



**City of Kingston  
Information Report to Council  
Report Number 24-105**

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**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services  
**Resource Staff:** Amy Gibson, Manager, Housing & Homelessness  
**Date of Meeting:** June 4, 2024  
**Subject:** Welcoming Streets Program Update & Extension

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 1. Support Housing Affordability

Goal: 1.4 Improve service to unhoused and precariously housed.

**Executive Summary:**

On May 16, 2023, Council approved that the City, as the Service Manager for housing and homelessness programs, use portions of the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and Housing & Social Services municipal funding toward establishing a downtown focused street outreach pilot program ([Report Number 23-112](#)). In July 2023, the City entered into service agreements with the Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Area (DBIA) and Addictions & Mental Health Services KFLA (AMHS) to support the Welcoming Street pilot program until June 30, 2024. The purpose of this program is to support vulnerable individuals through the presence and support of dedicated street outreach workers specifically located in the downtown core. The vision of the program is to foster a compassionate, inclusive and supportive environment for everyone. The annual budget for the Welcoming Streets pilot project is \$250K, with each service agency receiving \$125K in funding. Of this total funding package, \$150K was allocated from the HPP and \$100K was funded by the 2023 municipal operating budget. The pilot program has now been operating for 11 months and this report is an update on the pilot program, its findings and future program considerations. Staff have reviewed the findings of the program to date and are recommending an extension of the pilot program from July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 until a further review of all Street Outreach Services are evaluated through a planned procurement process that will be completed by the end of Q4 2024.

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**Recommendation:**

**That** Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to enter into amended agreements with Addiction & Mental Health Services - KFL&A and the Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Area to continue the downtown focused pilot street outreach program between July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services; and

**That** Council approve a monthly funding allocation of up to \$10,417 per agency for the duration of the extension and to be funded from the Homelessness Prevention Program and the approved 2024 Housing and Social Services operating budget; and

**That** Council direct staff to return to Council by the end of Q4 2024 with an update on all Street Outreach Services and associated recommendations for funding for these services moving forward.

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**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

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**Jennifer Campbell,  
Commissioner, Community  
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives	Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	

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**Options/Discussion:**

On May 16, 2023, Council approved funding ([Report Number 23-112](#)) for the implementation of a new pilot program, Welcoming Streets. The purpose of this pilot program is to support vulnerable individuals through dedicated street outreach workers specifically located in the downtown core. The City, AMHS and the DBIA entered into service agreements to offer the Welcoming Street pilot between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

Under the terms of these agreements, the DBIA and AMHS have been collaborating on the Welcoming Streets program to serve two purposes:

1. Engage with individuals who may be experiencing homelessness and/or addiction or mental health difficulties in a respectful manner, and assist them in accessing the resources and supports they may need; and
2. Support property and business owners, as well as their staff and customers, to cultivate a safe, welcoming and supportive community that considers the complex needs of all those involved.

A representative from each organization, known as Stewards, provide services in the City's downtown area Monday to Saturday during typical business hours. The vision of the program is to foster a compassionate, inclusive and supportive environment for everyone in the downtown Kingston community. The Stewards are trained with a trauma-informed lens and are experienced with supporting people who have complex needs. The individuals who are engaged through the program may be experiencing poverty, homelessness, addictions, mental and physical health challenges. The Stewards focus on relationship building, providing access to service opportunities, referrals and/or direction to rest areas where persons can access meals and/or shelter from the outdoor elements. The service area defined for the Welcoming Streets pilot was identified as a priority to support both vulnerable populations and downtown businesses. The program operates alongside of and in addition to the Street Outreach program delivered by Home Base Housing that attends to all areas of Kingston seven days a week.

