



Innovation in Planning Approvals (Bloomberg)

General Issues Committee – Report PED25047

April 9, 2025

Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track Program – What is it?

Helps cities adopt cutting-edge innovation techniques that engage residents in testing, adapting, and scaling ideas with the potential for long-term impact.



<https://centreforpublicimpact.org/resource-hub/innovation-track-of-the-bloomberg-harvard-city-leadership-initiative/>

Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track Program – The Challenge

The Challenge: Improve the City's development approvals process to address housing affordability and availability, supporting the Mayor and Council's commitment to build 47,000 housing units by 2031.

The Goal: To identify and implement innovative practices and technologies to streamline and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of development application reviews through collaboration.

Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track Program - Project Team

Planning and Economic Development

- Sean Kenney - **Project Lead**
- Jana Kelemen
- Jenn Hohol
- Jill Juhlke
- Joyanne Beckett
- Monir Moniruzzaman
- Rino Dal Bello
- Rob Lalli
- Tricia Collingwood

City Manager's Office

- Cyrus Tehrani
- Jocelyn Strutt

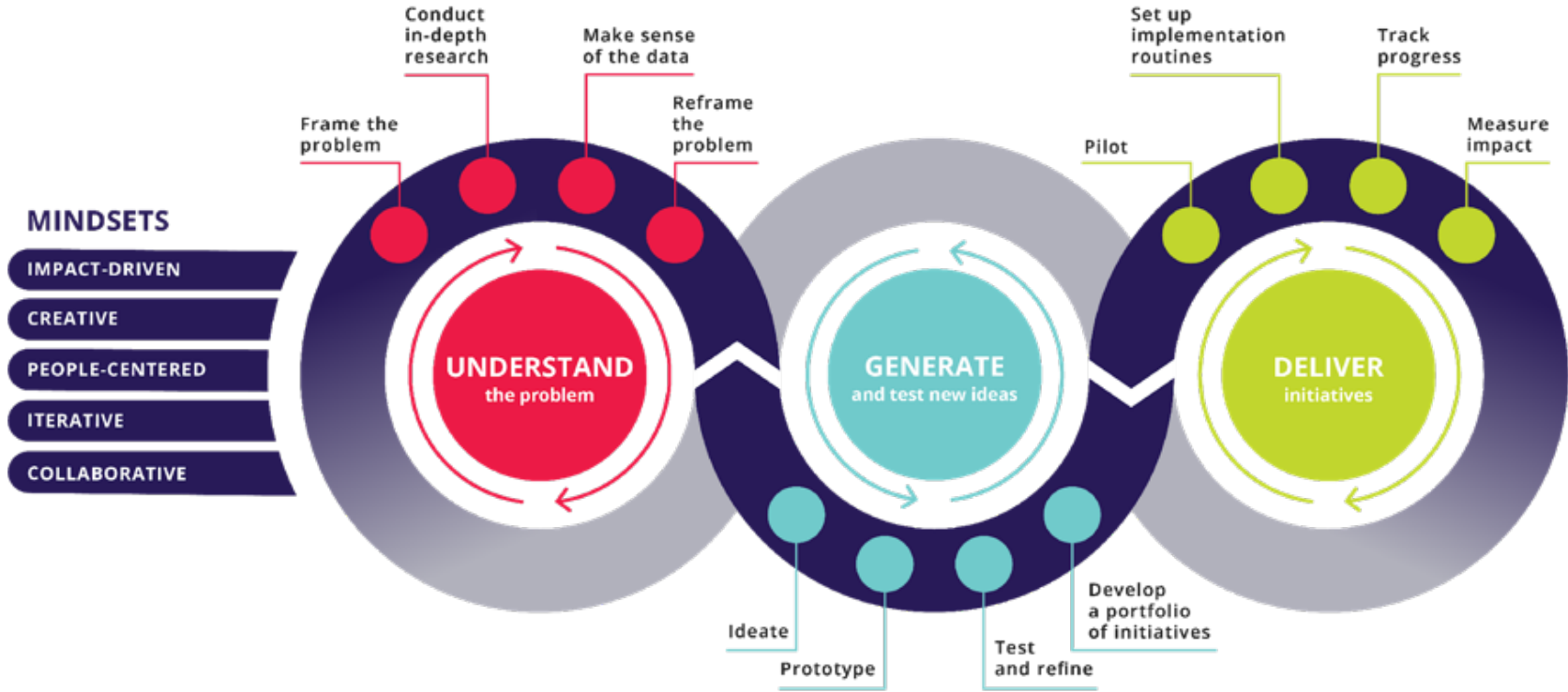
Mayor's Office

- Uzma Qureshi

Public Works

- Hanna Daniels

Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track Program

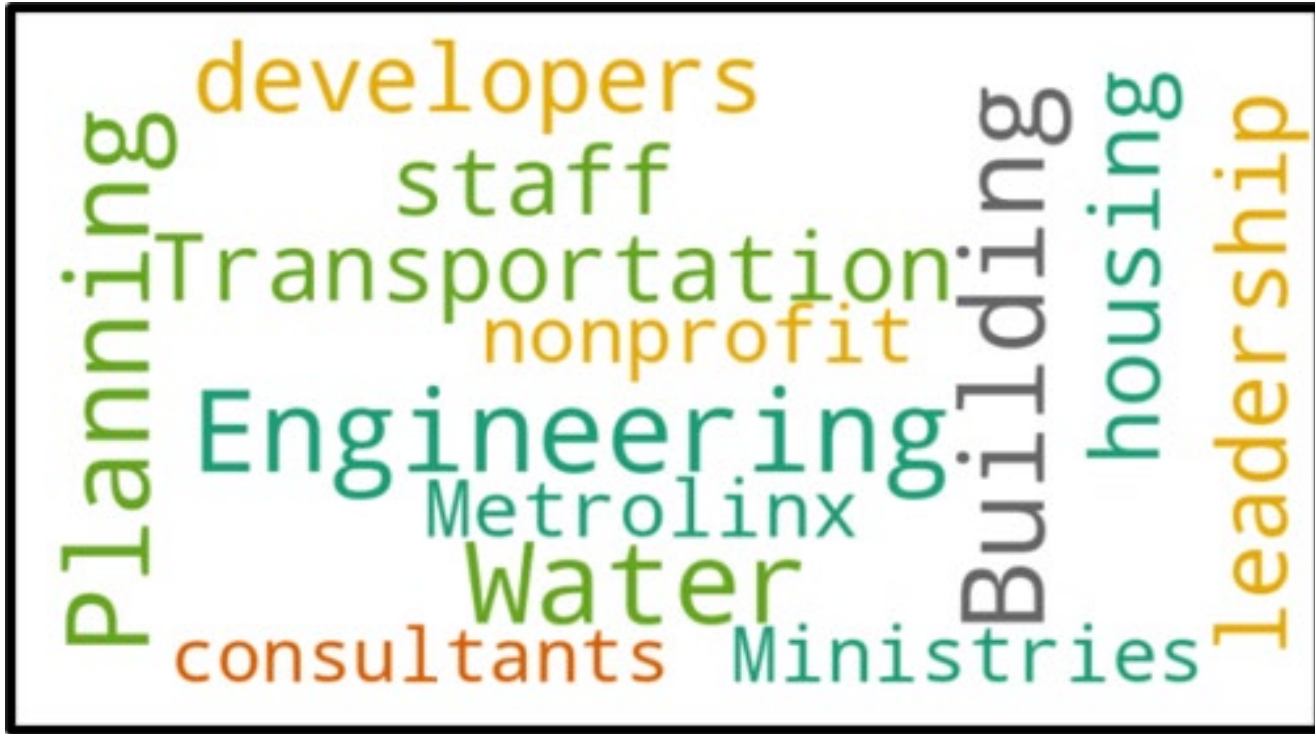


Consider the Customer



<https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/blog/2022/11/we-used-your-insights-to-update-our-graphic-on-equity.html>

Step #1 Understand the Problem – Who was Consulted?



