



Govstream.ai Partnership

Transforming Bellevue's Permitting System: Early Results and Future Direction

In 2025, the Bellevue Development Services and Information Technology departments launched a public-private design partnership with Govstream.ai, a government-focused AI startup. Through this partnership, the team piloted cutting-edge permitting tools designed to expand staff capacity and deliver a faster, more responsive experience for applicants. Advanced AI tools are being integrated into the permitting process that enable staff to keep pace with demand while maintaining Bellevue's hallmark quality.

The Aim of This Work

This initiative focuses on modernizing a critical, high-demand public service and strengthening the city's overall permitting system. This is not "AI for AI's sake" - it's innovation that solves real problems, enhances staff capacity and improves community-facing services.

Status of Implementation

Adoption has grown from an initial pilot group of about 40 users to nearly 200 staff, moving the project from a pilot to implementation of the first phase. Phase I includes deployment of two AI assistants to city staff, trained on City codes, GIS data, permit data and other relevant information. Staff are using the assistants to help answer customer questions while reviewing and validating the AI-generated responses before providing them to customers.

What Comes Next

The work is progressing through a phased rollout, with the first phase already completed. Phase 1 delivered an internal guide that supports permitting staff by answering common questions and helping them respond more effectively to customer inquiries. With that foundation in place, the effort has moved into phase 2, which focuses on providing real-time permit application guidance directly to customers so they can understand requirements before submitting an application. The work in this phase also focuses on introducing AI-supported application triage that identifies issues early and accelerates processing.

Results: Building Confidence in the Path Ahead

Early results show meaningful time savings and clearer guidance for both staff and customers. The AI tool now completes the research that staff typically conduct during pre-application inquiries, generating citation-backed draft responses in under a minute. Staff review these results, make edits as needed, and finalize responses based on what the assistant provides from city code, GIS data, zoning regulations, parcel information, permit history and other sources. This work has targeted a 30% reduction in the time required to guide pre-application inquiries, allowing staff to focus their expertise where it matters most. In a one-month timeframe between June and July of 2026, staff estimate these tools saved them 152 hours of time, placing the city on a strong path towards meeting the 30% efficiency goal.

Complete Permit Applications – A Case Study

This case study highlights early results from Bellevue's partnership with Govstream.ai, showing how advanced AI tools can help applicants submit complete, review-ready permit applications the first time and enabling staff to reduce rework, shorten review cycles and maintain the city's hallmark quality.

Early data shows how continuous improvement in the system reduces correction cycles, frees staff to focus on judgment rather than paperwork, and sets the foundation for a faster, more predictable permitting experience for everyone.

Building on those early results, Bellevue and Govstream.ai are now refining rules, improving guidance, and expanding configuration so each new tuning round produces even better applications. Additional details on this case study are attached on the following pages.

Learn More

BellevueWA.gov/city-news/govstreamai-partnership



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CASE STUDY

Complete Permit Applications the First Time

How Govstream.ai and the City of Bellevue have partnered to reduce incomplete permit applications, eliminate unnecessary review cycles, and make permitting faster for applicants and staff.

3x More applications arrive complete on the first submission

Up from 22% before Govstream.ai to 67% today

96% Required documents correctly identified at intake

Flagged for applicants before they submit

Early results based on a back test of 276 real 2025 Bellevue building permits, replayed against Govstream.ai's configured intake assistant. Continued configuration and rule refinement are expected to further improve performance.

Bellevue is building fast. Permitting has to keep up.

Cranes on the skyline, a new light rail line, and one of the strongest development pipelines in Washington: Bellevue is building fast, and its permitting office sits at the center of all of it. Every home, addition, and tower depends on an application moving smoothly through review.

Submitting permitting applications has become increasingly complex for residents and builders alike. Regulatory requirements vary by project type, zoning, utilities, critical areas, and dozens of other conditions that applicants often discover only after they submit. Each incomplete application means at least one resubmission cycle: two to four weeks of added time, rework for the applicant, and another round of staff review before technical review can even begin.

In a random sample of 276 recent residential building permits, 78% were missing at least one required document on their first submission.

