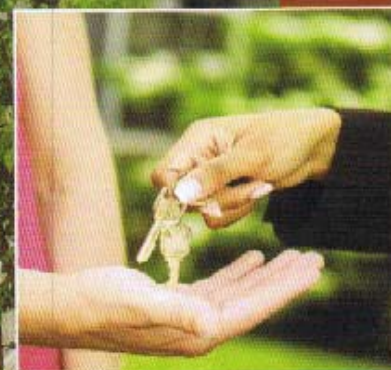


# Realizing the *American Dream*



**FOR  
SALE**  
**SOLD**



# Realizing the *American Dream*

**1st Edition**

Kevin McQueen, Deborah Schneider and Alison Thresher

**2nd Edition**

Laurie Maggiano

**3rd Edition**

Christi Baker

**4th Edition**

Doris Barrell

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## Welcome to *Realizing the American Dream!*

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### **GETTING STARTED**

The fact that you are holding this book probably means that you are thinking seriously about what can be one of the most rewarding experiences of a lifetime: Buying your own home. Whatever size or shape of home you may end up purchasing, you've taken an excellent first step in the process by getting your hands on this copy of *Realizing the American Dream*.

Just like many jobs involving multiple tasks, the homebuying process can be a complicated one. That's why we created this guidebook. In *Realizing the American Dream*, we take the mystery out of the homebuying process. At each step of the way, you'll find all of the key topics you'll need to consider explained in clear, uncomplicated language.

However, while we at NeighborWorks® are confident that this book is a great tool to help guide you along the path to homeownership, we don't necessarily recommend that you go it alone. We strongly advise that you enroll in a prepurchase homeownership education class. (If you received your copy of *Realizing the American Dream* in a homeownership class, way to go!)

By participating in a prepurchase homeownership education class led by a qualified professional, you'll increase your knowledge about the homebuying process while getting expert advice and encouraging support from your instructor and fellow classmates. The next section gives some information on homeownership education and counseling and how to select a good program for you.

### **A NOTE ON HOMEOWNERSHIP EDUCATION AND COUNSELING**

Prepurchase education provides general instruction to increase your knowledge and build new skills in the area of homeownership. Subjects covered include homeownership readiness and affordability; money and credit management; types of properties and financing available; purchase, mortgage, and closing processes; and home maintenance and financial management after you've bought your home.

Prepurchase counseling offers specific guidance tailored to your needs as an individual to overcome particular obstacles or address specific concerns in the homebuying process. Counseling is usually delivered to individuals through face-to-face meetings, but also can take place over the telephone. Generally, counseling is more intensive than education and includes an analysis of your financial situation, assessment of your ability to qualify for a mortgage, development of a corrective action plan to overcome any barriers to achieving homeownership, links with housing industry professionals, and review of various aspects of your purchasing and financing process.

You should shop around for a reputable provider of homeownership education and counseling services. A good starting point is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Web site, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov), where you can find a list of HUD-approved counseling agencies. To help you find high-quality homeownership education,

NeighborWorks® America recommends looking for an organization that has adopted the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling ([www.homeownershipstandards.com](http://www.homeownershipstandards.com)) and offers a program that meets the following guidelines:

- Up to eight (and no less than four) hours of group homeownership education with follow-up individual counseling
- Certified homeownership education trainers and counselors
- Homeownership educators and counselors who have adopted the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling and who have signed the National Industry Code of Ethics and Conduct (see details below)
- Core class content of: assessing readiness to buy, managing money, understanding credit, financing a home, shopping for a home, and maintaining a home and finances
- Face-to-face training using interactive techniques
- Education and counseling before a purchase contract is signed

NeighborWorks® America and E\*TRADE FINANCIAL collaborated on “Keys to My Home” ([www.keystomyhome.org](http://www.keystomyhome.org)), a Web site that features a range of tools to assist potential homebuyers as they pursue the American dream of owning a home. The tools are based, in part, on the curriculum of *Realizing the American Dream*.

## **NATIONAL INDUSTRY STANDARDS FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP EDUCATION AND COUNSELING**

Now more than ever the housing industry recognizes the need to ensure high-quality education and counseling for households throughout the country. After all, it’s not just about buying a home; it’s also about *keeping* the home. To help address this need, in 2005 a National Advisory Council made up of local, state and national housing counseling organizations, financial institutions and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development developed a set of National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling (the “Standards”) and a National Industry Code of Ethics and Conduct for Homeownership Professionals ([www.homeownershipstandards.com](http://www.homeownershipstandards.com)).

The Standards are a set of guidelines for quality homeownership education and counseling services that help professionals and organizations provide families with consistent service and professional excellence. Like a seal of approval, when you see that an organization has adopted the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling, you can be sure that you will receive correct information and competent service, and be treated with fairness and respect.

## **NEIGHBORWORKS® AMERICA: WHO WE ARE**

NeighborWorks® America’s mission is to create opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities. NeighborWorks® America and its network of NeighborWorks® organizations have successfully built healthy communities for more than 30 years.

### **NeighborWorks® America**

NeighborWorks® America is a national nonprofit organization created by Congress in 1978 to provide financial support, technical assistance and training for community-based affordable housing and revitalization efforts.

### **NeighborWorks® Network**

NeighborWorks® delivers most of its programs and services through the NeighborWorks® network, more than 235 independent, community-based organizations in more than 4,400 communities nationwide. This network of community-based organizations creates healthy communities through the work of thousands of residents, business people, government officials and other partners.

For more than three decades, NeighborWorks® America and the NeighborWorks® system have opened doors to sustainable homeownership for families and communities. Our 30 years of experience working through the NeighborWorks® Network of Excellence indicates that successful, long-term homeownership begins with quality financial education. This includes prepurchase housing counseling and financial fitness education that help families develop sound money management skills, incorporate strategies for improving the borrower's credit rating and encourage the selection of responsible mortgage products.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **Writers**

Kevin McQueen, Deborah Schneider and Alison Thresher, 1st edition  
Laurie Maggiano, 2nd edition  
Christi Baker, 3rd edition  
Doris Barrell, 4th edition

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