# 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.

# 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, Planning - **Project Lead**
- Jana Kelemen, Planning
- Jenn Hohol, Strategy and Continuous Improvement
- Jill Juhlke, Transportation
- Joyanne Beckett, Building
- Monir Moniruzzaman, Development Engineering
- Rino Dal Bello, Planning
- Rob Lalli, Building
- Tricia Collingwood, Planning

## City Manager's Office

- Cyrus Tehrani, Chief Digital Office
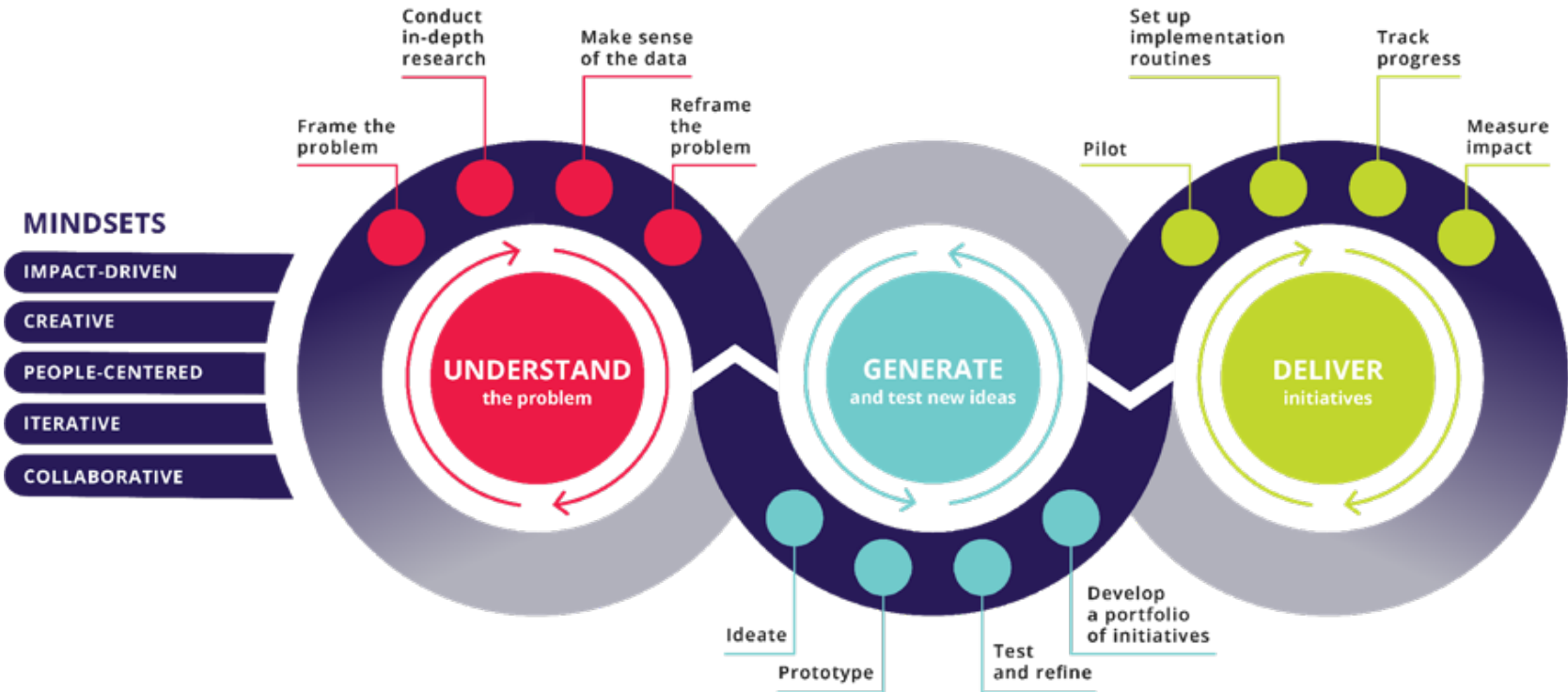- Jocelyn Strutt, Public Engagement

## Mayor's Office

- Uzma Qureshi, Mayors Chief of Staff

## Public Works

- Hanna Daniels, Water and Wastewater

# Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track Program



MINDSETS
- IMPACT-DRIVEN
- CREATIVE
- PEOPLE-CENTERED
- ITERATIVE
- COLLABORATIVE

UNDERSTAND the problem
- Frame the problem
- Conduct in-depth research
- Make sense of the data
- Reframe the problem

GENERATE and test new ideas
- Ideate
- Prototype
- Test and refine
- Develop a portfolio of initiatives

DELIVER initiatives
- Pilot
- Set up implementation routines
- Track progress
- Measure impact

