



**DATE:** October 8, 2024

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Director of Development Services

**SUBJECT:** Project Independence: Adopt a Resolution Allocating \$417,215 in HOME Investment Partnership Program Funds and Renewing the Housing Grant Subsidy Agreement with Abode Services for Project Independence to Provide Tenant Based Rental Assistance to Emancipated and Former Foster Care Youth

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council adopts a resolution (Attachment II) authorizing the use of HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funds for rental assistance to emancipated and former foster care youth through Abode Services' Project Independence and authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute a rental housing subsidy grant agreement with Adobe Services in an amount not-to-exceed \$417,215.

## **SUMMARY**

The Project Independence Program, managed by Abode Services, provides rental assistance to emancipated and former foster care youth and has been supported by the City of Hayward since 2007. Project Independence has been successful at providing positive outcomes for participants who are otherwise at high risk for housing instability and homelessness.

The recommended resolution authorizes the City Manager to negotiate and execute a rental housing subsidy agreement with Abode Services in an amount not-to-exceed \$417,215 of HOME funds. The Project Independence Program receives funding from multiple sources. The City of Hayward's allocation of HOME funds is used for the direct benefit of program participants through a rent payment subsidy. In addition to the City of Hayward, the program also receives funding from the Alameda County Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP+), which pays for case management, staffing, and other operating costs for the Program. The Program is consistent with priorities set in the Consolidated Plan of the Alameda County HOME Consortium, the Hayward Housing Element, and the City's Strategic Plan Priority to Preserve, Protect, and Produce Housing for All.

## **BACKGROUND**

On July 24, 2007, the Council first authorized the use of HOME funds to provide rental assistance to emancipated and former foster care youth through Abode Services' Project Independence Program.<sup>1</sup> The Program was implemented in 2008. The primary goal of the Program is to provide case management and rental support to emancipated and former foster care youth who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Council approved the renewal of the program in 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2021.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Project Independence Program provides a critical service in Hayward by giving housing subsidies to emancipated and former foster youth. The Program is consistent with priorities set in the Consolidated Plan of the Alameda County HOME Consortium and the Hayward Housing Element.

### **Program Need**

Alameda County's 2022 Homeless Count & Survey Comprehensive Report estimates that one in five former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.<sup>2</sup> Of the total respondents in the 2022 homeless survey, fourteen percent (14%) of respondents reported a history of foster care. Furthermore, no youth under the age of 25 reported that aging out of the foster care system was the primary cause of their current homelessness. Youth who age out of the foster care system face unique challenges such as mental health problems, early or unplanned pregnancies, lack of stable affordable housing, fewer employment opportunities, and substandard medical care. As a result, youth who were formerly in foster care or group homes experience disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, lower educational attainment, incarceration, dependence on public assistance, substance abuse, and other high-risk behaviors that lead to ongoing housing instability.

### **Consistency with Housing Goals**

The Project Independence Program is consistent with the strategies, priorities, and programs in the FY 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan of the Alameda County HOME Consortium, of which the City is a member.<sup>3</sup> The Consolidated Plan outlines needs,

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<sup>1</sup> July 24, 2007 City Council Meeting Staff Report:

<https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=136821&repo=r-b6d2994c>

<sup>2</sup> 2022 Alameda County Homeless Count and Survey Comprehensive Report:

[https://homelessness.acgov.org/homelessness-assets/docs/reports/2022-Alameda-County-PIT-Report\\_9.22.22-FINAL-3.pdf](https://homelessness.acgov.org/homelessness-assets/docs/reports/2022-Alameda-County-PIT-Report_9.22.22-FINAL-3.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> City of Hayward Consolidated Plan FY21-25:

strategies, priorities, and programs for the expenditure of Federal funds for housing and community development activities as required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for jurisdictions to be eligible to receive Federal funding. The Program is also included in the current Housing Element as one of the programs aimed at addressing the housing needs of special populations.<sup>4</sup> Finally, tenant-based rental assistance such as the Project Independence Program was highlighted as a strength of the City's response to homelessness during the Let's House Hayward strategic planning process in early 2021.<sup>5</sup>

## **Program Description**

The objective of the Program is to assist young adults transition from the foster care or group home system with securing housing, linkages to job training and/or education, and social services that will enable them to act with self-determination and independence. Program participants are either fully emancipated youth or 18 years or older and have aged out of the foster care system, experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness, and demonstrate the ability to enter housing, including signing a lease agreement, abiding by the rules, and agreeing to pay the \$75 deposit and first month's rent. Each participant will develop a Transition to Independent Living Plan. This Plan is used to set goals for the participant and monitor progress in achieving the participant's stated goals. Each participant will work with Abode staff to identify and make referrals to any needed resources. Participants will be required to pay the greater of \$75 or 30% of their adjusted income on rent, unless a hardship can be determined. They are also required to abide by the terms of the lease and the Program.

