

HOMeward TRUST EDMONTON - 2022 CITY OF EDMONTON SUBSIDY

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2022 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 23, 2022, Community Services report CS01556, be approved, and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

Requested Council Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community safety and well-being
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the future		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CS00809, Homeward Trust Foundation - 2021 City of Edmonton Subsidy, Executive Committee, November 16, 2021 		

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.

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- Administration recommends approval of this annual subsidy agreement, to be funded as approved in the 2022 operating budget.

REPORT

Homeward Trust Foundation (Homeward Trust) is the designated community entity responsible for the administration of the Government of Canada's Reaching Home funding 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. Each year, Homeward Trust administers approximately \$10 million in funding from the federal government. Since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, this funding has been increased to \$14.5 million per year.

Homeward Trust is also the community-based organization responsible for implementing the Government of Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness. Homeward Trust administers approximately \$29 million from the Government of Alberta for the delivery of the Housing First Program towards the goal of ending homelessness each year. On October 1, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced the equalizing of funding between community-based organizations in Edmonton and Calgary. This will result in an increase of \$12 million per year in funding for Homeward Trust. In addition to administering these funds, Homeward Trust is the steward of A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

The City of Edmonton has contributed \$1.238 million per year to Homeward Trust since 2000. Homeward Trust uses the City of Edmonton's funding to supplement funding contracts they administer, to address gaps not eligible for funding by other orders of government, and to provide flexibility for addressing emerging needs through mid-year adjustments to project commitments. Each year, the City of Edmonton enters into a subsidy agreement with Homeward Trust, which defines eligible expenditures and defines annual reporting requirements.

In addition to this annual operating subsidy, from time to time, the City of Edmonton provides additional funding to Homeward Trust to meet emerging priorities or projects, such as providing funding to support the construction of transitional housing between 2008-2012, providing funding to enable Homeward Trust to assume operational control and rehouse residents of Dwayne's home, and most recently, to extend bridge housing provision.

Recent Highlights

The following section provides additional information about activities undertaken by Homeward Trust using the financial resources provided by the City as well as updates on other activities that align with City of Edmonton priority areas.

Homelessness Point in Time (PiT) Count Data

Homeward Trust manages the By-Names List, a real-time record of people experiencing chronic homelessness across Edmonton. 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.

In addition to the By Names List, Homeward Trust is responsible for organizing Point-in-Time (PiT) counts. PiT Counts have been conducted in Edmonton since 1999. These counts provide a

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snapshot of homelessness in Edmonton, including changes and trends over time. Counts are used by community agencies, researchers and governments to inform policies and practices. The Point-in-Time count differs from the By-Name List as the By-Name List is a real-time registry of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton. PiT counts can be useful when conducted simultaneously with other cities at providing an indication of homelessness over a larger geographical area (province or country) and for asking additional questions not covered by the By Names List. The Homelessness Point-in-Time count provides additional depth and context to data available through the By Name List.

Homeward Trust conducted the 2022 PiT count on September 28, 2022. This activity involved engagement of sector staff, community members and the broader public in a series of training and information sessions. Over 140 volunteers and staff participated in the count. The results are currently being analyzed and combined with administrative data from AHS and the Government of Alberta (which includes information from correctional facilities). Results from the count are expected to be released publicly before the end of 2022.

Encampment Outreach Teams

The City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust coordinate a housing-focused response to homeless encampments, which is an integral part of the Encampment Response Team. Housing outreach teams funded by Homeward Trust support the City-funded Boyle Street Community Services Street Outreach Team to offer and prioritize accommodation options to people sleeping outside, such as bridge housing.

Outreach workers and City staff meet weekly to coordinate activities to ensure individuals sleeping outside have opportunities to receive services before relocation. The process to house someone takes 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 prioritize access to housing for all residents of encampments, while providing input to address emerging issues in a sensitive, human-centred way. City of Edmonton funding was used by Homeward Trust to create a Housing Outreach Prototype Pilot (HOPP) team to evaluate new strategies for expediting access to housing for people living in encampments.

Housing First

From November 16, 2021 through September 1, 2022, 1,257 people were housed in Edmonton's Housing First programs. At any given time, housing and follow-up support workers funded by Homeward Trust support a caseload of approximately 1,500 people. Intake to Homeward Trust funded housing programs is managed through Coordinated Access, which is a program operated by Homeward Trust to e-match people with the right support for housing, based on their needs. Coordinated Access ensures standardized processes are applied and decision-making is transparent. Clients housed through Coordinated Access also have access to a variety of supports, which can include: client support costs, first and last month's rent, rent subsidy and access to furniture through FIND Edmonton, a social enterprise run by Homeward Trust which furnishes approximately 100-130 apartments each month. City of Edmonton funding supports the operation of the Coordinated Access program.

