HomeSafe Georgia programs are closing. **Application packages must be submitted by March 31, 2020 to be considered for assistance.**

HomeSafe Georgia is a limited funded program and not all eligible homeowners may receive assistance before funds are exhausted. Application to HomeSafe Georgia does not guarantee that funds will be available or that assistance will be provided.

HomeSafe Georgia will provide up to $50,000 in a onetime payment to the lender to reduce the principal balance for eligible homeowners who are underwater on their mortgage. Submitting an application package? Keep a copy of the application package and proof of delivery and/or receipt for your records.

1. **What does underwater mean?**
   Underwater means you owe more on the home than it is worth, also referred to being upside down on the mortgage or having negative equity. To be considered for this program, you must be significantly underwater (110% or greater loan to value) and with assistance of $5,000 to $50,000, the mortgage balance can be reduced, giving a 100%-125% loan to value.

2. **How do I know if my home is underwater?**
   We will check your home’s property value if you submit an application, and compare the value to your mortgage balance. To gauge if you may be a candidate, compare the total amount owed on your home to the sales price of similar homes being sold in your neighborhood. If what you owe is more than the average sales price, you may be underwater. If you owe less, you may have equity in the home.
   - **Examples of Underwater:**
     - **Example 1:** Total mortgage balance $200,000; property value: $175,000 = 200,000/175,000 = **114%**. This home would be a candidate for $25,000 assistance, which would bring the LTV to **100%**. (175,000 balance after assistance/175,000 value.)
     - **Example 2:** Total mortgage balance $150,000; property value: $95,000 = 150,000/95,000 = **158%**. This home would be a candidate for $50,000 assistance, which would bring the LTV to **105%**, which falls in the 100%-125% range. (100,000 balance after assistance/95,000 value.)

3. **Will the assistance pay off my loan or lower my payment?**
   The purpose of the assistance is to bring the amount you owe closer to the value of the property through a principal curtailment, which will reduce the principal mortgage balance. Assistance will not provide equity in the home, but will help your home build up equity faster. Only your lender can lower your payment or change the terms of your loan.

4. **What do the Eligibility Requirements mean?**
   Applicant(s), property, and mortgage must meet all eligibility requirements established for the HomeSafe Georgia program at the time of application review. (Applicant = homeowner, borrower, and spouse.) Some of the requirements have been listed below.
   - **Primary residence.** This is the home where the applicant lives and proof of residency is easily documented. The home must have been purchased prior to January 1, 2015 and is the only home owned. Recent quit claims may effect eligibility. Georgia driver’s license or ID should reflect this address.
• **Total mortgage (lien) balance.** The total balance of what is owed on all loans (first mortgage, second mortgage, home equity line of credit, HUD claims, DPA, etc.) on the home cannot exceed $510,400.

• **Current on tax filings.** All applicants must be current on tax return filings to the IRS, if their income required them to file.

• **Tax liens.** Applicant(s) cannot have more than $10,000 in tax liens total, against them personally or attached to the property. If tax lien total is $10,000 or less, an active payment plan must be in place for all tax liens; documentation of the payment plan is required at application.

• **Income.** This program has income limits: the total annual income cannot exceed the averaged 140% Area Median Income for the county of residence (see chart). The income of co-homeowners and co-borrowers not residing in the home may be excluded with proof of other verifiable residency, subject to state requirements.

• **Bankruptcy.** Applicant(s) cannot be in an active bankruptcy. This is regardless of the type of bankruptcy filed or if the mortgage was included as part of the bankruptcy. Applicants with a recently dismissed bankruptcy may be required to provide dismissal or discharge papers. (Must be finalized.)

• **Legal resident.** Applicant(s) must be legal resident(s) of the United States.

• **Your lender (or servicer) must be participating in the program, or agree to participate, prior to March 31, 2020.** If your lender is not listed in the drop down selection for lender, please call Customer Service.

• **No previous HomeSafe Georgia assistance received.** HomeSafe Georgia/Hardest Hit Fund® assistance is only available one time, regardless of the amount of assistance received, the year it was received, or the program under which it was received.

• **Other underwriting criteria apply.** Refer to “Our Programs” (tab) for eligibility requirements.

5. **What if I’m underwater and delinquent on my mortgage?**
   Delinquent mortgages that are also underwater can be brought current for eligible homeowners, under the following conditions:
   • A qualifying financial hardship resulted in a financial loss, causing the mortgage delinquency;
   • The income (residing homeowners, borrowers, spouse) supports the mortgage payment; and
   • The total amount needed to meet program requirements does not exceed $50,000. (If more, the application can only be considered for Reinstatement Assistance.)

   If you are current on your mortgage, continue to make your mortgage payments. Mortgages that become delinquent after processing approval may require additional processing, and must meet the requirements noted above. Underwater assistance cannot be provided if the mortgage is delinquent, if the delinquency was not caused by a verifiable qualifying financial hardship.

6. **What type of hardships can be considered for delinquency?**
   Hardships involving involuntary unemployment/underemployment, military, divorce, catastrophic medical, disability, or death that caused the mortgage to become delinquent, as noted under the Mortgage Reinstatement program. Applicants will be required to provide verifiable hardship documentation. Hardships that cannot be verified cannot be considered.

7. **Who must be on the application?**
   All homeowners (persons listed on the Warranty or a Security Deed) and borrowers (persons listed on the Mortgage Note), plus the spouse of the residing homeowner (if married), even if the spouse is not a homeowner or borrower. All must cooperate in the application process.

