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Date January 26, 2021 **Report No.** 2021-115

To Mayor and Members of City Council

From Aaron Wallace, Acting General Manager
Community Services and Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item []
Item For Consideration [X]

2.0 Topic **Library Based Community Housing Outreach Worker Partnership [Financial Impact: None]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2021-115 Library Based Community Housing Outreach Worker Partnership BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to proceed with a one-year pilot project to hire a Library-based Community Housing Outreach Worker, reporting to the City's Housing and Homelessness Department, using staff funding from the Library and a portion of Social Services Relief Funds to fund the position; and
- C. THAT the Director, Housing and Homelessness Services, or designate, and the Manager, Housing Stability BE AUTHORIZED to sign on behalf of the City of Brantford any agreements necessary, satisfactory in form to the City's Solicitor or designate, to proceed with the one-year pilot project.

4.0 Executive Summary

The City of Brantford Library has proposed a one-year term partnership to fund a Housing Stability Services staff position, in conjunction with time-limited Social

Services Relief Funding that must be expensed by March 31, 2021. The Library-based Community Housing Outreach Worker would be hired and supervised by the City, at no cost to the City, and work with Library and at-risk citizens that frequently require Library services to connect those citizens with appropriate housing, shelter or social service supports.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval to hire a Community Housing Outreach Worker in partnership and to be based in the City of Brantford Library, using available Library salary funding, to assist with Library and downtown outreach services to citizens in need. The report urgency is related to the time-limited Social Service Relief Fund (SSRF) that must be expensed by March 31, 2021; part of the position costs will utilize the SSRF with the balance provided through the existing Library budget.

6.0 Background

Since 2010 the Library has supported a position targeting community connections and programming traditionally targeting youth. The position provided services to engage and support youth at risk, marginalized children and their families with programs and services delivered through the Brantford Public Library. Those services included linking young people to the community information and services they needed to make better life choices, and achieve self-improvement. The position was initially established through a successful grant application to the Healthy Communities Fund, supported by partners, the Brant County Health Unit and the Children's Aid Society of Brant. The position transitioned from part-time to full-time in 2016. At the time it was introduced, it was an "out of the box" solution to challenges the Library was experiencing in supporting high-needs youth. Over the years, the Child and Youth Worker established several partnerships, programs, and relationships that resulted in meaningful supports for at-risk and vulnerable children and youth in Brantford.

The position has been vacant since August 2020 due to both the COVID-19 pandemic and because the position required review and potential revision to meet the current needs of the Library, which has shifted considerably since the position was created. Supporting young people remains a priority for the Library, however vulnerable community members of all ages are in need of support within the Library, and accordingly a position focused on broader social service supports is required. In conversation with City staff, the CEO/Chief Librarian has

presented a report and gained approval from the Library Board on January 21, 2021 to proceed with a partnership as outlined in this report.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

The subject of this report supports City Council's 2021-2022 priority #2: "Meaningful supports are in place for those most in need in the community". In particular, the recommendations in this report support Brantford being a safe and healthy community, one that promotes and enables the well-being of its citizens and supports access of all citizens to a full range of health and community services.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

The Library CEO/Chief Librarian and board members, and City Human Resources staff have provided input for this report.

9.0 Analysis

The Brantford Library has a distinct need to maintain a social support-focused position as a resource for staff in the Library. Library staff generally do not have social service backgrounds, however they are called upon to provide an increasing amount of service to community members experiencing a range of challenges, including homelessness, addictions, and mental health issues. A recent staff vacancy provided an opportunity to consider improvements to the former Child and Youth Worker role at the Library. Specifically, given the changing demographics of citizens requiring services in and around the Library, the position should be focused on vulnerable community members of all ages as opposed to only youth services.

The Library has noted the success of the position was often dependent on the incumbent's ability to make connections with social service providers and supports outside of the Library, which is frequently a challenge to do as a library worker. In addition staff with the Library had noted it was challenging to be the only social support worker within the library, a cultural institution that is not specifically focused on that type of work. The Library recognized there was an emotional burden and it was problematic for their staff to respond to customers in crises, and to do so alone without being able to debrief and consult with qualified colleagues.

Following consultation with City of Brantford staff, the Library Board has authorized a transformation of the position into a Library-based Community

Housing Outreach Worker (CHOW) with the Community Services & Social Development (CS&SD) Commission. A CHOW is an existing position with the CS&SD Commission that best matches the social support related needs and interests of the Library. A CHOW provides a range of individual/family, group, and community interventions to reduce the risk of homelessness and help address homelessness. In addition, the position takes a holistic view of vulnerable client needs providing interventions and referrals to other community agencies for supports and assistance in a client-centered manner. Interventions provided by the position typically include short-term crisis intervention, connecting clients to other community services, ongoing case management, training and education, and other supports to connect clients with solutions to their challenges.

The proposed one-year pilot project with the Library would see the Library's funding for their former position diverted to hire a Library-based CHOW through the City's CS&SD Commission. The Outreach Worker would be a unionized City of Brantford temporary full-time employee, with the CS&SD Commission, but located in the Library and primarily focused on Library-related interests. The Manager, Housing Stability Services would work collaboratively with the Manager, Public Services at the Library to ensure the position and incumbent meet the Library's needs.

In addition to administering the position, the City is able to commit funds from available Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF), received to assist with addressing the needs of vulnerable and at-risk people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The incumbent will also work periodically outside of the library with other community partners, such as the Salvation Army Housing Resource Centre, and the incumbent will be a resource and connected with the City's newly introduced Corporate Physical Security service to better assist vulnerable individuals. These activities will ensure that the requirements for the SSRF grant are met, and also serve to strengthen the connections the position will need in order to best serve at-risk customers in the Library. The incumbent will be connected to the City's network services and utilize the Homelessness Individuals and Families System (HIFIS) to track client data. This connection to the HIFIS system will permit reporting on outcomes and assist with evaluation of the Library-based CHOW position.

Staff is seeking approval to post and fill the position quickly through the City's hiring process. The expedited timelines are to ensure that a portion of the SSRF grant can be used to support the project, as those funds must be expensed by March 31, 2021. The position would provide services through the COVID-19

provincial shutdown, because Ontario Regulation 82/20 permits libraries to provide space for the provision of social services.

10.0 Financial Implications

The annual current collective agreement pay, at the top of the pay grid for the Community Housing Outreach Worker position, is \$64,337 plus benefits, there are no financial implications related to this report. Funding for the position is being provided primarily through the Library and, depending on the employee start date, approximately \$14,500 will be available through the Province of Ontario SSRF program. Should the one-year pilot project be a success and the Library wish to continue with the arrangement in 2022, the Library budget will have adequate funding for the full costs of the position.

11.0 Conclusion

An increasing demographic of citizens utilizing Library services, the facility and in the general area of the Library are vulnerable members of the community at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Library has a history of providing a social support focused position and has funding to support a renewal of that staffing component as a Community Housing Outreach Worker in conjunction with the City of Brantford. Placing an outreach worker position as a Library-based support will see success through the imbedded community resources and support connections available with the City's Community Services & Social Development (CS&SD) Commission. Further, a Library-based outreach worker will work with at-risk clients of all ages in conjunction with other City services and to collaboratively problem solve their basic needs and housing challenges; determine other necessary supports; and, provide intervention and/or referral to community resources. This opportunity provides another opportunity for the Library and the City to have effective citizen-centered services for the community and in the downtown core.



Aaron Wallace, Acting General Manager
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Prepared By:

Kevin O'Hara,
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Attachments

N/A

Copy to:

Rae-Lynne, CEO/Chief Librarian, Brantford Public Library

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no