Hamilton

# Consider the Customer



Equity and Equality

Diversity and Inclusion

Trauma Informed Decision Making

Bias

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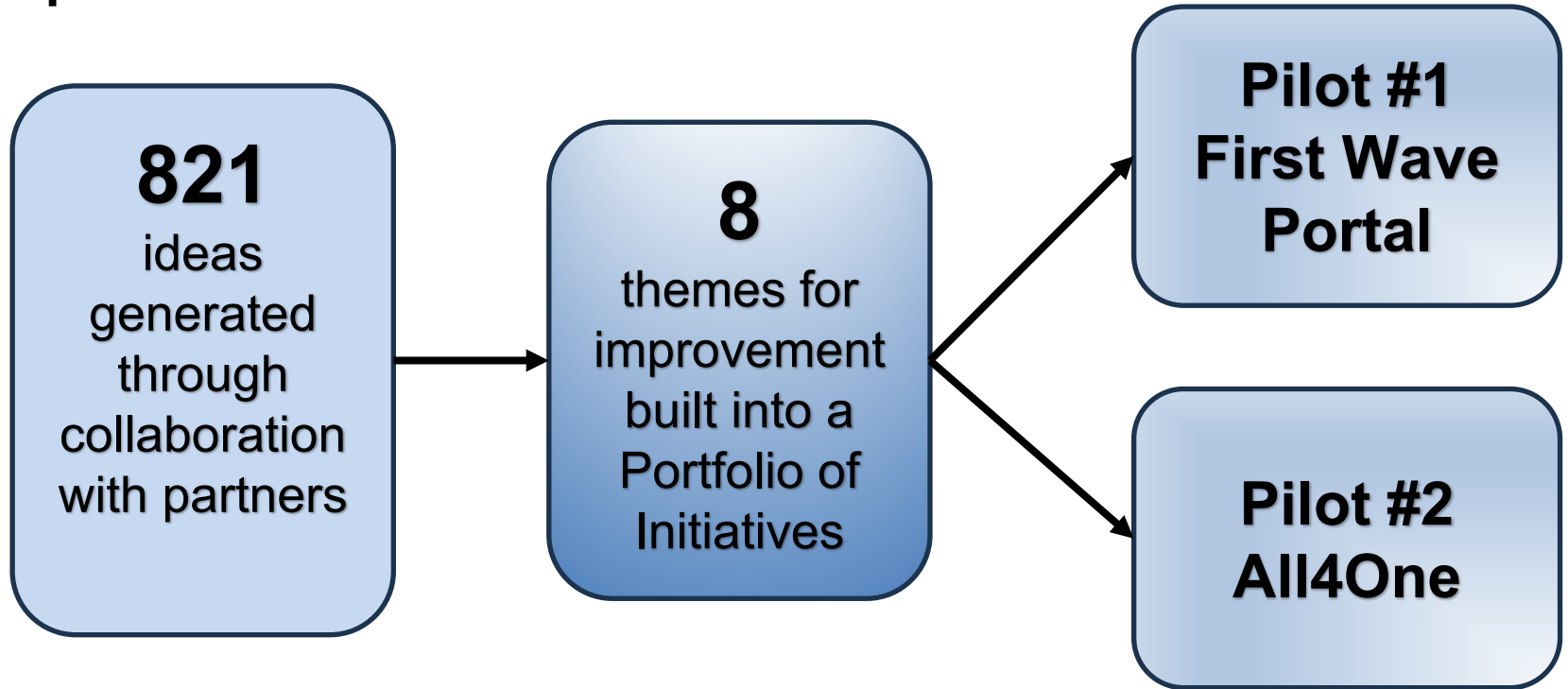
*"We should **start working together** to find the best solutions so we can build more homes for people in need."*

