



CASE STUDY

CONVERGENCE[®]

UNITING FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Community-Centered Approaches to Homeownership Education

Homebuyer education events are a powerful tool for reducing barriers and building trust among aspiring homeowners. These events bring information, resources, and professionals directly into neighborhoods, making the homebuying process more accessible, less intimidating, and deeply connected to local contexts. Whether delivered through small gatherings or larger neighborhood expos, these events offer residents clarity, confidence, and direct connections to counselors, lenders, and community partners who can support them on their journey to becoming homeowners.

APPROACHES TO HOMEBUYER EDUCATION EVENTS

CONVERGENCE PHILADELPHIA: COMMUNITY-BASED HOUSE PARTIES

CONVERGENCE Philadelphia hosted a citywide “house party” event across four neighborhood locations — West, North, Southwest, and Northeast Philadelphia — on a single day, in partnership with neighborhood churches, local leaders, and community groups. These small-scale gatherings were designed to make homeownership information approachable, culturally resonant, and geographically convenient. Rather than expecting residents to attend traditional workshops, the program brought trusted experts into familiar spaces where residents already felt comfortable.



The sites each featured a resource fair, interactive workshops, food and local entertainment, blending education with community connection. Each house party was co-organized with local partners who helped shape topics and mobilize attendees. CONVERGENCE stakeholders provided content guidance, ensuring each event addressed issues specific to Philadelphia’s housing landscape, such as tangled titles, repair needs, and down payment assistance. Lenders, housing counselors, and nonprofit partners served as presenters and resource providers, covering topics such as homebuying basics, credit counseling, repair resources, and legacy property challenges.

Residents responded positively to the conversational nature of the sessions, though many expressed interest in even more one-on-one guidance. The model's intimacy allowed for meaningful engagement. Implementation required significant staff coordination, customized outreach, and consistent partner presence — factors that could make scaling the model challenging. Still, the Philadelphia house parties demonstrated the value of highly localized, relationship-based homeownership engagement.

CONVERGENCE MEMPHIS: NEIGHBORHOOD HOME EXPO SERIES

CONVERGENCE Memphis and partners including local banks, community development corporations (CDCs), and real estate professionals, designed a neighborhood-based Home Expo series in three majority-minority communities. These events focused on demystifying the homebuying process by organizing content around the actual sequence of purchasing a home, from credit preparation to closing and homeownership sustainability.

A planning committee made up of loan officers, real estate professionals, CDCs, insurance agents, and others, crafted each agenda to reflect real-world experience at every stage of the journey. Instead of general workshops, the Home Expos provided practical, step-by-step guidance delivered by professionals who regularly support local homebuyers.



Each location was chosen for having an existing community anchor — such as a church or CDC — ensuring trust, authentic engagement, and strong neighborhood visibility. This approach allowed each event to feel hyper-local while maintaining consistent quality across the series. A multilayered marketing strategy amplified reach through radio, direct mail, school-based outreach, local businesses, and media coverage.

CONVERGENCE UNITING FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY **MEMPHIS**®

Attendance was strong, with approximately 90% of participants being first-time homebuyers. Eventbrite registration, surveys, and data tracking added more than 600 new contacts to a centralized database for future engagement.

The Memphis team identified several improvement opportunities, including exploring a roundtable event format to simplify flow, integrating more home preservation content, and strengthening cross-partner communication and referrals. The learnings highlighted how repeatable, data-informed events can build momentum over time while cultivating trust across neighborhoods.





LESSONS LEARNED AND REPLICATION TIPS

Despite differences in scale, tone, and structure, the Philadelphia and Memphis experiences yielded common insights about how to design effective, inclusive homeownership events.

- 1. Meet Residents Where They Are:** Whether in a church, neighborhood center, or other venue, trusted and familiar environments make participation easier and more comfortable. Smaller gatherings work well for conversational learning, while larger expos are ideal for structured education and broad resources access.
- 2. Build Cross-Sector Partnerships Early:** Successful events require collaboration among lenders, housing counselors, CDCs, nonprofits, real estate professionals, legal partners, and local government. When all pieces of the homeownership ecosystem are represented, participants receive more complete guidance and seamless referrals.
- 3. Reduce Complexity by Centralizing Resources:** Aspiring homebuyers may struggle to navigate multiple agencies or programs on their own. Events that gather professionals in one place — physically or conversationally — help participants move from information to action more efficiently.
- 4. Ensure a Consistent Experience for Attendees:** Whether planning multiple small gatherings or one larger event, establish clear expectations for presenters and other partners that will interact with attendees. Develop a standardized presentation template and provide high-level talking points about the event and ways for attendees to stay engaged after the event.
- 5. Cultural Competency Drives Trust:** Tailoring content to local housing challenges — from tangled titles to disinvestment — signals relevance and builds credibility. Residents respond best when presenters understand the neighborhood context.
- 6. Use a Variety of Outreach Tools:** Develop a multi-channel neighborhood-specific marketing strategy. Combine direct mail, radio, local media, schools, and partner networks to promote the event and drive attendance.
- 7. Track Data and Follow Up Consistently:** Robust sign-in tools, surveys, and referral processes help measure impact and keep participants engaged. View each event as an entry point into a longer journey supported by coordinated follow-up.