

Anchorage, Alaska

**Willow Commons
Project Insights**



Content

1 Who we are

2 What we've learned about Willow Commons

3 What's next

Who We Are

The Bloomberg Cities Idea Exchange

Our goal is to
**spread
solutions**
and accelerate the
lending and borrowing
of successful civic
innovations



Bloomberg Evaluation Partner



GLOBAL EXPERTS

Conducted over 1,000 evaluations across 80 countries, enhancing decision-making for governments worldwide.



CITY SPECIALISTS

Partnered with 130+ cities to evaluate solutions to their most urgent challenges and inform decision-making.



PRAGMATIC EVALUATORS

Guide you through the process to design rigorous, scalable evaluations aligned with your policy goals.

Evaluating the replications of the Melody Project will help future cities make decisions

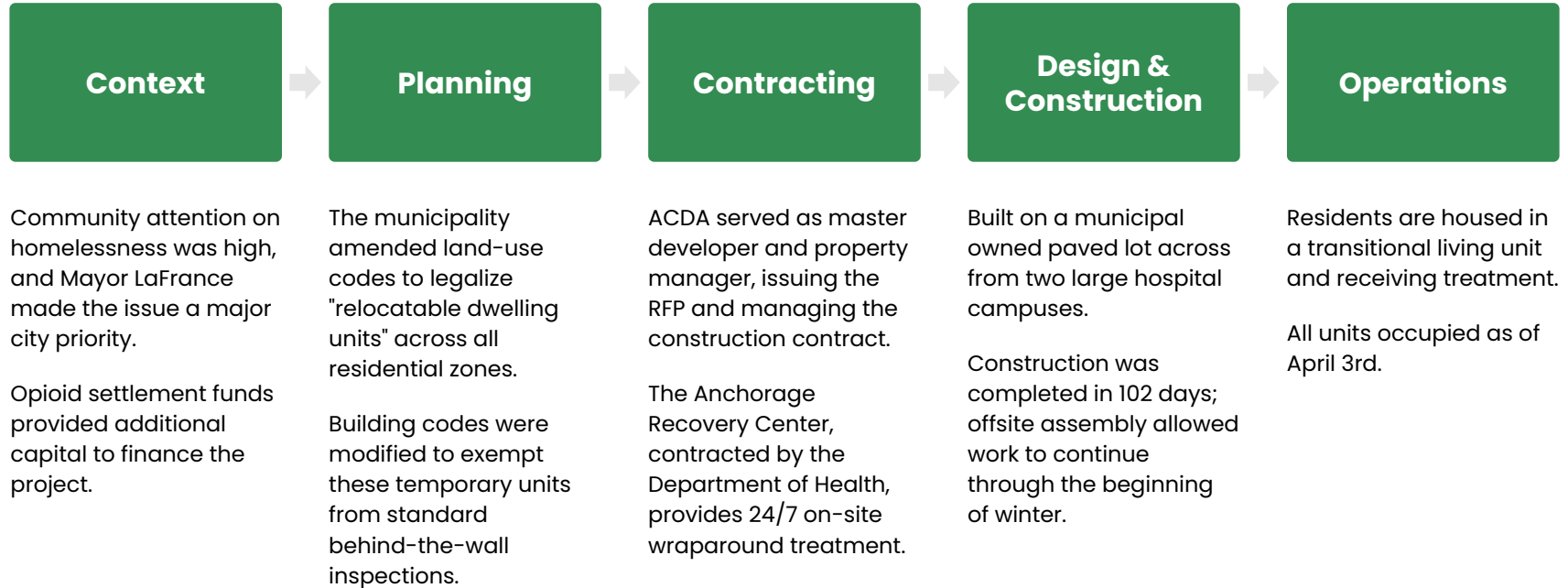
What we've set out to learn	How it will guide future decisions
• Characteristics of the target population • City geography and density • Alternative housing options	Whether the conditions in the city mean the idea would be a good fit
• Unit features • Site infrastructure • Material, land, and labor costs	The investment required to implement
• Choice of target population • Site selection • Design and construction • Social supports	How to adapt the idea to the local context
• What has worked well • Where there have been challenges	How to implement successfully

Willow Commons

Who we talked to

Name	Role	Responsibilities
Thea Agnew Bemben	Special Assistant to the Mayor	Project coordination
Mélisa Babb	MoA Planning Director	High-level land use and zoning code planning
Daniel King	MoA Engineering Services Manager	Structural engineer and building permitting
Daniel McKenna Foster	MoA Long-Range Planning Manager	Zoning and long-range planning manage
Mike Robbins	ACDA Executive Director	Property management
Eric Visser	Visser Construction	General contractor
Kimberly Rash	MoA Health Department Director	Treatment operation management
Melinda Gant Nora Morse Emily Goodykoontz	ACDA External & Community Affairs Director Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's office Press Secretary, Mayor's Office	Communications
Eva Gardner	MoA Municipal Attorney	Legal consultation