Step #1 Understand the Problem – What We Heard

*“As a non-profit developer trying to do public good, I feel **frustrated** with the lack of communication and transparency throughout the application process.”*



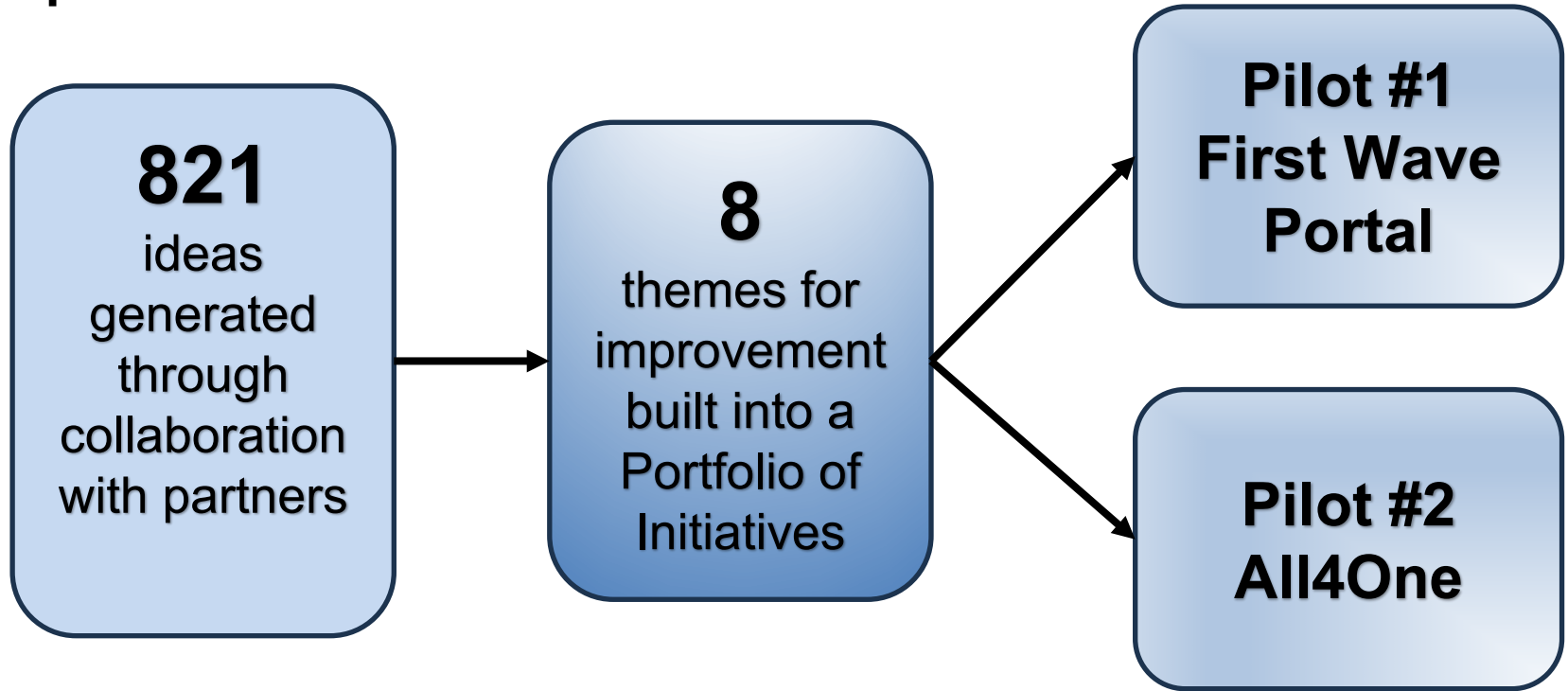
*“We should **start working together** to find the best solutions so we can build more homes for people in need.”*

Step #1 Understand the Problem – Redefined Problem Statement

There is insufficient coordination and unclear expectations for development approvals needed to efficiently and effectively achieve housing targets for the City of Hamilton.



Step #2 Generate and Test New Ideas



Step #3 Deliver Initiatives – First Wave Portal Pilot

What is it? Testing Artificial Intelligence technology to provide data informed development and planning assistance to applicants for low density residential applications.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Provide tools to staff to expedite the review process.



First Wave Portal Pilot Outcomes and Implementation Plan

Pilot Outcomes

- Automate time consuming and repetitive tasks.
- Accurate reviews for zoning and building code compliance.
- Automate data entry into zoning compliance responses.
- Reduction of human error.
- Provides clear plain language responses to complex zoning regulation.

Next Steps

- Expand testing of technology to include more application types.
- Collect feedback on customer experience using the technology from both internal and external user groups.
- Launch technology for staff and public use Q4 2025.

Step #3

Deliver Initiatives

– All4One Pilot

What is it? A cross-departmental team working on non-profit development projects, with a dedicated point of contact for each project.