The Stewards have worked closely with downtown businesses to provide details regarding the program and share knowledge with respect to mental health, substance abuse and/or de-escalation techniques. The DBIA reports receiving positive feedback and appreciation for the program. The Stewards have offered information sessions and naloxone training to the members of the DBIA at large, as well as for singular businesses that would like their staff informed and trained in valuable harm reduction methods. The Stewards have also worked closely with the City's By-Law Enforcement team, Home Base Housing and AMHS Street Outreach staff to divert crisis or conflict calls from emergency services and refer individuals to specific services such as Detox, Street Health or Day Services. From February to March 2024, program data reported that 16 calls were diverted from enforcement services.

The service agreements with the DBIA and AMHS require that each organization tracks metrics with respect to demographics, connections made, services or referrals provided and outcomes, where possible, to enable an evidence-based review of the program.

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### Summary of Pilot Program Interactions Since July 2023

1,051 personal connections to individuals and business staff/owners in downtown Kingston. This is not a sum of unique individuals, and some percentages may be skewed due to the recurring interactions with some individuals and the quick nature of some of the interactions.

- 76% of individuals they connected with identified as homeless
- 20% were housed
- 4% of people's housing was not confirmed (unknown housing status)
- 61% of individuals were between the ages of 30-54
- 24% were between the ages of 55-64
- 11% were between the ages of 18-29
- 59% identified as male
- 35% identified as female
- 6% identified as gender non-conforming, transgender or the person did not confirm
- 36% identified as Indigenous, First Nations, Non-status or Metis
- 56% received Ontario Disability Support Program benefits
- 17% received Ontario Works (OW) benefits
- 20% would not/did not disclose their income
- 5% had no income
- 920 personal items/supplies were distributed over the last eight months with the most items provided in November and February:
  - 271 outdoor/winter supplies such as hand warmers, winter boots, coats, scarves, toques and gloves
  - 229 basic needs items such as hygiene products, food and water
  - 136 clothing items including shoes, pants, hoodies, coats, underwear and socks; whatever may be needed by a specific individual
  - 81 harm reduction supplies
  - 28 transit passes
  - Other items include cell phones, gift cards and naloxone kits

Over the course of the pilot, Housing & Homelessness staff met bi-weekly with the DBIA and AMHS to review the program effectiveness and to ensure the goals and objectives were being met. The pilot project demonstrates the work and compassion required to foster connections and build community; however, it is recognized this work can be challenging. Both AMHS and DBIA shared that staffing for the program has been difficult due to the contract nature of the position as well as the experience required for the positions. This is a common challenge in this sector; however, both organizations are committed to ensuring the program is staffed and the deliverables are being met.

The Welcoming Streets initiative is a pilot that is an extension to additional Street Outreach services provided in the community by various service providers. All current Housing and Homelessness programs receiving HPP funding are to be reviewed by year end. This review will consider the operation and funding of Street Outreach services and once it is completed staff

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will return to Council with an update and recommendations for the operation and funding of these services moving forward. Given the timeline of the planned review, staff have recommended that the current Welcoming Streets pilot program be extended until December 31, 2024.

**Public Engagement**

Staff did not complete any public engagement on the program. In August 2023, the DBIA and City officials attended a meeting to discuss the increase in crime and vandalism in the downtown core. The meeting was to learn how services work in Kingston and allow business owners to make suggestions on how to sustain the vibrancy of Kingston's downtown retailers and services and to ensure residents and tourists feel comfortable and excited to frequent the area. Welcoming Streets is a program that also currently exists in the downtown business areas of Belleville, Brampton, Guelph and Sudbury.

**Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

The Stewards build relationships with the individuals they connect with to learn how best to serve them. As trust develops, the staff learn how best to serve individuals and encourage them to access specific services to meet their individual needs.

**Financial Considerations:**

The annual budget for the Welcoming Streets pilot project is \$250K, with each service agency receiving \$125K. The recommended extension of the program from July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 was included in the development of the 2024 operating budget and can additionally continue to be supported through contributions from the Homelessness Prevention Program. The total cost of the program extension is \$125,004; which allocates up to \$10,417 monthly to each agency over the six month extension.

**Contacts:**

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**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

Lori Kidd Velkova, Housing Program Administrator, Housing & Social Services