

Homeward Trust Foundation

2021 City of Edmonton Subsidy

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2021 subsidy agreement between the City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust Foundation, to provide operational support in the fulfillment of its objectives, in the amount of \$1.238 million as outlined in Attachment 1 of the November 16, 2021, Citizen Services report CS00809, be approved, and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

Report Purpose

Council decision required

Executive Committee is being asked to approve the terms of the annual subsidy agreement with Homeward Trust Foundation. Executive Committee approval is required as the funding amount in the agreement presented in this report exceeds Administration's delegated authority under the City Administration Bylaw.

Executive Summary

- Homeward Trust Foundation is the designated community-based organization responsible for coordinating efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Edmonton.
- Since 2000, the City of Edmonton has provided an annual subsidy of approximately \$1.2 million to support Homeward Trust Foundation and its work to coordinate the 13 agencies working to end homelessness in Edmonton.
- Administration recommends approval of the subsidy agreement, to be funded as approved in the 2021 operating budget.

REPORT

Homeward Trust Foundation ("Homeward Trust") is the designated community entity responsible for the administration of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy in Edmonton. In 2017, the federal government announced a 10-year commitment to reduce homelessness by 50 per cent as a part of the National Housing Strategy. In 2020-21, Homeward

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Trust administered more than \$10 million of homeless funding as well as \$17.2 million in COVID-19 emergency funding on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Homeward Trust is also the community-based organization responsible for implementing the Government of Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, Homeward Trust administered \$29 million from the Government of Alberta for the delivery of the Housing First Program towards the goal of ending homelessness, plus nearly \$5 million for emergency shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to administering these funds, Homeward Trust is the steward of A Place to Call Home.

The City of Edmonton's \$1.2 million funding commitment for 2021 is a part of its efforts to support ending homelessness and meet priority needs in Edmonton. The annual subsidy agreement between the City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust is to provide operational support to Homeward Trust to assist in the fulfillment of its role as the organization leading efforts to end homelessness in Edmonton as well as enable it to respond to emerging local needs.

Recent Highlights

Homeward Trust performs research that informs community-wide data gathering and evaluation efforts. Homeward Trust manages the By-Names List, which serves as a real-time record of people experiencing chronic homelessness across Edmonton. The data collected in the By-Names List shows that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the number of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton. In October 2021, there were more than 2,800 people on the list, more than double the number at the end of 2019. Homeward Trust's data collection efforts assist the City in identifying and addressing affordable housing gaps, especially in relation to the development of housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Supportive Housing

In April 2018, City Council directed Administration to prioritize the establishment of new permanent supportive housing units to house and support Edmonton's most vulnerable citizens. Administration worked with Homeward Trust to develop a plan for achieving this goal. On June 29, 2020, City Council approved the sale of four sites to Homeward Trust to create additional units of supportive housing. On March 15, 2021, City Council approved a fifth site, with Homeward Trust Holding Company identified as the intermediary of all five projects.

The five projects will provide 210 new supportive housing units in Terrace Heights, McArthur Industrial, Inglewood, King Edward Park and Westmount. These units advance the City's goal of 600 supportive housing units by 2022 and address a portion of the city's need for 900 units of permanent supportive housing, as identified in A Place to Call Home – Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness and the Affordable Housing Investment Plan.

Encampment Response

The City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust coordinate a housing-focused response to homeless encampments through the Encampment Response Team. Housing outreach teams funded by Homeward Trust support the City-funded Boyle Street Community Services Street Outreach Team to offer different accommodation options, including bridge housing, to people sleeping outside.

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Outreach workers and City staff meet weekly to coordinate enforcement activities and ensure individuals sleeping outside have opportunities to engage with services before they relocate to provide better outcomes for people living unsheltered. The process to house someone can take an average of 45 days to secure income, meet with landlords, attend viewings, and sign a lease. For individuals sleeping outside, this process is often longer due to unpredictable living conditions. Homeward Trust staff work with the City to address large-scale encampments that form periodically in a sensitive, human-centred way that prioritizes access to housing for residents.

COVID-19 Response

Homeward Trust directed funding to support pandemic service enhancement and accommodation for vulnerable people. This included partial funding for day supports at the Edmonton EXPO Centre in the early days of the pandemic, operationalization of bridge housing at a number of hotels across Edmonton, and partial funding for Tipinawâw, the temporary accommodation at the Edmonton Convention Centre last winter.