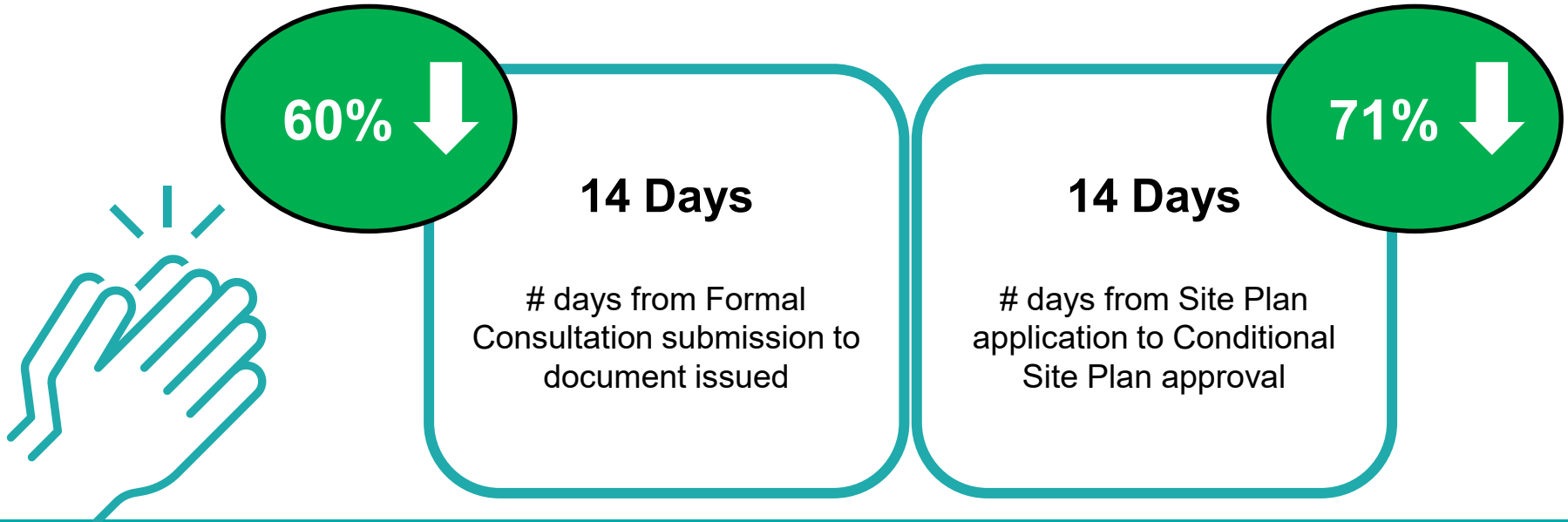
Anticipated Benefits:

- Shorten the overall approval timeline of the Site Plan process.
- Increase speed of decision making.
- Improve internal collaboration.
- Improve communication with applicants.

All4One Pilot Outcomes and Implementation Plan

Initial Pilot Outcomes:

Currently 3 applicants in All4One Pilot, 1 with conditional Site Plan



All4One Pilot Outcomes and Implementation Plan

Initial Pilot Outcomes:

- Solution driven discussions.
- Quicker decision making.
- More clarity for next steps and action for both staff and applicants.

Next Steps:

- Complete All4One pilot with up to 5 applications.
- Create All4One Playbook with staff roles and responsibilities.
- Explore other development application processes that may benefit from All4One approach.

Lessons Learned – Collaboration is Key!



To solve the problem, we must work with everyone involved in the development process.

Employees and the development community appreciated the opportunity to participate.

There was excitement for the project across City Departments.

Next Steps

- Complete implementation of First Wave Portal and All4One pilots.
- Determine lessons learned from pilots and application in other business areas.
- Implement Action Plan developed to support improvements in remaining Portfolio of Initiatives.
- Apply innovation tools to other City challenges.



Building Back Better: Response to Motion on Permit Reform Process

Continuous improvement work underway to improve the customer experience and increase efficiencies:

- New planning, permitting, licensing technology system
- Public facing dashboards with KPIs and reporting on development activity
- Continued commitment to meet *Planning Act* timelines for Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments
- New Mid-rise and High-rise zoning and expanding the Transit Oriented Corridor zoning
- New subdivision agreement
- Updated public notices and notice circulation
- Formal Consultation process and fee review
- Holding Removal process and fee review
- Site Plan conditions process review
- Customer experience journey mapping on approvals and incentive programs

Thank
you