

## Home of My Own: A Web-based Homebuyer Education Curriculum

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*Home of My Own* is a new Web site designed to provide potential homeowners with the most up-to-date information and valuable insights into the home-buying process. It is available at <http://www.nmhomeofmyown.com>. The development of this Web based curriculum and its delivery is the result of a partnership between the City of Las Cruces and New Mexico State University.

The *Home of My Own* curriculum was developed with the assistance of a Curriculum Consultants Committee made up of twenty-one community stakeholders. In addition, focus groups of local home builders, mortgage loan officers, non-profit organizations, potential first-time homeowners, realtors, recent homebuyers, retirees and title companies were held. The participants contributed to the breadth and development of the project by providing feedback on the format and content of educational materials needed on the subject of homebuyer education. Other home-buyer education curricula were reviewed in order to create the best and most complete Web site available. Once development of the curriculum and Web site began, the Curriculum Consultants Committee members met semi-monthly to review, evaluate and provide suggestions for the developing Web site.

*Home of My Own* is divided into six sections, available in both English and Spanish. The *Managing Money* section provides the foundation and skills for preparing to buy a home and helps determine financial readiness. The section on *Renting a Home* focuses on important considerations to keep in mind when renting is a first step to homeownership or a long-term lifestyle. The section on *Deciding to Buy a Home* includes many things to think about before buying a home including the advantages and disadvantages of ownership, and determining needs and wants. The largest section on the site is the *Home-Buying Process*. This section gives an overview of the key home-buying steps including: 1) Determining financial readiness, 2) Shopping for a mortgage loan, 3) Selecting the home, and 4) Closing on the house. *Maintaining the Home* focuses on good maintenance techniques to protect the investment and increase the value of the home. The final section, *Being a Responsible Home Owner*, provides information about financial issues, foreclosure, and legal responsibilities of home owners.

The *For Educators* segment is specifically designed for instructors and includes thirty-three educator guides each with lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, handouts and hands-on activities. Educator guides are provided for four sections – *Managing Money*, *Renting a Home*, *Home-Buying Process* and *Being a Responsible Home Owner*. The City of Las Cruces contracted with two non-profit agencies to offer Homebuyer education in the city. The information also is available for self-study on the Web or through Extension programming. Members of the Curriculum Consultants Committee are promoting the Web site through flyers and bookmarks to their clientele.

Owning a home is the dream of many Americans. The project culminated from a desire to increase City of Las Cruces and New Mexico State University collaborations to improve the quality of life for the people of Las Cruces. Senator Pete Domenici and Representative Joe Skeen secured funding for the project through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### Endnotes

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