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Supportive Housing

The City of Edmonton has also played a significant leadership role in supporting the creation of new supportive housing in collaboration with Homeward Trust. In 2017, Homeward Trust called for the development of 900 new supportive housing units as part of the Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

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, including 600 units by 2022 and 900 units by 2024. By March 2021, City Council had approved the sale of five sites to Homeward Trust Holding Company (a corporation in which Homeward Trust is a shareholder) to create additional units of supportive housing. The projects were expedited thanks to support from the Government of Canada's Rapid Housing Initiative, with one site receiving additional support from the Government of Alberta's Municipal Stimulus Program. The projects are collectively near completion, with three sites already complete and transferred to Homeward Trust Holding Company to commence operation, and with the remaining two sites expected to follow soon. In anticipation of operation, Homeward Trust Holding Company has selected non-profit operators for each of the five sites. The first site, operated by Bissell Centre, began welcoming residents in mid-October 2022, and the remaining sites will gradually welcome residents soon, with all residents expected to be moved in by the end of 2022.

The five projects have provided 210 supportive housing units in the Terrace Heights, McArthur Industrial, Inglewood, King Edward Park and Westmount neighborhoods. These units increase the City's supportive housing commitments to 646 units since 2019.

Community/Sector Coordination

Homeward Trust has hosted a number of online events, such as its annual Housing Month events organized each November. Dedicated sector update meetings were also hosted by Homeward Trust and included updates on key issues shared through various mediums, including WhatsApp for real time problem solving as part of its overall sector emergency response table.

Homelessness Prevention

Homeward Trust's Community Strategy to End Youth Homelessness identifies Intervention and Prevention as one of three core strategies to eliminate or reduce the risks of youth becoming homeless.

Therapy support for youth experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and their families are cost prohibitive for clients or if they are available at subsidized rates, wait times are typically long. Homeward Trust provides funding to The Family Centre, which assists youth and their families with therapy support.

The YMCA's Youth Diversion Program - a partnership with Homeward Trust, Edmonton Police Service and the YMCA - directs youth away from the criminal justice system and provides them with individualized supports to help them forge a new path away from crime and towards a positive future. A portion of the City of Edmonton's annual subsidy is used to support this Diversion Program.

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Bridge Housing

Homeward Trust supported the operation of a number of bridge housing sites across Edmonton, including:

- Pimatisiwin (formerly Sands Inn) - 34 spaces until March 2023
- Sandy's Place - 25 spaces until March 2023
- Coliseum Inn - 80 spaces, closed in May 2022
- Travelodge West - 100 spaces, closed in March 2022

The closure of hotels being used for bridge housing required a high-level of coordination across the homeless-serving sector to ensure individuals were given housing options and available resources. Government of Canada funding that had supported bridge housing operations was unavailable from November 2021 until February 2022 and contributed to a year-end loss for Homeward Trust of approximately \$6 million. On February 22/24, 2022, Edmonton City Council approved \$4.8 million in funding to extend four bridge housing sites across Edmonton. This bridge housing mitigated street homelessness and emergency shelter usage for many people, and provided a dignified respite from extreme weather conditions, safety from overcrowding and the ability to isolate and stay at home during the pandemic. As of October 2022, Homeward Trust has reached agreements with operators to extend certain City-funded bridge housing sites, which were set to close at the end of this year, through to March 2023 to help provide additional capacity through the winter.

Indigenous Advisory Committee

The Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) is responsible for providing knowledge, cultural perspectives, and awareness of Indigenous urban experiences to Homeward Trust. The IAC fosters innovative solutions to build capacity within Indigenous organizations, groups, and communities. The IAC reviews all funding applications, providing feedback and recommendations with regard to cultural appropriateness of delivery models, and assurance of quality services for Indigenous people receiving housing and support services. All Homeward Trust program funding agreements require agencies to ensure their caseload is made up of at least 60% Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

The Indigenous Advisory Council is currently undertaking a review and expansion of its role which will be informed through a comprehensive community engagement process.

Budget/Financial Implications

Since 2000, the City has contributed approximately \$1.2 million per year to support Homeward Trust. The funding for the 2022 subsidy agreement is included within the approved 2022 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+

Almost 2,700 individuals in Edmonton are experiencing homelessness according to the By Names List, with approximately 45 per cent identifying as female. Of the 2,700 individuals, approximately half are unsheltered or using emergency shelters. Despite making up only five per cent of Edmonton's overall population, roughly 60 per cent of these Edmontonians are Indigenous.

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 two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and plus (2SLGBTQ+) community members experiencing homelessness is uniquely challenging in that they may face additional discrimination and lack of appropriate support when trying to access existing shelter, housing and social service systems. People with disabilities and significant health challenges are over-represented among those experiencing homelessness – being homeless also worsens health issues and creates an elevated risk of new health issues and death. Some services available to people experiencing homelessness struggle to meet the needs of people with significant and complex physical and mental health challenges, including substance use disorders.

As a funder of the homeless-serving sector, the City endeavors to include contractual provisions in its agreements with 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.

ATTACHMENT

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