Willow Commons development process:



Important development lessons:



'In Our Backyard' pilot:

1. Identified necessary code changes
2. A visible example that made the development of more micro units more tangible.

Important development lessons:



Important Highlights

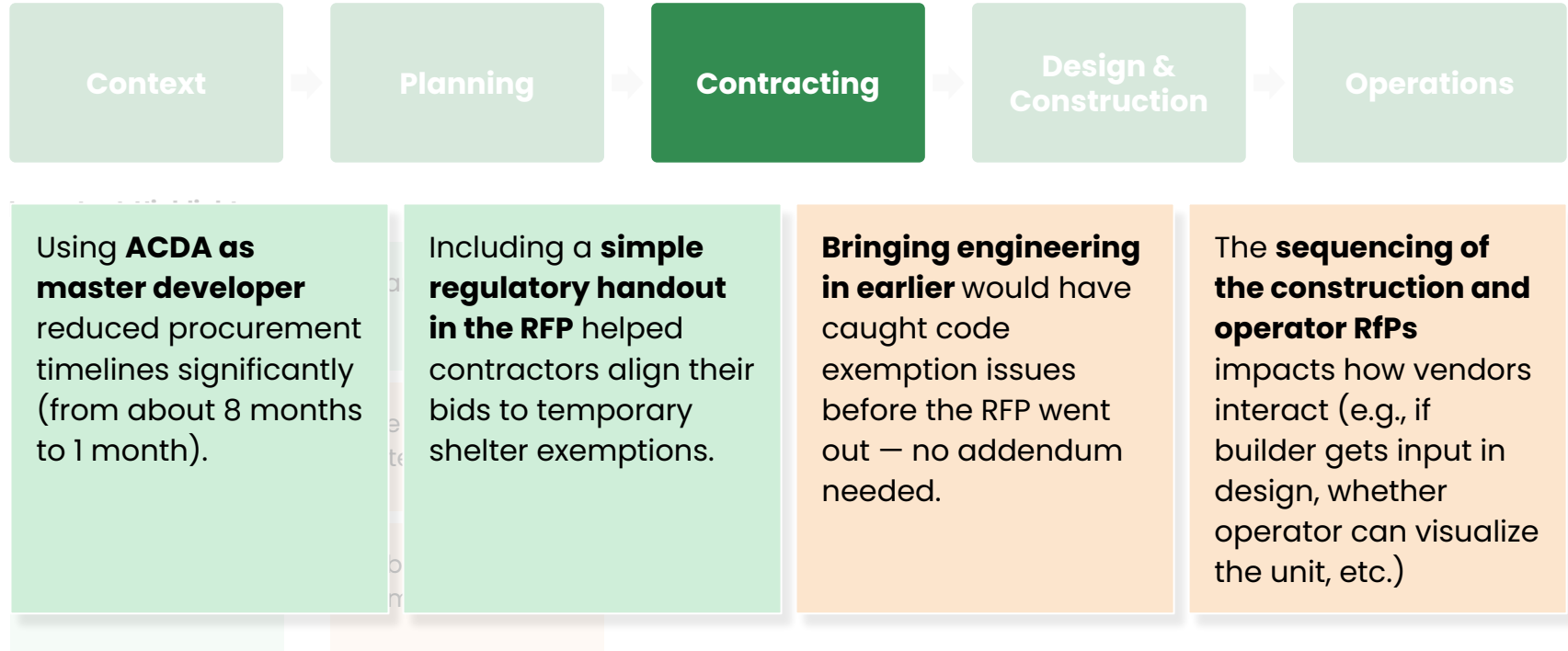
'In Our Backyard'
pilot

A **trusted, apolitical project leader** with direct access to the mayor, **backed by senior city staff**, broke through the usual bureaucratic roadblocks.

Finding a site that checked every box took considerable time. In the end, the chosen site still required adaptations.

Moving quickly made it **hard to give the public accurate timelines** — leaving room for confusion and false expectations.

Important development lessons:



Important development lessons:



Important Highlights

'In Our Backyard' pilot

Building in a controlled warehouse shielded the project from harsh weather and made the work more appealing to workers.

Temporary shelter classification waived internal inspections.

Establishing utilities on such a compressed timeline required strong coordination — and came down to the wire.

Important development lessons:



Important Highlights

'In Our Backyard' pilot

Team structure

Site determination

Public communication

ACDA as r
developer

Regulator
handout

Aligning w
engineer

RFP sequ

The **service billing model** should ensure that the operator is self-sufficient and does not need ongoing municipal funds.

Early branding as "Willow Commons" could have shaped public perception to make the project feel like a community.

Next Steps

What's next

Now

We're in Anchorage this week to see Willow Commons in person, hear how things have been going, and learn about current approaches to housing development.

Short-term

We're documenting similar efforts in two other cities (Shreveport and Atlanta).

Long-term

We'll publish a report on our findings to guide other cities on rapid development housing projects.

Thank you!