# 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

**821** ideas generated through collaboration with partners

→

**8** themes for improvement built into a Portfolio of Initiatives

→ **Pilot #1 First Wave Portal**

→ **Pilot #2 All4One**

# 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.
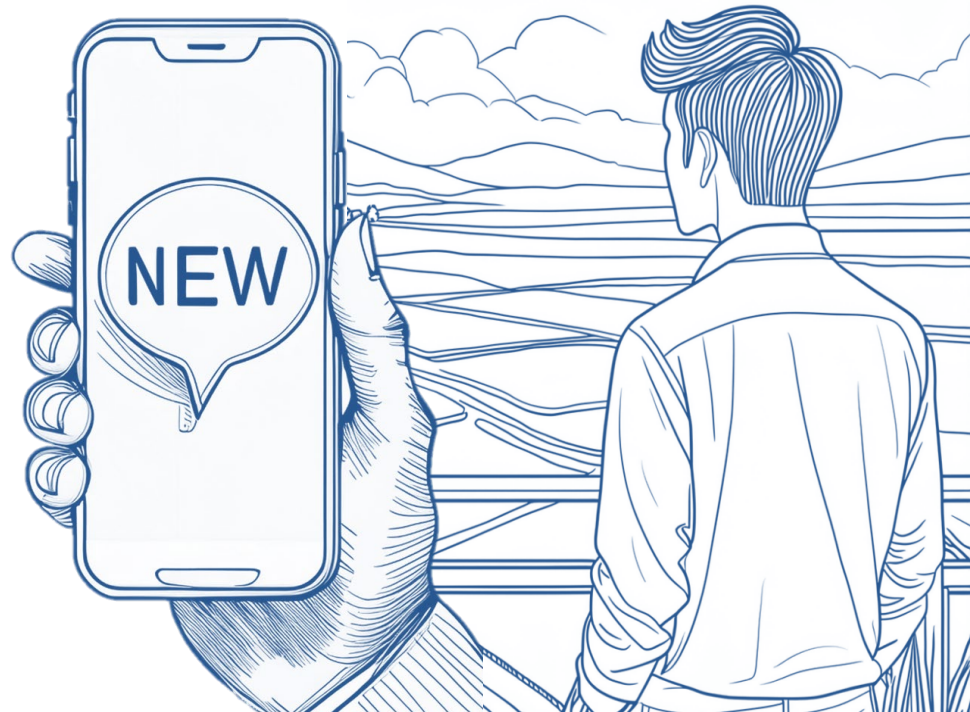
# First Wave Portal Pilot Outcomes and Implementation Plan

## 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.
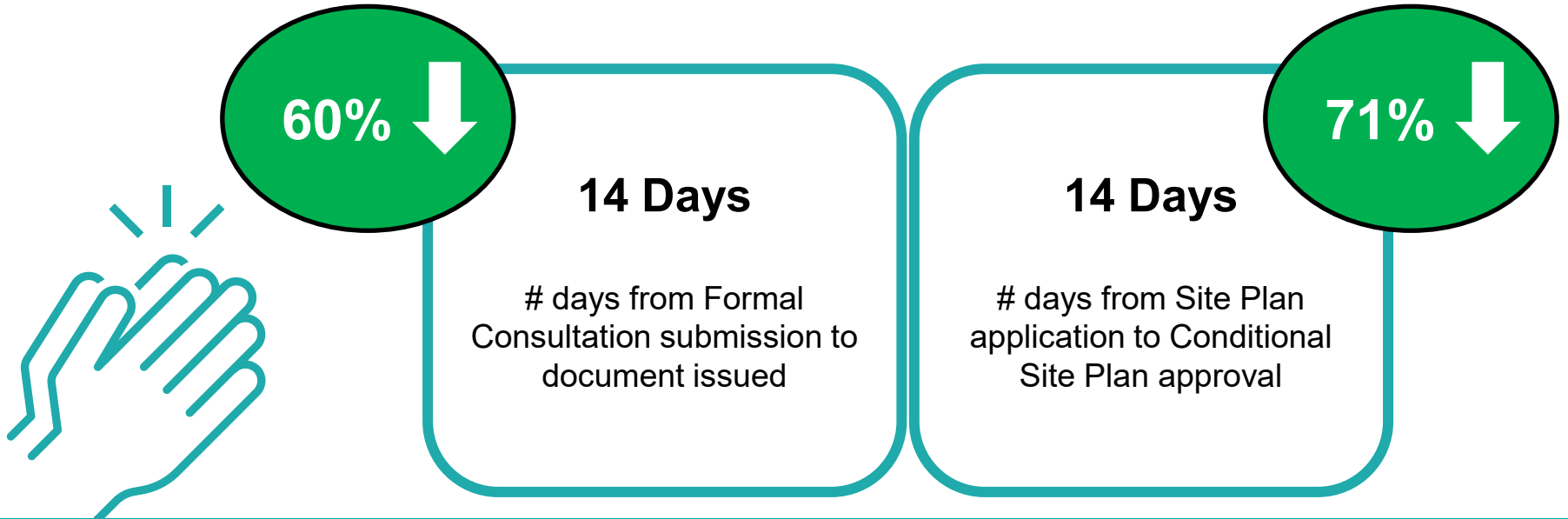


**Anticipated Benefits:**
- Shorten the overall approval timeline of the Site Plan process.
- Increase speed of decision making.
- Improve internal collaboration.
- Improve communication with applicants.

# All4One Pilot Outcomes and Implementation Plan

**Initial Pilot Outcomes:**

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

**60% ↓**

**14 Days**

# days from Formal Consultation submission to document issued

**71% ↓**

**14 Days**

# days from Site Plan application to Conditional Site Plan approval

# 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.*

Hamilton

# 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