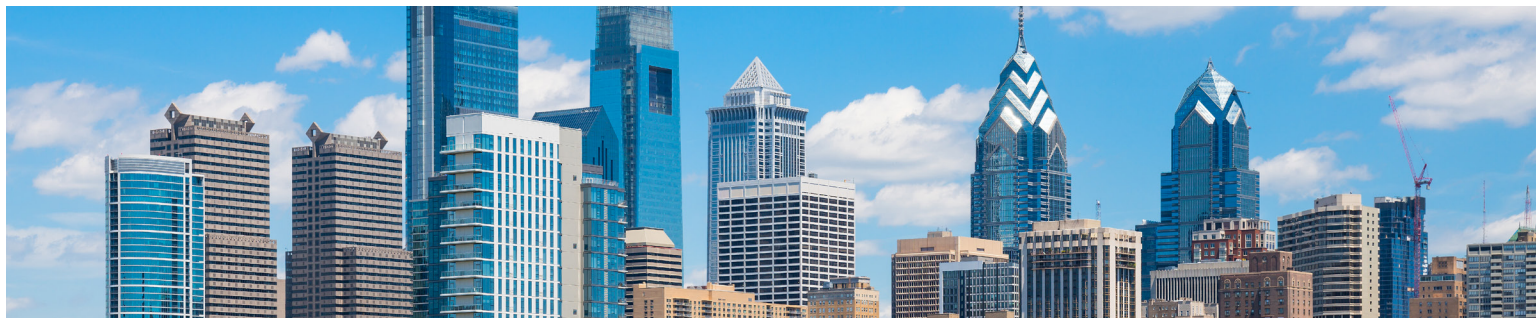




CASE STUDY

CONVERGENCE UNITING FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PHILADELPHIA®

Advancing Homeownership Through Multi-Sector Summits

Since 2024, CONVERGENCE Philadelphia has convened local and regional housing leaders through the annual Homeownership Summit, a collaborative forum designed to break down silos and accelerate progress toward equitable homeownership. These summits bring together policymakers, lenders, developers, housing counselors, nonprofit leaders, and advocates to learn from new data, explore emerging solutions, and build partnerships that advance racial and economic equity in homeownership. With successful gatherings in 2024 and 2025, the summit has evolved from a local convening into a regional platform for thought leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and shared action.

THE PROBLEM: PERSISTENT HOMEOWNERSHIP GAPS AND FRAGMENTED ECOSYSTEMS

Philadelphia faces long-standing inequities in homeownership access, wealth-building opportunities, and property valuation. Systemic barriers — such as appraisal disparity, limited access to capital, undervaluation of homes in legacy neighborhoods, and fragmented service delivery — continue to reduce economic mobility for underserved communities. Local practitioners work hard within their own areas of expertise, but often lack opportunities to collaborate across sectors, share emerging data, or align on strategies.

Against this backdrop, CONVERGENCE Philadelphia recognized the need for a collaborative platform where leaders could learn together, build relationships, and align efforts to close homeownership gaps.

BUILDING AN ANNUAL SUMMIT SERIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

2024 — ESTABLISHING A SHARED VISION

The first Homeownership Summit, held in July 2024, marked a major milestone for CONVERGENCE Philadelphia, occurring shortly after the initiative's first anniversary. The event drew participants from across the housing landscape — lenders, community advocates, developers, real estate professionals, government officials, and nonprofit leaders.



The inaugural summit was designed to:

- **Connect** practitioners who often work in isolation.
- **Showcase** the incoming mayoral administration's housing priorities, including the ambitious **H.O.M.E. Initiative** to create or preserve 30,000 affordable homes.
- **Introduce** the CONVERGENCE collective-impact model and demonstrate its value in coordinating citywide solutions.

Attendees heard from a City Council member, the Mortgage Bankers Association, and local experts who offered national and local perspectives on equity challenges. Two panel discussions explored emerging initiatives, and networking sessions facilitated early collaboration. The event was free by design to ensure accessibility for advocates, smaller nonprofits, and other community participants.

Post-event reflection revealed opportunities to strengthen outreach and scheduling, both of which informed planning for the next year.

2025 — EXPANDING SCALE, DEPTH, AND REGIONAL REACH

By 2025, the Homeownership Summit had evolved into a full-day, regional convening with two dozen speakers, nine sessions, and participation from three CONVERGENCE cities (Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Columbus). This second summit built on the first by shifting from broad introductions to deeper exploration of specialized challenges.

Key thematic expansions included:

- Veterans housing and VA loan access
- Place-based community development strategies
- Appraisal disparity and the citywide impact of undervaluation

The 2025 discussions resonated deeply with participants. "The topics were thoughtful — they covered before, during, and after the homebuying process," shared Nicole Gailliard of ESSA Bank. Throughout the day, speakers reinforced a central theme: collaboration must extend beyond the convening itself.

Sessions also highlighted the city's new home repair programs and affordability initiatives. Attendees appreciated the practical, digestible presentation of information and the range of presenters.

With two successful iterations, the Homeownership Summit is now firmly established as an annual anchor event for housing stakeholders across the region.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Accessibility Drives Participation:** Free admission and community-centered venues ensured broad attendance, creating space for grassroots advocates and smaller nonprofits that are often excluded from formal policy discussions.
- 2. Data Should Guide Dialogue:** Integrating high-quality data, especially on appraisal disparity and undervaluation, generated urgency and helped participants better understand the systemic barriers affecting underserved communities.
- 3. Cross-City Collaboration Strengthens Impact:** Participation from Baltimore and Columbus in 2025 highlighted the value of sharing lessons across CONVERGENCE markets and building a national learning community.
- 4. Timing and Outreach Matter:** The inaugural summit revealed that scheduling immediately after holidays can depress attendance. Expanded



marketing in 2025 contributed to stronger turnout and more diverse representation.

- 5. Summits Must Produce Follow-Through:** Attendees requested post-summit workshops, webinars, and implementation pathways to help turn insights into measurable action — an area of opportunity for future gatherings.

TIPS FOR REPLICATION

Organizations seeking to replicate CONVERGENCE Philadelphia's model should consider the following practices:

- **Prioritize inclusivity:** Remove financial barriers and choose venues that reflect the communities served.
- **Use data to spark action:** Incorporate local research, real estate market trends, homeownership data, and personal narratives to ground conversations.
- **Curate diverse speakers:** Include government officials, lenders, developers, community leaders, counselors, and advocates to ensure well-rounded perspectives.
- **Balance information with interaction:** Build in networking, small-group dialogue, and cross-sector introductions to strengthen collaboration.
- **Plan for continuity:** Position the summit as part of an ongoing ecosystem strategy, not a one-time event, with follow-up sessions or work groups.
- **Invite regional partners:** Broaden engagement beyond city limits to share innovations and learn from peer markets.
- **Evaluate and adapt:** After each convening, assess timing, content, outreach, and logistics to continuously enhance impact.