Current participants are being housed in rental units located throughout multiple apartment complexes in Hayward. As required by Federal funding, staff from Abode Services conduct a housing quality inspection of the apartments prior to move-in by participants to make sure that they live in a decent, safe, and sanitary environment. The City pays the difference between the fair market rents, as established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the participants' rent payments do not exceed the actual rent for the unit.

## **Program Funding**

The Project Independence Program receives funding from multiple sources. The City of Hayward's entire allocation of HOME funds for Fiscal Year 2023 is used for the direct

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[https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-2025%20Con%20Plan\\_FINAL\\_20200702.pdf](https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-2025%20Con%20Plan_FINAL_20200702.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> City of Hayward Housing Element:

[https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/City\\_of\\_Hayward\\_2023\\_2031\\_Housing%20Element\\_Certified.pdf](https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/City_of_Hayward_2023_2031_Housing%20Element_Certified.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Let's House Hayward Strategic Plan:

<https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Let%27s%20House%20Hayward%21%20Strategic%20Plan%202021.06.25.pdf>

benefit of program participants through a rent payment subsidy. In addition to the City of Hayward, the program also receives funding from the Alameda County Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP+), which pays for case management, staffing, and other operating costs for the Program.

### **Program Performance**

Since the implementation of the Program in 2008, Hayward’s HOME fund contributions have helped house over 567 youth formerly in foster care and at-risk of homelessness. During the last fiscal year, Project Independence supported 13 emancipated or former foster care youth. *Table 1* highlights some program successes for Fiscal Year 2024.

**TABLE 1. HIGHLIGHTS OF PROJECT INDEPENDENCES SUCCESS**

Enrolled in formal education or vocational training	25%
Earned high school diploma or GED	61%
Secured stable housing after aging out of program	38%

Independent living programs like Project Independence are an effective approach to mitigating and resolving many of the challenges with which youth that were formerly in the foster care system are inevitably facing. The supportive housing strategy provides youth with a stable foundation and adult support while they finish their education or job training, find new employment, and/or overcome psychological problems that interfere with their ability to live independently.

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Homelessness and housing crises are not only damaging to the physical, mental, and economic health of individuals and families, but have serious costs to the community as well. The costs to the community include the costs of providing emergency housing, mental health crisis services, emergency medical care, criminal justice, and judicial system involvement. A program such as Project Independence helps avoid these costs by preventing youth aging out of the foster care system from becoming homeless. This impact was further amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased long-term strain on the economic well-being of individuals, families, and businesses.

### **STRATEGIC ROADMAP**

This agenda item supports the Strategic Priority of Preserve, Protect, and Produce Housing. This item is not specifically related to a project identified in the Strategic Roadmap. Staff is bringing forth this item to continue operations of an important City-funded program that supports the City’s goals of providing affordable housing opportunities to individuals at risk of homelessness, creating housing stability and preventing displacement.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Implementation and administration of this program would have no impact on the City's General Fund. There are sufficient HOME funds to support this contract. Should Council approve the attached resolution, the City will fund Project Independence in the amount of \$417,215 from uncommitted HOME funds.

## **PUBLIC CONTACT**

As part of the Housing Element update process, the City implemented the State's Housing Element's public participation requirements. As a goal of the Housing Element, the Project Independence Program was open to public feedback during community/stakeholder workshops, townhall forums, General Plan taskforce meetings, Planning Commission and Council Study Sessions, and through a community survey. The City and County also took public comment on the formation of the Consolidated Plan for the HOME Consortium; no comments about Project Independence were provided.

## **NEXT STEPS**

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*Recommended by:* Sara Buizer, AICP, Director of Development Services  
Christina Morales, Deputy Director of Development Services

Approved by:



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Dustin Claussen, Interim City Manager