In 2020 and 2021, Homeward Trust opened approximately 400 units of bridge housing in Edmonton. Bridge housing solutions were pursued to reduce the number of people sleeping outside, resulting in positive impacts for individuals experiencing homelessness and the communities and neighbourhoods where they live. Bridge housing reduces barriers to permanent housing for people sleeping outside and allows individuals to move through the housing process to a stable and secure environment. On average, those using bridge housing stay for 30 to 90 days before moving on to an appropriate permanent housing option.

System Coordination

The City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust work together on issues related to homelessness and the provision of affordable housing. This work includes convening organizations that are a part of the homeless-serving system, from emergency shelter providers to organizations delivering Housing First programming, to ensure coordination and information sharing to improve housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

This function has been critical throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, where public health regulations limited the ability of agencies to deliver adequate emergency shelter, day services and other social supports. Homeward Trust played an integral role in the operations and management of the Edmonton EXPO Centre temporary day shelter, bringing together several agencies to deliver integrated, housing-focused services and ensure individuals had a safe place to stay during the day. This space also provided isolation units for individuals experiencing homelessness and was critical to reducing the risk of transmission among Edmonton's most vulnerable communities.

Housing First Program

Homeward Trust is responsible for funding and coordinating the Housing First Program through 13 homeless support organizations in the city. Edmonton has embraced the Housing First approach, which recognizes homelessness as a complex problem that can only start to be addressed through access to safe, affordable housing without pre-conditions (e.g. sobriety or

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employment). Through the Housing First Program, more than 13,000 people experiencing homelessness have found secure housing since 2009 including more than 3,000 people since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget/Financial Implications

Since 2000, the City has contributed approximately \$1.2 million per year to support Homeward Trust. The funding for the 2021 subsidy agreement is included within the approved 2021 operating budget. No new funds are being requested.

Legal Implications

Section 43 of Bylaw 16620 - City Administration Bylaw enables the City Manager to approve an agreement that does not pertain to an interest in land if the value of the agreement does not exceed \$1 million and the term of the agreement does not exceed 10 years. Agreement approval is sought as the subsidy agreement value exceeds the delegated authority limit.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration works closely with Homeward Trust to generate its subsidy agreement. The subsidy funding supports Homeward Trust in its role as the organization responsible for leading efforts to end homelessness in Edmonton. As a system-planner organization, Homeward Trust collects data and reports on progress towards the goal of ending homelessness, provides funding for housing programs and aligns funding streams for ending homelessness, leads research and public awareness activities, convenes community organizations for collective action and is further positioned to quickly adapt programming to meet emerging local needs. This work is in alignment with the goals of A Place to Call Home - Edmonton's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, which included extensive engagement with stakeholders, people with lived experience and thousands of Edmontonians.

GBA+

More than 2,800 individuals in Edmonton are experiencing homelessness. Despite making up only 5 percent of Edmonton's overall population, nearly 60 percent of these individuals are Indigenous. Of the more than 2,800 individuals experiencing homelessness, approximately 690 individuals are children - either dependents or independent youth. Approximately 42 percent of homeless individuals identify as female.

In addition to the ongoing barriers individuals experiencing homelessness face in accessing public services like transportation, regular and appropriate health care, food, and shelter, the identities of those individuals intersect with other equity-seeking groups. The experience of racialized and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, two-spirit, and plus (LGBTQ2S+) community members who are experiencing homelessness is uniquely challenging in that they face additional discrimination and lack of appropriate supports when trying to access existing shelter, housing, and social services systems.

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As a funder, the City endeavours to include contractual provisions in its agreements with homeless-serving agencies, to best ensure the removal of barriers to access for vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness. As a term of the subsidy agreement, the City requires annual reporting forms which collect data to ensure the City is serving those that need it most from an intersectional lens. Homeward Trust is committed to ending homelessness and removing barriers that impact people's ability to obtain safe and secure housing. Through the work funded by this annual subsidy, Homeward Trust works to secure housing for those that need it most.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Homeward Trust Foundation Subsidy Agreement - Key Terms and Conditions