



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

**Homeownership Council of America**

[HomeownershipCouncil.org](https://HomeownershipCouncil.org)



Homeownership  
Council of America

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## A Message from our CEO, Gabe Ewing del Rio

I've always had a "problem" with wearing my heart on my sleeve, but fortunately, I found my place doing the good work of community development, where that kind of honesty and transparency has been welcomed. 2025 was a difficult year for me in this work and for HCA, as we and so many others were forced to find different ways to best serve our mission. HCA had spent the previous few years steeped in helping the industry understand and successfully deploy special purpose credit. Just as we were seeing more production of

underserved homebuyers than any of our veteran team members had ever witnessed before, the regulatory and public messaging around equitable access to credit was turned on its head. From GSE program and initiative cessations, to the gutting of fair housing enforcement mechanisms, to the cancellation of minority target markets for CDFIs, and the very words we were all using daily being made unsafe; 2025 served up a series of challenges to our mission work.

That said, we had prepared for some of those possibilities and are so fortunate to have the guidance and support of many industry leaders like those on our Board of Directors and National Advisory Council, who are helping chart the course for the success of our mission long into the future. In many ways, the pivots we have made mean taking a broader focus to our programming, but in each case, those changes enhance the program's overall impact and scale. Our National DPA platform added products and expanded guidelines. Though we saw some chilling effect on investments in these programs while everyone adjusted to the landscape changes of last year, we have some exciting partnerships in the pipeline for 2026. Our CLIMB Technical Assistance pivoted to include more CDFI-building supports as well as CRA strategy and more community needs assessments. We have also put more emphasis on our long-standing TA for nonprofit lenders and CDFIs, working again with some of our Native-CDFI partners from past work who have since grown. Finally, our lender services work of providing underwriting and quality assurance supports to CDFIs is growing and helped our partners deliver safe and compliant credit to their local communities. So as Jennifer, whom I couldn't be happier about having promoted to COO, reminds me: even though we faced major external challenges to our mission, we did it successfully and have a strong platform with which we can move forward, grow, and deliver our mission in partnership with the industry. Thanks for your interest and support of HCA; we are excited to continue advancing homeownership opportunities together!

Gabe Ewing del Rio, CMB, AMP  
President & CEO  
Homeownership Council of America

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## Welcome Howard Banker, Chief Lending Officer

We are pleased to welcome Howie to HCA as our new Chief Lending Officer. Howie previously served as a Subject Matter Expert in HCA's CLIMB program, where he provided trusted training, guidance, and capacity-building support to lending organizations nationwide.

With more than 40 years of experience as a mortgage lender and nonprofit leader, Howie brings deep expertise in housing finance organizations and CDFI lending. Throughout his career, he has remained committed to expanding sustainable homeownership opportunities for underserved communities through collaborative, credible, and mission-driven programs.

Howie's expertise spans nonprofit mortgage banking, innovative financing structures, partnership development, fair housing policy, and consumer lending. His distinguished career includes senior leadership roles such as Chief Lending Officer at the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, Director of Housing Finance at NJ Community Capital, Executive Director of the Fair Mortgage Collaborative, Managing Director at Energy Programs Consortium, Executive Vice President of Financial Services at Opportunity Finance Network, and Special Assistant to the President at BNY Mortgage Company.

We are excited to have Howie join our leadership team and look forward to the impact his experience and vision will bring to our lending work and mission.



## Lender Services Expanded in 2025

HCA's **CDFI and community lender services** provide mission-focused support to nonprofit lenders, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), and other community lenders to help strengthen their

lending operations and expand affordable homeownership. Key service areas include:

- **Management Services:** Interim and as-needed leadership support to help organizations navigate times of change, build capacity, and successfully launch or manage mortgage lending and related programs.
- **Contract Underwriting & Processing:** High-quality outsourced underwriting and processing by HCA's NMLS-licensed underwriters, designed to support first mortgages and down payment assistance (DPA) loans with quick turnaround and mission alignment.
- **Compliance Check-ups:** Assessments of lending policies, procedures, and compliance gaps, followed by guidance and implementation support to ensure lenders maintain up-to-date, compliant practices.

These services help CDFIs and community lenders enhance operational effectiveness, mitigate risk, and improve service delivery to underserved homebuyers.

