

# BUILDING KNOWLEDGE



## Dedicated-Site Supportive Housing SROI Series:

### Wesley Street, Nanaimo

This series explores the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of operating dedicated-site supportive housing in B.C. It features five case studies of dedicated-site supportive housing programs located in communities across the province. An SROI ratio compares the total investment to the financial value of the social and economic outcomes achieved, highlighting the value created by investing in these programs.

#### Full report

*The Social and Economic Value of Dedicated-Site Supportive Housing in B.C.*

#### Other case studies

*Cardington Apartments, Kelowna*

*The Budzey, Vancouver*

*Kettle on Burrard, Vancouver*

*Queens Manor, Victoria*

*For every dollar invested in dedicated-site supportive housing at Wesley Street, approximately four dollars in social and economic value is created.*

The Wesley Street Supportive Housing project (“Wesley Street”) is a 36-unit supportive housing building in Nanaimo. Established in 2012 through a partnership between CMHA Mid-island Branch and BC Housing, it offers safe and affordable housing with supports for single men and women who live on the street with addictions, mental health issues and/or other challenges that often contribute to difficulties maintaining housing in the community.

Programming at Wesley Street is provided through CMHA Mid-island Branch and is designed to help residents address issues that may have led to homelessness in the past. This support enables housing stability: the average length of stay is 24 months and 57% of current residents have been living at Wesley Street for over 24 months. For individuals who have experienced difficulties maintaining housing in the past, this stability helps with achieving positive outcomes.



Wesley Street exterior



### This study examines:

- › The social and economic value created by investing in the operation of dedicated-site supportive housing
- › The breakdown by stakeholder group of social and economic value that is created
- › Implications for future investment

## The Social Return on Investment (SROI) Methodology

The SROI methodology articulates the financial value of outcomes created through a social investment (such as investment in supportive housing), to reveal how much value is created for every dollar invested. An SROI analysis combines quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research techniques to show the value of outcomes from different stakeholder perspectives. The result is an SROI ratio that compares the total investment to the financial value of the social and economic outcomes that are achieved, showing – in monetary terms – the financial benefit of social investments.

The current research follows the internationally standardized SROI methodology and uses information from existing academic research and grey literature (including other SROI studies and economic analyses), and data gathered from residents, partners, and supportive housing providers.

### KEY ELEMENTS IN THE WESLEY STREET SROI MODEL

<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Investment by BC Housing as the sole investor in the total operating cost of Wesley Street, including staffing, programming, administration, maintenance, insurance, mortgage payments, and security</li> <li>› Rents paid by residents</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe for Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› 2016-2017 operating year</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Residents at Wesley Street (single male and female adults) (primary stakeholder)</li> <li>› Local communities</li> <li>› Government systems (various levels)</li> <li>› Investor (BC Housing)</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› With an average length of stay of 24 months, and 57% of current residents maintaining their housing for two years or longer, outcomes included in this SROI analysis are expected to last at least one year. Since residents may not continue to experience positive outcomes if investment stops (they could return to homelessness), outcomes in this case study were not valued beyond one year.</li> </ul>
<b>Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› The Wesley Street SROI analysis employs an equally blended forecast and evaluative approach with forecasting based on primary and rigorous secondary research.</li> </ul>



### Outcomes Included in the SROI Analysis

Outcomes included and valued in the Wesley Street SROI analysis were identified based on existing research, information from CMHA staff, and resident interviews. Each outcome was assigned a financial value in the calculation of the SROI ratio. Outcomes include:

Stakeholder	Key Outcomes Included in the SROI
Residents at Wesley Street (all male and female single adults)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Increased access to high-quality housing and decreased experiences of homelessness</li> <li>› Increased overall wellbeing, including positive changes in physical and mental health</li> <li>› Increased social support, socialization, and sense of community (decreased social isolation)</li> <li>› Increased safety and decreased experiences of violence</li> <li>› Decreased harm from risk involved with street-based sex work</li> <li>› Increased ability to engage in employment</li> <li>› Decreased harm from substance use and increased ability to move towards reducing use</li> <li>› Increased personal disposable income</li> </ul>
Local community/neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Improved local neighbourhood and community quality</li> <li>› Increased local economic activity due to resident spending</li> </ul>
Government (all levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Decreased use of emergency services by residents such as ambulances and emergency rooms</li> <li>› Decreased use of homeless shelters by residents</li> <li>› Decreased resident involvement in justice systems</li> <li>› Decreased long-term hospital stays by residents</li> <li>› Decreased service use related to substance use by residents</li> <li>› Decreased risk of sexual exploitation related to homelessness among residents (and associated decrease of government service use)</li> </ul>

