Mortgage

(Continued from Page 7)

documentation of information the homebuyers have provided — such as an appraisal report on the home being purchased, records of title insurance and a property survey. Final approval of an FHA-insured loan can then come in a week or two.

In a pilot project with Freddie Mac and 11 lenders over the past year, FHA used the new version of Loan Prospector tailored to FHA needs to evaluate about 15,000 loan applications. FHA does not make mortgage loans directly,

but instead insures loans by private lenders to homebuyers. FHA insurance guarantees the lender timely payment of principal and interest, in the event the homebuyer defaults on the loan. Because the FHA mortgage insurance protects lenders from losses, it enables millions of Americans who would otherwise have been locked out of the mortgage market and homeownership to qualify for mortgages. FHA-insured loans benefit homebuyers in these ways:

• Down payments as low as 3 percent are required—lower than the minimum that lenders require for non-FHA mortgages.

 Homebuyers can borrow closing costs in their mortgages — something often not permitted with many non-FHA mortgages.
FHA's requirements for homebuyer credit ratings are more flexible than those set by many lenders for non-FHA borrowers

• The FHA permits homebuyers to use gifts from family members and non-profit groups to make their down payments, while conventional loans generally require homebuyers to come up with down payments on their own.

• The FHA permits a borrower to carry more debt than a private mortgage insurer would allow.