Personalized guidance for every applicant, every step

The Govstream.ai tools tested against Bellevue data provide applicants what they could previously only get from a counter visit: personalized guidance, specific to their property and their project, at every step.

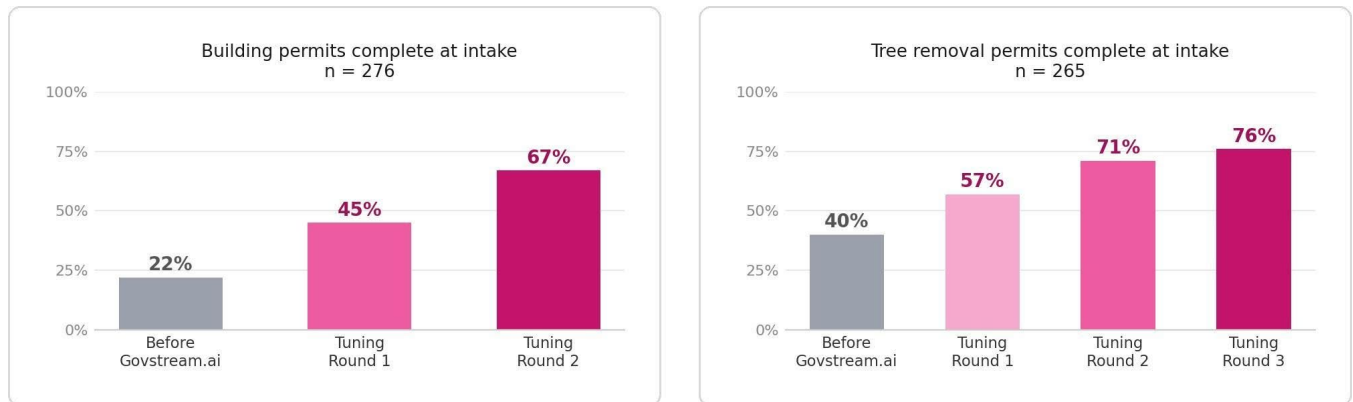
Research Assistant answers permitting questions in plain language and guides each applicant toward the right approach for their project, based on their property's unique site conditions. Applicants can explore different options, such as a detached ADU versus an addition, and see what's possible. Grounded in the city's own codes, policies, GIS data, and configured business rules, it identifies the right permit path and spells out the required documents, plans, and information.

Application Assistant picks up where the Research Assistant left off, carrying everything gathered during research into the application itself. Applicants upload their plans and supporting documents, and the assistant does the rest: it extracts key project information, fills out the right forms automatically, and scores completeness in real time. Applicants see exactly where their application stands and what is still missing before they submit.

The result: complete, well-prepared applications, fewer revision cycles for staff, and faster path to a Yes.

"We don't want to flag problems after someone has already submitted. We'd rather support our customers up front, so applications come in review-ready the first time." Jake Hesselgesser, Acting Director, Development Services Department, City of Bellevue

First-pass completeness climbed in every tuning round



Residential Building Permits

Govstream.ai was tested against 276 real Bellevue building permits for new single-family homes and major additions. Compared to the city's historical baseline:

- Applications arriving complete on the first submission increased from 22% to 67%
- The system correctly identified 96% of all required documents

Tree Removal Permits

The same test was run against 265 real tree-removal permits, a category where 60% of applications historically required at least one correction cycle before approval. After three tuning rounds:

- Applications arriving complete on the first submission increased from 40% to 76%
- The system correctly identified 86% of required documents, up from 74% in the first round

The analysis also surfaced an upstream opportunity: about one in five tree permit applications never reach issuance, often because the work was filed under the wrong permit type or needed no permit at all. Guiding applicants to the right path before they apply would eliminate an entire class of unnecessary applications.

Built to keep improving

These results come from the first phase of tuning Govstream.ai to Bellevue's codes and requirements, and the system improves with every review cycle. Each application shows where applicants get stuck and which requirements drive rework. Staff refine the rule configurations, and every future applicant benefits. Better applications improve the process, and a better process produces better applications.

The aim: more applications arriving complete, fewer correction cycles, and reviewers spending their expertise on judgment calls instead of paperwork chases.