

FOCUS ON

Our Neighborhood Stabilization Program: Fighting foreclosures one home at a time

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When disabled Navy veteran Darrell Lowery bought his new home in Lawrenceville in February, it was Gwinnett's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) that made the mortgage possible.

The program helps neighborhoods where housing values and conditions are deteriorating due to foreclosures. Created by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, NSP provides affordable housing to Lowery and many others by buying vacant, foreclosed homes in targeted areas, making repairs, and selling the houses to eligible new homebuyers.

In 2009, the County used \$14.4 million to acquire and rehabilitate 101 single-family homes and a 92-unit townhome development. In 2011, it used a grant of \$5.6 million to target designated neighborhoods in and around Lawrenceville. So far, NSP has invested in more than 30 Gwinnett County neighborhoods. It is based at the Gwinnett County Community Development Office.

Housing Specialist Matthew Elder says, "Gwinnett County's Neighborhood Stabilization Program has provided a unique opportunity to achieve not only the dream of homeownership for income-qualified citizens but to also strategically acquire those housing assets in neighborhoods that were most affected by the housing crisis."

Gwinnett commissioners renewed a contract last fall with three firms to carry out the NSP objectives on behalf of the County: the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Gwinnett Window and Door, and The Macallan Group. They are working with non-profit partners Lawrenceville Housing Corporation and View Point Health.

Buyers must invest one percent of the purchase price toward buying the home, complete an eight-hour HUD-approved homebuyers course (offered by The Impact Group in Gwinnett), and occupy the home as their principal residence. Eligibility is based on a sliding scale of income and household size.

All NSP homebuyers receive up to \$22,500 to help buy their new home, which can lower the purchase price and/or be applied to the mortgage to reduce monthly payments. Buyers can also choose either a "soft second" mortgage of \$14,500 for five years at zero percent interest and no payments, with the principal reduced 20 percent per year, or a "soft second" mortgage of \$22,500 for 10 years at zero percent interest and no payments, with the principal reduced at 10 percent per year.

Available homes, located throughout Gwinnett County, are priced from \$70,000 to just under \$200,000. They are move-in ready and some have never been lived in. Available homes are pictured on the County website, www.gwinnettcountry.com, under the Financial Services department. For more information, email Matthew.Elder@gwinnettcountry.com or call 678.518.6024.