In 2025, HCA experienced meaningful growth in its Lender Services, reflecting increasing demand for specialized, mission-aligned support among nonprofit lenders. We expanded our third-party underwriting services, welcoming a new partner organization and extending our capacity to deliver high-quality, compliant underwriting tailored to community lending models. In addition, HCA provided management services to a nonprofit CDFI navigating a significant organizational transition, offering stability, leadership support, and operational guidance during a critical period of change. As nonprofit lenders continue to scale and adapt, services such as underwriting, processing, compliance, quality control, and management support play a vital role in strengthening lending operations, enabling CDFIs to reduce risk, improve efficiency, and deliver greater access to affordable, responsible mortgage products for the communities they serve.

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## Partner Spotlight: HomeSight



HCA is proud to partner with HomeSight, a mission-driven nonprofit lender in Seattle, WA offering conventional mortgages statewide. Through this partnership, HCA provides contract underwriting and processing services, helping HomeSight scale its lending operations efficiently while maintaining a high

standard of quality, compliance, and borrower care.

HomeSight is experiencing continued growth, and our underwriting and processing support enables their team to focus on what they do best: advancing equitable access to homeownership. As a nonprofit lender, HomeSight reinvests all lending revenue directly back into its mission, supporting communities rather than shareholders.

Deeply rooted in equity, HomeSight advocates for opportunity for all community members, with a particular focus on communities of color. In addition to lending, HomeSight provides free homebuyer education and financial counseling and actively supports the development of local small businesses.

HomeSight's personalized approach sets it apart. As a small lender, they know borrowers by name, not by number, and tailor each transaction to meet the specific needs of the buyer. Their team works closely with realtors to help strengthen offers in competitive markets, ensuring borrowers receive both expert guidance and individualized support. This partnership reflects HCA's commitment to strengthening nonprofit lenders and expanding sustainable, equitable homeownership nationwide.

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## CLIMB Continues to Provide Training and Assistance for Lenders



HCA's **CLIMB program** is a cornerstone initiative designed to support lenders and nonprofit organizations in expanding sustainable, equitable homeownership lending—especially to underserved and low-to-moderate income communities. Through deep, customized technical assistance and partnership, CLIMB helps lenders develop **mission-aligned business models, innovative loan products, and scalable strategies** that increase access to credit and expand affordable lending in their markets.

Rather than simply offering advice, HCA's team of subject matter experts works alongside partners to assess organizational needs, design effective lending programs, and develop written tactical plans that guide implementation and growth. CLIMB supports a range of lenders—including banks, independent mortgage banks, community lenders, credit unions, CDFIs, and HUD-approved housing counseling agencies. For our nonprofit partners we are often helping them “**climb the lending ladder**” from packaging and down payment assistance to first mortgage origination and brokerage, eventually, as a correspondent lender, and on to a seller/servicer as they scale. For banks, large credit unions, and IMBs - our CLIMBs are often focused on deeper reach and insights into market areas, products, and delivery systems for increasing production and market share among underserved communities within their footprint.

By enhancing business models, increasing production and building capacity for lenders nationwide, CLIMB contributes to expanding credit options and equitable mortgage opportunities for the least served consumers.

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## Partner Spotlight: Hawai'i Community Lending



We proudly highlight our ongoing partnership with **Hawai'i Community Lending (HCL)**, a mission-driven, nonprofit CDFI dedicated to increasing access to credit and capital for Hawai'i residents, especially Native Hawaiians, on their path to

homeownership and economic self-sufficiency.

HCL first engaged with HCA's CLIMB program in 2022 and continues to work with us as they grow and expand their mortgage offerings. Through CLIMB, HCA provides tailored technical assistance that supports HCL in strengthening its lending strategies and operations as it scales. The result was increased capacity and business at HCL as a mortgage broker and direct lender for the Department of Hawaiian Homelands.

HCL has since grown significantly and now offers a full range of mortgage products designed to meet the needs of Hawai'i homebuyers, including permanent financing options on Hawaiian Home Lands, zero-down and low-fee mortgages for families in rural communities, and competitive statewide mortgage loans—all structured to increase affordability and opportunity for homeownership.

This partnership reflects our shared commitment to equitable homeownership and community-centered lending, especially among the Native CDFI community. As HCL

continues to grow and introduce additional mortgage solutions, HCA's support helps ensure these mission-aligned products reach more borrowers, strengthening community stability across Hawai'i.

