

When You're Ready, We'll Be Here

North Carolina Housing Finance Agency

Communications: Integrated Campaign

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Following the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shutdowns, our Agency's challenge was to maintain our home buyer market share in a global pandemic, educate home buyers, help them become homeowners and maintain the Agency's status as a trusted home buying partner. Our 2020 home buyer campaign provided a way to leverage our partners and existing media channels to help consumers make educated financial decisions. We needed a fresh campaign to reach and motivate younger buyers facing unique challenges. Enter *When You're Ready, We'll Be Here*.

Insights and Analysis

For the new campaign, we dug deeper into the psyche of Millennials as a target audience to pinpoint their unique circumstances and the best way to reach them. In the wake of the Great Recession, this cohort struggled in the job market and as late as 2015, [a full one-third](#) were living with their parents. This was further exacerbated by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that shut down the state of North Carolina along with the nation, causing thousands to face an uncertain climate. Would-be buyers in 2020 cited uncertainty about the economy, social distancing, lack of down payment savings and inadequate home buying knowledge among the barriers to home ownership. We needed a way to reach our target demographic of first-time home buyers in North Carolina in a way that highlighted the benefits of our programs, but most important, highlighted the possibilities that home ownership might bring to their lives and reiterate the fact that while their dreams of home ownership may have been put on hold for now, when they are ready for home ownership, the NC Housing Finance Agency is here for them.

More than [50 percent of Millennial buyers](#) researched mortgage products on their phones before the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the virus keeping more and more people at home for extended periods of time, the amount of research conducted on mobile devices increased. Yet even with this self-sufficiency, most seek online tools from credible resources and trustworthy home buying partners to guide them. We built upon the success of our previous award-winning campaigns, as well as research that included a survey of our lending partners to determine the current concerns they have gleaned from their home buying clients. In addition to this primary research, we also conducted secondary research from media reports to determine:

- Current market trends imply that potential home buyers are uncertain about buying a home with a rapidly changing financial environment.
- Many potential home buyers who are facing an uncertain job market are unsure about making such a large financial commitment as purchasing a home.
- Uncertain interest rates make buyers struggling with student loan debt reluctant to take on more debt.

Objective: Continue to educate potential homeowners and maintain market share of home buyers who used NC Home Advantage suite of products, (NC Home Advantage Mortgage™, NC Home Advantage Tax Credit and the NC 1st Home Advantage Down Payment) as determined by use of the Find a Lender button which serves as our campaign's Call to Action. Increase the use of the Find a Lender button by 50%+%. June 2020-February 2021 over June 2019-February 2020.

Campaign Strategies

- Educate potential home buyers so they are ready to buy a home when the time comes.
- Strengthen existing relationships with home ownership partners and develop new ones.

Campaign Tactics

- Deploy commercials acknowledging the unprecedented times to showcase that our mortgage products are available when the time is right for the buyer.
- Build a microsite to provide information and move the user to learn more about home ownership, products from the Agency and talking to a lender.
- Create a new home buyer newsletter and encourage subscription.
- Use social media to promote other tactics.
- Deploy complementary digital advertising.

Implementation

Our Agency collaborated with Brasco/// Marketing in Raleigh to develop three commercials: *Home is Possibility*, *Home Means Everything* and *Get Help Navigating Home Ownership Possibilities*; a multimedia campaign that educates consumers on our products, asks them to think about the possibilities that home ownership offers, acknowledges where home buyers might be in these uncertain times and reminds viewers that help is available from the NC Housing Finance Agency. Implementation included:

- Product Suite Branding—We maintained the existing branding of our products under the NC Home Advantage moniker: the NC 1st Home Advantage Down Payment and the NC Home Advantage Tax Credit with logos, digital branding and advertisements.
- Online commercials—These videos feature clips of homeowners in our target demographic, acknowledging how things have changed and what home means now that many people are staying at home. In these commercials, the audience is exposed to meaningful messages told in a way that is tactful and engaging.
- Digital Advertising & Paid Search—Banner and text ads complemented the video and were deployed using search, site and retargeting strategies.
- Microsite and SEO Marketing— To serve as a hub for the campaign, we leveraged a microsite that was specifically branded for the NC Home Advantage Mortgage™ and the campaign: www.NCHomeAdvantage.com. Our digital advertising and SEO marketing pushed users toward this microsite where they could not only view the commercial, but explore possibilities that might make home ownership a reality for them. The microsite offers specific calls to action to learn more about down payment assistance, affordable mortgage options and home buying and to directly contact local lenders. This microsite also serves as a bridge to our Agency website and partner contacts to create a unified branding campaign.
- Get the Keys NC Newsletter: Launched in June 2020 for Home Ownership Month, this subscription-based newsletter provides bi-weekly information about home buying in an engaging way, based on topics gained from surveys of our audience.
- Content Marketing—Customized graphics, “Home Matters” blogs, and infographics underscored the NC Housing Finance Agency’s reputation as an authority, showcased the NC Home Advantage Mortgage™ and its suite of products as viable home buying options, and positioned our partners as home buying experts.
- Social Media—Videos and ads on Facebook and Instagram and companion posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter shared related content and engaged users.
- Partner Support—We educated partners through trainings and webinars, including instructional videos and handouts on how to market the products, and monthly “Partner Perks” eblasts with