*“I’m not worried about where to stay.  
I feel healthier and more secure”*

– Wesley Street Resident



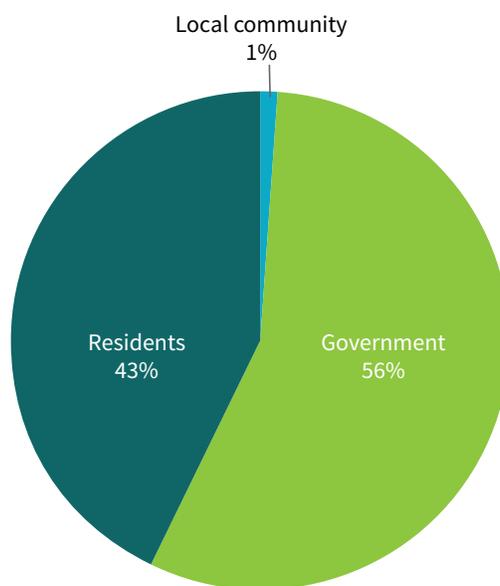


## Wesley Street SROI Results

SROI analysis of investment in the Wesley Street revealed:



**For every dollar invested in operating Wesley Street, approximately four dollars in social and economic value is created.**



*Value Breakdown by Stakeholder Group*

All stakeholders in the SROI analysis experience value from outcomes, including:

**Government:** Approximately 56% of the value generated by Wesley Street goes back to government in cost reallocations related to decreased service use by residents. In other words, for every dollar invested in operating Wesley Street, just over two dollars is generated for government in cost reallocations due to decreased service use.

**Local Community:** While the community as a whole benefits from decreased service use that increases efficiency and reduces costs to taxpayers over time, an additional 1% of the value goes back to Wesley Street’s local community. This value is generated through improved neighbourhood quality and local spending by residents. The value is experienced by community members who encounter less homelessness in their community and by local businesses that see dollars spent by residents locally. While some value to the local community is captured through the SROI analysis, this value is likely understated. Benefits from resident community involvement, more efficient delivery of services among community partners, and benefits for businesses (beyond local spending) were not fully captured in the SROI model.

**Residents:** Approximately 43% of the social and economic value created by Wesley Street goes back to residents, through increases in wellbeing, employment earnings, increased disposable income, increased safety, and reduced harm. This shows that while dedicated-site supportive housing like Wesley Street creates important value for the government, it also generates value for people living in supportive housing.

### Lessons Learned

- › Investment in dedicated-site supportive housing creates significant social and economic value, not only for the various levels of government that may experience decreased service use, but also for supportive housing residents and local communities. Further investment in dedicated-site supportive housing is expected to generate value while addressing a social need.
- › Further research is needed to continue to understand and track the social and economic value created from dedicated-site supportive housing.

### Discussion

With nearly four dollars in social and economic value generated by Wesley Street for every dollar invested, it is clear that significant value is created through the operation of dedicated-site supportive housing for single adults (both men and women) who have had difficulty obtaining or maintaining housing.

It is important to note that the SROI analysis of Wesley Street provides a conservative estimate of the total social and economic value created, since it was not possible to measure the financial value of all potential outcomes. Further, outcomes were not valued into the future, despite the possibility of longer-term impacts generated through the life skills and experience of stability gained through housing at Wesley Street. The actual social and economic value created by the ongoing operation of Wesley Street is likely much higher.

*“I’ve been surprised by my improvement in health”*

*– Wesley Street Resident*

### Thank You

*Our sincere thanks to all the residents who shared their perspectives and stories with us.  
Our sincere appreciation to Wesley Street staff for sharing their valuable insights and for supporting this study.*

### More Information:

Visit BC Housing’s Research Centre at [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org) to find the latest workshops, research and publications on building and operating affordable, sustainable housing.

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*This study was conducted by SROI experts at Constellation Consulting Group*