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## Special Projects: Advancing Innovation in Equitable Lending



Through its Special Projects, HCA partners with nonprofits, funders, and industry leaders to design and implement innovative solutions that expand equitable access to homeownership. Serving as a technical advisor and project partner, HCA supports initiatives such as Special Purpose Credit Program (SPCP) development, mortgage training and technical assistance for Native CDFIs, scalable down payment assistance products, micro-mortgage pilots, and nonprofit hub-and-spoke lending models.

These collaborative efforts strengthen lending systems, reduce barriers to credit, and bring practical, mission-driven solutions to scale in communities nationwide.

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## Partner Spotlight: Living Cities



We are proud to collaborate with Living Cities, a national collaborative of philanthropic foundations and financial institutions dedicated to closing racial income and wealth gaps in U.S. cities by advancing inclusive capital, shared learning, and systemic solutions that expand economic opportunity for historically underserved communities.

Through this partnership, HCA is working with Living Cities on an upcoming paper, planned for release in early 2026, that will capture lessons learned from the special-purpose pilots and explore how those insights can inform and transform future mortgage lending practice. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to equity-centered innovation and to generating actionable knowledge that strengthens pathways to homeownership and wealth-building across diverse communities.

Living Cities' work focuses on identifying barriers to wealth equity and catalyzing cross-sector collaboration to improve access to capital, including in the homeownership space—making this partnership a natural extension of both organizations' missions to promote fair and inclusive access to economic opportunity.

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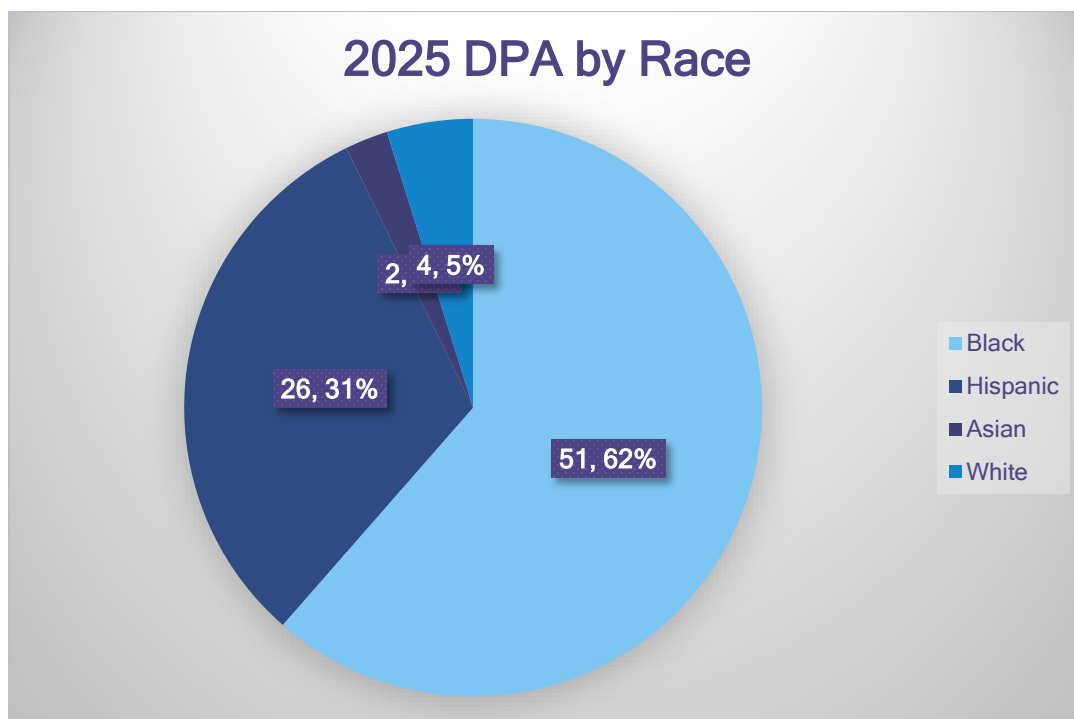


## National Down Payment Assistance Platform

### *Recognition by the Brookings Institution and Economic Architecture*

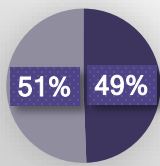
HCA's National DPA Platform was recognized by leading scholars who have reviewed thousands of programs to find the most scalable and equitable solutions nationally. With results from our pilot period demonstrating national reach for our delivery systems and impact with the first product on the platform, **Equity DPA**, HCA was among a leading group of affordable solutions providers whose programs are worthy of significant investment and expansion. HCA's solution set provides affordable and equitable guidelines designed to assist both traditional low-income barriers as well as missing-middle homebuyers up to 140% and even 200% AMI in high-cost markets.