links to new resources and marketing tips. Partners could access and download materials from our website in special "Resources for Clients" sections. Resources include customizable fliers and social media graphics for partners to post.

Our budget for commercial, ad and microsite development and eight months of digital advertising was \$86,125. Content marketing, the Get the Keys NC newsletter, partner outreach, social media and more were handled in house at an ongoing staff cost of about 20 hours per week between three staff members. We launched the commercials, ads, updated microsite and all additional content marketing in early 2020. The campaign is ongoing.

Evaluation/Results

We used a combination of metrics to evaluate success:

- Goal: Increased use of the "Find a Lender" button on the microsite by 50% June 2020 – February 2021 over the same time period in 2019/20
 - Find a lender button use June 2020-February 2021: 40,328
 - Find a lender button use June 2019-February 2020: 20,697
 - This represents an increase of 194.85%
- Goal: Garner at least 1,000 Home Matters Blog reads per month in 2020
 - Our Home Matters Blog posts had an average of 2,100 reads per month in 2020
- Goal: Gain 1,000 subscribers to the Get the Keys NC Newsletter June 1, 2020-December 31, 2020
 - Get the Keys NC Newsletter gained more than 2,400 subscribers between launch and end of year
- Goal: Gain 50 new Facebook followers in 2020 | Result: 369 new followers gained
- Gain 75 new Twitter followers in 2020 | Result: 111 new followers gained
- Gain 15 new Instagram followers in 2020 | Result: 118 new followers gained

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Additional Materials

The Commercials

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ4WQpSeQgo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpl2ti0_SXQ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TV88ELienI>

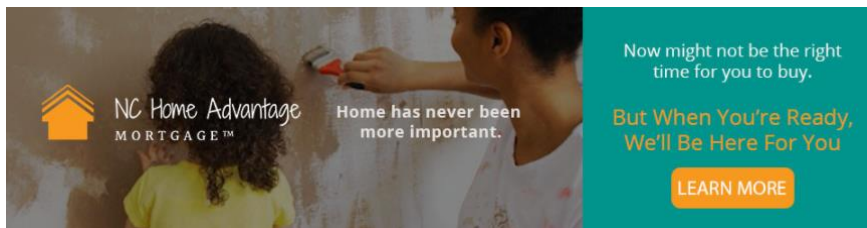
The Digital Advertising



Ready for more space or need help
navigating home ownership possibilities?

NC Home Advantage™

Open >



The Microsite

www.NCHomeAdvantage.com

Social Media



North Carolina Housing Finance Agency

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If you're not getting Get the Keys NC then you're missing out! Our bimonthly newsletter helps first-time buyers learn everything they need to know about buying a home and is a great way to get ready for life as a homeowner. Subscribe today! <http://ow.ly/iLP150DI9D5>



The Home Matters Blogs



Surprising Ways Homeowners Insurance Can Help You

December 7, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis, APR

Your first home in North Carolina is most likely your largest purchase to date. It makes sense that you will want to get a strong homeowners insurance policy to protect...

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How to Minimize Your Closing Costs

November 9, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis, APR

Closing on a home can feel daunting, with the excitement of becoming a homeowner colliding with the possible stress of paying the down payment and closing costs. However,...

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Scary Things a Home Inspection Can Uncover

October 26, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis, APR

Buying a home is an exciting milestone in many people's lives, but it can also be very intimidating, worrisome and even scary!

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Gifts for Your Down Payment? Understanding this Creative Solution

October 12, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis

For most home buyers, financing a down payment is one of the biggest obstacles for home ownership. While there are many ways to boost your down payment, some first-time...

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Know Your Affordability Factors

September 28, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis, APR

Buying your first home in North Carolina can feel like a daunting financial task, and that's just considering the monthly mortgage payment. Much more goes into determining...

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Common Home Buying Scams and How to Avoid Them

September 14, 2020 by Madison Fislser Lewis, APR

Buying a home can be stressful and confusing, especially for first-time home buyers in North Carolina. Between showings, offers, escrow and everything in between, it can...

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The Get the Keys NC Newsletter

<https://www.nchfa.com/news/subscribe-get-keys-nc-newsletter>