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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



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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

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 loved both. Price: \$840 with 30% discount on their website, including charging case. Standard frame allows for your prescription and Transitions lenses. The website lists 47 Denver metro optical stores which sell them.

A third vendor in the AARP pavilion was a shoe company called **Cadense**. Their shoe looks much like my beloved Skechers from above, but its sole contains both glide zones and a grip zone designed to reduce the risk of falls in persons with balance or stability issues. I was able to test-walk a pair, and I can see it would be helpful for the right person. They sell for \$199 on their website.

One of my broker associates suffers from dyslexia, so I made a point of visiting the booth of a French company called **Lilli for Life**, which has developed a 27-inch moni-

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.

Other Products That Caught My Attention at CES 2026

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In my one day at CES 2026, I must have seen a half dozen companies selling robotic lawn mowers and one, **Yarbo**, which also clears snow robotically (and quietly) "before it piles up," through the night if necessary.

Several companies, among them **Aiper**, demonstrated robots that clean the bottom and walls of swimming pools.

Home automation was ubiquitous, with some companies, like **VTA+**, offering complete automation, from outlets to smart curtains to pet care to home security to lighting to you-name-it.

Healthcare technology was everywhere,

too. I sat before an AI mirror which studied my face for 30 seconds, then reported my heart rate, blood pressure, my susceptibility to diabetes, hypertension and several other ills, including fatty liver disease. It said my facial age was 16 years younger than my chronological age, and physiological age was 5 years younger. My "aging index" was 95/100. Nice!

Another vendor, **Withings**, demonstrated its "Body Scan 2," which it describes as "the first science-backed longevity station."

Birdfy showed its smart bird feeder, which video records and identifies visiting birds.

Find much more on my Substack blog.



Showings of Conifer Listing Pause for a Month on Jan. 16

This classic A-frame on a half-acre lot at **30874 Kings Valley Drive** has generated lots of interest, but is still available. If you've been thinking of checking it out, do so soon, because the seller is leaving town on business on Jan. 16th and the wife doesn't want any showings while he's gone. You can check out the interior photos, floor plan, and view a narrated video walk-through at www.GRELlistings.com. You will, as I do, like the lichen-covered rock outcroppings above and below this home. There's even a trail out the back door to a bench with unobstructed views all the way to Pikes Peak. Call your agent or me, **Jim Smith**, at **303-525-1851**, to request a private showing.

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