The programs helped 83 families in 2025, bringing the total to 215 families who have achieved homeownership through the National DPA pilot period. National DPA has reduced a significant barrier to buying a home and advancing equitable access to mortgage credit. In 2025, the program also expanded with the addition of a new grant product, Equity Access, and two new lending partners, strengthening its national footprint and capacity to serve more communities. Building on this success, HCA will launch **Equity Builder** in 2026, a new, larger, fully amortizing loan designed to increase affordability and support long-term financial stability for borrowers, marking an important next step in scaling innovative, mission-driven homeownership solutions. The platform will continue building partnerships and adding product solutions as appropriate, with some exciting developments in sight.





## LMI vs Other Qualifications



■ 80% AMI or Less

■ Above 80% AMI  
(Otherwise Qualify)

## 2025 DPA Loans vs Grants



## Partner Spotlight: Fifth Third Bank



**FIFTH THIRD**

We are honored to partner with Fifth Third Bank, a major U.S. financial institution committed to expanding access to homeownership and community prosperity through innovative financial products and strategic community

investment. Fifth Third's ongoing efforts include substantial down payment assistance programs that help reduce one of the biggest barriers to buying a home by providing eligible borrowers with funds toward down payment and closing costs as part of their broader community lending initiatives. Since launching these efforts, the Bank has delivered significant support, including thousands of new homeowners benefiting from its down payment assistance offerings and related mortgage lending activities.

Through our collaboration, HCA works with Fifth Third to connect homebuyers with down payment assistance opportunities that strengthen affordable lending outcomes and expand equitable access to credit. This partnership aligns with Fifth Third's commitment to community development—where lending supports not just transactions, but thriving, inclusive neighborhoods.



Fifth Third's community efforts have received national visibility, including broadcasting real-world impact stories that highlight how down payment assistance can turn the dream of homeownership into reality. One such story, [Anna's Story](#), shared on the Today Show, illustrates how thoughtful support and access to assistance helped a homebuyer secure affordable housing, underscoring the meaningful human impact of these programs.

We celebrate our partnership with Fifth Third Bank as a powerful example of how financial institutions and mission-aligned nonprofits can work together to remove barriers and open doors for first-time and underserved homebuyers.

## 2025 Board of Directors

<b>Gabe del Rio</b> CEO Homeownership Council of America	<b>Yamila Ayad</b> Senior Mortgage Loan Officer Equity Smart	<b>Gisele Roget</b> Senior Advisor Overbrook Square
<b>Clemente Mojica</b> CEO NPHS CDFI	<b>LaTasha Waddy</b> President NFM Lending & LUCAS CDFI	<b>Steve O'Connor</b> Mortgage Industry Consultant
<b>Francis Baffour</b> Retired Regulator OCC	<b>Tamara King</b> VP of Strategic Industry Engagement Mortgage Bankers Association	<b>Maureen Schimmel</b> Senior Marketing Director New American Funding

*HCA thanks Francis Baffour for his six years of service as a Board member. Francis will be stepping down in 2026. We are excited to announce that Frances' former supervisor, Barry Wides, will be joining the HCA Board in 2026!*

## 2025 National Advisory Council

<b>Nikki Bialka, Co-Chair</b> Fifth Third Bank	<b>Cristian Correa, Co-Chair</b> One Trust Home Loans	<b>Patty Arvielo</b> New American Funding
<b>Mickey Neuberger</b> Realtor.com	<b>Sylvia Alvarez</b> Housing Education Alliance	<b>Eric Lawrence</b> The Power is Now Media
<b>LaTasha Waddy</b> NFM Lending & LUCAS	<b>Lisette Tores</b> Lowes	<b>Bruce Reynolds</b> International Black History
<b>Beverley Meek</b> Flagstar Bank	<b>Nora Guerra</b> Guild Mortgage	<b>Bobbie Salgado</b> First Citizens Bank
<b>Hyepin Im</b> FACE Los Angeles	<b>Irma Yopez Klassen</b> MGIC	<b>Brad Blower</b> Inclusive Partners LLP
<b>Marisa Calderon</b> Prosperity Now	<b>Laird Nosulli</b> iEmergent	<b>Cashuana Hill</b> Redress Movement