8. **How will I know if my application has been received?**
   It is recommended that you submit your application package in a manner in which you are able to track submission and/or receipt. As the program winds down the volume of applications is expected to increase, thereby increasing the time from application receipt to processor review. Contact Customer Service if you have not received any notice after 30 days of submission. Proof of timely submission may be required.
Applications must be submitted by March 31, 2020 to be considered for assistance.

9. How long should it take before I know if I’m eligible?
Once assigned, the processor will discuss your application with you, and should let you know within 60 days if your application is able to move forward. There are three steps for HomeSafe Georgia approval: processor approval, underwriter approval, and pre-closing, in which the title will be reviewed. With a clear title and a lender approval, an Approval Letter will be issued and the homeowner will have about 10 days in which to close. From processor assignment to final approval (if approved) takes 10-12 weeks.
- If you have a foreclosure sale date, follow up with Customer Service to confirm the sale date and receipt of the application. The processing of the application will be expedited, however, we do not notify the lender of possible assistance until underwriting approval. Application to HomeSafe Georgia does not automatically stop a foreclosure. Contact your lender to request a postponement.
- Additional documentation may be requested- submit timely to prevent withdrawal. A Statement of Ineligibility or Denial will be issued by the processor, underwriter, or pre-closer if an applicant, the mortgage, or the property does not meet all requirements.

10. How is assistance provided, and do I have to pay it back?
Assistance is provided through a no interest, forgivable loan. If you close on a HomeSafe Georgia loan, a onetime payment will be made to your lender on your behalf. A subordinate lien is placed on the home in the amount of the assistance provided, for which the balance will be forgiven at 20% each year, starting 1 year and 30 days after the assistance payment. After 5 years, the lien will be cancelled. If you sell your home before the lien is cancelled, you will have to pay the outstanding balance if there is equity in the home. HomeSafe Georgia will subordinate to a no cash out refinance.

11. Is HomeSafe Georgia’s assistance considered income?
No. The 1098MA form was created for Mortgage Assistance and if assistance is provided, you will receive the 1098MA form in February, following the year in which assistance was received. The amount of assistance provided is reported to the IRS, but the form itself is not a line item on the tax return. The IRS offers a safe harbor for calculating mortgage interest deductions. Consult your tax preparer if you have any questions.

12. I was denied for program assistance. Can I dispute the denial?
If you do not understand the denial, ask for an explanation. Then if you feel that the decision was incorrect, dispute the decision in writing within 30 calendar days of the date of the Statement of Ineligibility or Denial, explaining why the decision was wrong and providing documentation to support your dispute.
- Keep a copy of your dispute and proof of delivery for your records. Your dispute will be acknowledged and reviewed within 10 business days after receipt. (Contact us if you do not receive an acknowledgement.)
- A dispute does not guarantee the application will be reopened or that assistance will be provided.
- All ineligibility factors may not be listed on a Statement of Ineligibility or Denial- refer to eligibility requirements on the website: www.HomeSafeGeorgia.com
- Applicants, the property, and the mortgage must meet all eligibility requirements at the time of application review. Overcoming a cited ineligibility is not a dispute. If there is a change in circumstances, a new application can be submitted for reconsideration until March 31, 2020.

13. What do I do if my application was withdrawn?
A Submission Checklist prints out with the application. Application packages should include all checklist items at submission. Failure to do so can cause processing delay or withdrawal of the application. Additional documentation may be required and applicants are notified of what is needed and the date by which the item must be received to prevent withdrawal. If you feel the withdrawal was in error, provide an explanation in writing within 15 calendar days of the date of the Notice of Withdrawal. Refer to the request for documents and include the documents requested with your explanation.
• Keep a copy of your explanation and proof of delivery for your records. Your statement will be acknowledged and reviewed within 10 business days after receipt. (Contact us if you do not receive an acknowledgement.)
• An explanation does not guarantee the application will be reopened or that assistance will be provided. Proof of timely submission for all requested documents may be required.
• If your application is withdrawn for failure to provide documentation, a new application can be submitted until March 31, 2020.

Have questions or need help with an application?

Customer Service is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (except holidays) to answer general questions regarding HomeSafe Georgia programs.

Applicants needing help filling out their application should call, mail, or email Customer Service before March 16, 2020 to schedule an appointment for help over the phone or in person at our Atlanta office. **The application package must be submitted by March 31, 2020 to be considered for assistance.**

- Email: homesafe@dca.ga.gov (Include your Name, Address, and Phone Number)
- Phone 770-806-2100, or toll free 1-877-519-4443
- Para asistencia en Español, presiène (4) cuatro
- TDD/TYY Line 404-679-4915, or toll free 1-877-204-1194
- Mail: HomeSafe Georgia c/o Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs
  60 Executive Park South, NE
  Atlanta, GA 30329-2231

Submitting an application package:

**The online application portal will close March 31, 2020. Application packages must be submitted by March 31, 2020 to be considered for assistance.**

- Complete the online application. Continue to the end, download, and print. Complete and sign where indicated. Handwritten hard copy applications must be complete.
- Read the instructions with the application. Gather your supporting documents and use the Submission Checklist to ensure you have a complete application package.
- Submit your application package to HomeSafe Georgia via fax, mail, or delivery as noted on the Transmittal Cover Letter. If you fax your application, check for a fax confirmation that all pages were transmitted to the correct fax number.
- Keep a copy of the application package and proof of timely delivery and/or receipt for your records. Contact Customer Service if you have not received any notice of receipt after 30 days of submission.