

A framework to assess the effectiveness and impact of a residential community-building model

Executive Summary



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With Minivillage team members and community coordinators | More Than A Roof | in the common room at Karis building.



Minivillage team and Building Management | More Than A Roof | inside the office at Karis building.

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organizations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability and climate action across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of Minivillage staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Minivillage or the University of British Columbia.



With building residents | More Than a Roof | Kindred building

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assessing Minivillage's community building model

Prepared by Paige Cummings, UBC Sustainability Scholar.

This program represents a partnership between the University of British Columbia and a network of local governments and organizations, aimed at advancing sustainability initiatives.



Purpose

Minivillage's model aims to improve resident health, well-being and collective resilience. It also enhances residents' sense of belonging, engagement, and relationships with property staff, while offering data insights for building operators.

This project developed a custom evaluation framework to assess the model's impact on resident well-being and its financial outcomes for operators.

Context

Governments and community organizations have made efforts to boost social connections to improve community and individual well-being. Socially connected communities provide economic benefits like diversifying social networks leading to increased social capital.ⁱ Stronger connections among neighbours make communities safer and more resilient to natural disasters and economic uncertainty.ⁱⁱ Being socially connected has also been shown to provide multiple mental and physical health benefits leading to longer and healthier lives.ⁱⁱⁱ However, more than one in 10 Canadians report they often or always feel lonely.^{iv}

Metro 2050, Vancouver's regional growth plan, sets out strategies and goals for how "growth will be managed to support the creation of complete, connected, and resilient communities".^v One of the plan's five goals is to increase density in neighbourhoods creating more compact urban areas to increase housing supply.^{vi} Denser neighbourhoods with more multi unit housing has made achieving social connectedness more challenging.^{vii} Multi unit buildings can become sites for addressing social inequity and building community resilience if the plan ensures neighbourhood development and fosters neighbourhood-based social connection.^{viii}

Quick Numbers

How many people live in multi unit housing in Metro Vancouver?

42%

of the population

1.2 million

residents

Expected outcomes

- Measure the impact of Minivillage's community building model on resident well-being.
- Provide insights into how a stronger, more connected community has financial benefits for building operators and the local economy.
- Support ongoing learning for future adaptations of Minivillage's approach, to continue to best serve communities.
- Provide valuable insights on well-being that contribute to innovations in city planning and policy development.

A Unique Framework

This evaluation framework blends learnings from academic research and community engagement to include well-being and commercial impact indicators.

7 Commercial Indicators

The commercial indicators measure the financial and operational impact of Minivillage's approach.

Increased resident well-being through stronger social connection



- Building Costs
- Staffing Costs
- Resident Satisfaction
- Brand Differentiation
- Improved staff wellbeing and employee satisfaction
- Impact on Local Economy
- Financial Value to Tenants

14 Well-Being Indicators

The well-being indicators measure the social impact of Minivillage's approach. They include variables key to both individual and community well-being.



Community-focused, real-time, and adaptive methods

Developmental Evaluation Methods

To drive innovation by deeply understanding complex, interconnected challenges facing communities.

Formative and Impact Evaluation Framework

To support the continuous learning and adaptation of the approach based on real-time data and feedback.

Community-Engaged Evaluation Methods

To prioritize methods that are focused on the interests of communities, ensuring respectful and responsive data practices.

Informed by an in-depth research process

Exploration of Literature

Related to well-being, community building, social connectedness, and best evaluation practices.

Learnings from Existing Programs

Focused on methods employed to evaluate the impact of these programs and indicators created to measure well-being.

Community Outreach

With building managers, operators, and tenants at Karis and Kindred MTR buildings during the planning and testing phases of framework creation.

Insights from External Consultation

With experts in the fields of evaluation practices and community building.



Pilot evaluation advisory circle | More Than A Roof | Kindred common room

Implementing the Evaluation

Phase One: Organize Evaluation Timeline

- Proactively arrange the timeline of evaluation activities before Minivillage’s approach is implemented.

Phase Two: Community Outreach

- Prepare to conduct the evaluation by centering the best interests of the community.
- Share information about the evaluation process through focus groups and flyers.
- Host a resident advisory circle to learn the best strategies for conducting equitable and successful evaluations in their community.

Phase Three: Implementation

- Administer the baseline survey.
- Continue community outreach to build trust and respectful relationships with community members.

Phase Four: Ongoing Evaluation

- Fully implement the evaluation’s data collection and analysis methods.
- Consider extending the evaluation timeline. The initial timeline covers one year, but as the community evolves, additional time may be required to gather more data.

Data collection methods

- Every four months: surveys / focus groups / key informant interviews with residents.
- Every 6 months: operator surveys.
- Ongoing: observations / social pattern assessment.

Data analysis methods

- Cost-effectiveness analysis of reported operating costs.
- Qualitative coding of interview / focus group transcripts.
- Comparative analysis of quantitative data from surveys.

Key Aspects of the Framework

- **Ongoing Community Engagement:** Ongoing dialogue with building residents provides important insights on how to run an equitable and successful evaluation.
- **Adaptive, Flexible Approach:** The evaluation approach is flexible and responsive to real-time feedback as evaluations progress and data is collected.
- **Shared Learning:** Evidence gained from the evaluation should go directly into adapting the Minivillage model to help it better meet the needs of communities.
- **Continued learning:** Ongoing engagement with literature and experts will ensure the evaluation and Minivillage model align with emerging perspectives on community building.
- **In-depth process:** Community building does not happen overnight. A long-term evaluation allows adequate time for deep connections to develop.

References

- ⁱ Murthy, V. H. “Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community.” US Public Health Service. 2023.
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- ⁱⁱⁱ Murthy, V. H. “Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation”. 2023.
- ^{iv} Statistics Canada. “Canadian Social Survey: Loneliness in Canada.” The Daily. 2021

^v Metro Vancouver. About Metro 2050. Regional Growth Strategy. N.D.

^{vi} Metro Vancouver Regional Planning. Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy: Executive Summary. Metro Vancouver. 2022.

^{vii} Morris J. Wosk, “Developing Truly Complete Communities: Social equity, social connectedness, and multi-unit housing in an age of public health and climate crises.” Hey Neighbour Collective (Discussion paper to inform Metro 2050). 2020.

^{viii} Morris J. Wosk, “Developing Truly Complete Communities”. 2020.

Why work with Minivillage?

Minivillage helps you transform your building into a thriving community with a culture of care, so that you and your residents can enjoy a shared sense of purpose, deeper relationships and flourish together.

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