

Gig Workers Face More Obstacles to Qualifying for a Home Purchase Loan

I meet many hardworking people who want one thing: homeownership. And for many in the metro area, that goal has become more attainable.

Denver recently increased its minimum wage to \$19.29 per hour. That's welcome news for hourly workers. However, Jaxzann Riggs, owner of The Mortgage Network, reminds us that higher wages alone don't guarantee mortgage approval. What matters just as much, if not more, is the *stability and consistency* of income.

From an underwriting perspective, hourly workers generally fall into two categories, and they are evaluated differently.

One category is **salaried employees**. These are W-2 employees who are paid hourly by an employer, such as healthcare workers, airline employees, warehouse staff, or hospitality professionals. When a borrower has been with the same employer for one to two years and works a consistent number of hours, qualifying income is usually straightforward. Underwriters can easily average earnings and determine affordability.

The next category is **independent contractors**, who are typically considered self-employed. This group includes gig

workers — rideshare drivers, freelancers, consultants, delivery drivers, creatives, and others whose income is reported on a 1099.

Both W-2 employees and independent contractors can qualify for a mortgage, but the documentation, analysis, and timelines differ under Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and FHA guidelines. For independent contractors and gig workers, underwriters generally want to see a **two-year history of self-employment**. This is the standard across most loan programs. That said, there is some flexibility.

FHA guidelines, for example, may allow self-employed income with as little as one year of history if the borrower previously worked in the same or a related field for at least two years and current income is equal to or greater than past earnings. Conventional loans focus heavily on continuity, consistency, and the likelihood that income will continue—even if the 2-year history isn't perfectly uniform.

This flexibility can be especially helpful for borrowers who transition from traditional W-2 employment into contract or gig work.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of underwriting for both categories is the

importance of **consistent earnings**.

For waged employees, fluctuating hours can raise concerns, particularly if the borrower has less than two years in the same role. For example, a flight attendant who recently changed airlines may appear stable on paper, especially if there was no employment gap. However, if her monthly

hours vary widely in the new position, an underwriter may require a full year with the current employer before averaging income. The issue isn't the job or the pay rate, it's income consistency.

For independent contractors and gig workers, the principle is similar, even though hours aren't tracked the same way.

Here Are the Most Interesting New Products I Found at CES

Earlier this week, I attended CES 2026, formerly the Consumer Electronics Show, in Las Vegas to see what was new in home-related technology, especially now that home automation and artificial intelligence are the rage.

Since I'm an aging Baby Boomer, I spent some time at the AARP pavilion, where I found several products of interest. One was an innocent-looking wingback armchair by Samuelson which amplifies sound by Bluetooth from a TV or other device. It has no speakers. Instead, the adjustable sound is transmitted via its wood frame, creating "immersive sound." It would allow me with my reduced hearing to hear TV shows better while Rita has the TV at a volume more comfortable for her. The chair is made to order — \$8,750 on their website.

Another vendor, Nuance Audio, sells glasses which have directional microphones which amplify the voice of the person (or device) that you are looking directly at without amplifying background noise. I was able to experience it and the above chair and

tor (available shortly for \$649) which is switchable from regular view to a view that works well for dyslexics. They also sell a light that folds down to the size of a glasses case and opens to cast a light that makes regular text readable for dyslexics onto printed materials for up to 8 hours on a single charge. It's already on Amazon for €249. A video of the company's general manager demonstrating both products at the booth is on <http://realestatetoday.substack.com>, as are pictures and links for the other companies and some products not described here.

The only product I left Las Vegas with, and which I'm looking forward to using, is a pair of "Hyper AI Capture Glasses" from a Singapore firm called Tracup PTE Ltd. Their glasses look just like the ones I described above for enhanced hearing, but they are used to record face-to-face conversations and allow you to take still photos and up to 10-minute videos. And that's not all. With its Bluetooth connection to my iPhone, it creates a transcript of the conversation (with pictures and video) which I can then edit to

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