

# Homeward Trust Foundation

## 2020 City of Edmonton Subsidy

### Recommendation

That the terms of the 2020 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 \$1,238,000, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the November 30, 2020, Citizen Services report CR\_8423, be approved, and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

### Executive Summary

Homeward Trust Foundation ("Homeward Trust") is a key collaborator in ending and preventing homelessness in Edmonton. Since 2000, the City of Edmonton has provided an annual subsidy of approximately \$1.2 million to support Homeward Trust and its work to coordinate the 13 agencies working to end homelessness in Edmonton. Administration recommends approval of the subsidy agreement, to be funded from the approved 2020 operating budget.

### Report

Homeward Trust uses a community-based approach to coordinate local agency, government and other stakeholder actions to respond to and contribute to ending homelessness.

Homeward Trust is the designated community entity responsible for the administration of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy in Edmonton and is the community-based organization responsible for implementing the Government of Alberta's 10 year plan to end homelessness. Homeward Trust is also the steward of Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

The City of Edmonton's \$1,238,000 funding commitment for 2020 is a part of its efforts to support ending homelessness and meet priority housing needs in our city.

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 these objectives and other objectives as may be set out in the subsidy agreement.

### Specific Objectives - Recent Highlights

Homeward Trust provides strategic planning, funding, oversight and coordination for

Edmonton's homeless serving system. This work is critical as it allows one entity to align funding streams, lead research, convene community organizations for collective action, and quickly adapt programming to meet emerging, local needs. COVID-19 and the downturn in Alberta's economy has increased homelessness in Edmonton and has put pressure on the homeless-serving sector. Data collected by Homeward Trust via the By Name List shows that nearly 1,900 people are experiencing homelessness in Edmonton today.

### *Permanent 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 develop permanent supportive housing units. The four sites will create 150 units, addressing 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 (2019-2022).

### *Encampment Response*

The City of Edmonton works with Homeward Trust to 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 assertively offer different accommodation options, including bridge housing, to people sleeping outside. 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 in order 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. Bridge housing reduces barriers to permanent housing for people sleeping outside and allows individuals to proceed through the housing process from a stable and secure environment. At the end of October 2020, Homeward Trust assumed operations of Exhibition Lands bridge housing. Bridge housing solutions in hotels and other properties are being pursued to reduce the number of people sleeping outside, which will have positive impacts for not only individuals experiencing homelessness, but also the communities and neighbourhoods where they live.

### *System Coordination*

The City of Edmonton works in collaboration with Homeward Trust 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 in a COVID-19 context, where public health regulations limited the ability of agencies to deliver emergency shelter, day services and other social supports. Homeward Trust played an integral role in the 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 community. Over 1,000 people have been housed since the start of the pandemic, despite the numerous pressures on the housing and homelessness systems.

To complement this effort, Homeward Trust performs research that informs community-wide data gathering and evaluation efforts. Homeward Trust has established a live "By Names List" that serves as a real-time record of everyone experiencing chronic homelessness across Edmonton and is accessible by multiple service providers. Homeward Trust's data collection efforts assist the City in identifying and addressing housing needs, especially in relation to the development of permanent supportive housing for individuals with complex physical and mental health needs.

### *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 employment). Through the Housing First program, more than 11,400 homeless Edmontonians have found secure housing since 2009 including more than 1,000 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 2020 subsidy agreement would be funded from the approved 2020 operating budget.

### **Public Engagement**

Public Engagement did not take place for this report as this fits within the City's overall housing plan, which has included extensive public engagement. Homeward Trust undertakes community engagement in various forms for many of its housing services.

**Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management**

<b>Corporate Outcome(s):</b> Edmonton is a safe city			
<b>Outcome(s)</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>	<b>Result(s)</b>	<b>Target(s)</b>
Decrease the number of people who are experiencing homelessness and prevent homelessness for those with housing instability	Total number of persons identified on the by-name list	Sept 2020: 1,931 Sept 2019: 1,563 Sept 2018: 1,759	Decrease year-over-year

**Risk Assessment**

<b>Risk Element</b>	<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Risk Score</b>	<b>Current Mitigations</b>	<b>Potential Future Mitigations</b>
<b>If recommendation is approved</b>						
Project Management	Projects stewarded by Homeward Trust fail to reach completion	1 - Rare	3 - Major	3 - Low	Review of audited financial statements  Review of annual reports  Reporting of progress on programs and projects	n/a
<b>If recommendation is not approved</b>						
Financial	If City funds are not released it would impact the ability of Homeward Trust to deliver on their mandate	3 - Likely	3 - Major	9 - Medium	Homeward Trust has demonstrated responsible fund management	N/A

**Attachment**

1. Terms of Homeward Trust Foundation Subsidy Agreement

**Others Reviewing this Report**

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement

- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor