



CASE STUDY

CONVERGENCE UNITING FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY COLUMBUS®

HUD House Party: Connecting Columbus to Homeownership Opportunities

CONVERGENCE Columbus designed the HUD House Party as a community-centered event to make homeownership resources more accessible in Central Ohio. While the region has a strong network of housing counselors, lenders, nonprofits, and public agencies, these services are often distributed across multiple programs and locations, leaving many prospective buyers unsure where to start.

Held in June 2024, during National Homeownership Month, the HUD House Party created a single, welcoming entry point into the local homeownership ecosystem. With support from a broad coalition of partners, CONVERGENCE Columbus led the vision, coordination, and execution of the event, demonstrating how a locally driven, cross-sector approach can connect residents to trusted resources while strengthening collaboration among practitioners.

STREAMLINING ACCESS TO RESOURCES

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) launched the “Let’s Make Home the Goal” campaign in June 2023 to increase awareness of pre-purchase counseling and other resources available to prospective buyers. The campaign included advertising, public service announcements, and community-based “house parties” hosted in cities across the country.

In 2024, rising home prices, limited inventory, and economic uncertainty made the path to homeownership increasingly difficult, particularly for first-time buyers. Even financially prepared residents often felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the process, while others disengaged before taking meaningful next steps.

The HUD House Party was designed to respond to these challenges by:

- Creating a centralized, trusted space for education and connection
- Aligning practitioners around a shared journey-based framework
- Providing both practical guidance and relationship-building opportunities



A TWO-PART COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

The event combined structured education with accessible, family-friendly engagement.

PART 1: RESOURCE EXPO

Held indoors at a well-known venue, the Resource Expo featured breakout sessions aligned with the Bloom614 Journey Map; Before I Buy, When I Buy, and After I Buy. Sessions addressed credit repair, savings strategies, lender selection, inspections, foreclosure prevention, and post-purchase planning. Practitioners provided one-on-one guidance and made cross-referrals, helping participants move from general interest to actionable next steps.

PART 2: FAMILY FUN FESTIVAL

Hosted outdoors at Columbus Commons, a centrally located public space, the Family Fun Festival created an inviting environment for families. Activities included inflatables, face painting, music, games, a petting zoo, food trucks, and fitness classes. More than two dozen partners including lenders, community organizations, nonprofits, and local government agencies were on hand to provide information and answer questions about homeownership. This format broadened participation and reduced barriers for residents who might not attend a traditional housing workshop.

Together, the two-part format reinforced a core principle: homeownership education can be both informative and welcoming.

Leveraging Partnerships. CONVERGENCE Columbus served as the convener and coordinator, bringing together financial institutions, housing counseling agencies, nonprofit organizations, government entities, academic partners, and real estate professionals. Each partner contributed specialized expertise, tools, or educational resources. Centralized coordination ensured that programming aligned with a shared framework and that attendees experienced a cohesive event.

Partners further supported the event by amplifying promotion and outreach efforts through their own networks. Affiliation with HUD's "Let's Make Home the Goal" campaign provided additional credibility and brand recognition when recruiting partners and attracting attendees.



Participant-Centered Experience. A distinguishing feature of the event was its participant-centered design. During registration, attendees identified where they were on the homeownership journey and topics of interest. This information shaped breakout sessions and enabled personalized follow-up, strengthening the connection between in-person engagement and ongoing support.

The HUD House Party drew approximately 1,200 attendees across the Resource Expo and Family Fun Festival. The event demonstrated CONVERGENCE Columbus's ability to coordinate a large-scale convening while maintaining a practical, community-focused approach to homeownership education.

Participant feedback indicated the event successfully connected attendees with housing counselors and local resources, helping participants take meaningful steps along their homeownership journey. Practitioners reported that breakout sessions created opportunities to share expertise, refer prospective buyers to complementary services, and deepen collaboration across organizations

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS FOR REPLICATION

Clarify funding expectations early. While HUD's support as lead sponsor covered a portion of the budget, additional fundraising was required to deliver the event at full scale. Establishing early, transparent expectations with partners regarding financial contributions and fundraising roles can help prevent challenges later in the planning process.

Allow adequate planning time and accessible scheduling. Planning began in March 2024, providing approximately three months to coordinate logistics, programming, and outreach. Limited venue availability required a weekday afternoon schedule, which likely constrained attendance. Allowing at least four months for planning and selecting a weekend date may help increase participation for future events.

Simplify logistics where possible. Operating across both indoor and outdoor venues created navigation challenges for some attendees. Future events may benefit from a single, consolidated location to streamline the experience and improve flow.

Anchor the event in a shared framework. Organizing content around the Bloom614 Journey Map provided clarity for both practitioners and participants, helping align conversations around concrete next steps. A clear structure enhances coordination and reinforces continuity beyond the event itself.



Expand post-purchase content. While the Bloom614 Journey Map framework provided broad topic coverage, organizers identified opportunities to expand resources about post-purchase topics — such as estate planning and long-term wealth building — to better support sustainable homeownership.

Balance education with community engagement. Pairing structured learning with family-friendly programming broadened reach and reduced intimidation. This approach can help attract residents who may not otherwise engage with homeownership education.

CONCLUSION

The CONVERGENCE Columbus HUD House Party demonstrates how a locally led, cross-sector convening can transform fragmented resources into a coordinated, community-centered experience. By bringing together practitioners under a shared framework and creating an accessible entry point for families, the event strengthened referral networks and provided residents with clearer pathways toward homeownership.