Indigenous Land Recognition

Morehead-Cain

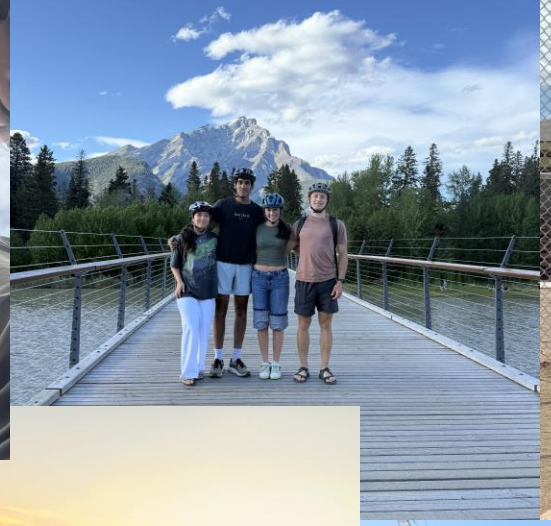
Smart Cities x Morehead-Cain Civic Collaboration | 07/08/2025

Shaping Digital Trust in The Calgary Tech Ecosystem

Morehead-Cain Scholars and Students @ the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, partnering with the City of Calgary's Wave Tech to Investigate Digital Trust

- Ecosystem Outreach: Tech Industry in Calgary
- What is the best way to engage Calgarians to build trust in Smart Cities initiatives?
- What are Calgarians' concerns regarding the Calgary tech ecosystem?

Our Team



The Voices

Five Key Findings

1. Privacy is Personal and Risk-Laden

Privacy underpins digital trust, but when it's seen as unmanageable or inevitably violated, people disengage and feel exploited.

"The tentacles of privacy and lack of privacy are everywhere, so it becomes a little bit overwhelming."

- Margo Purcell, CEO of InceptionU

2. Transparency is Necessary, but Rarely Sufficient

Transparency without accountability or action can backfire, eroding trust rather than building it.

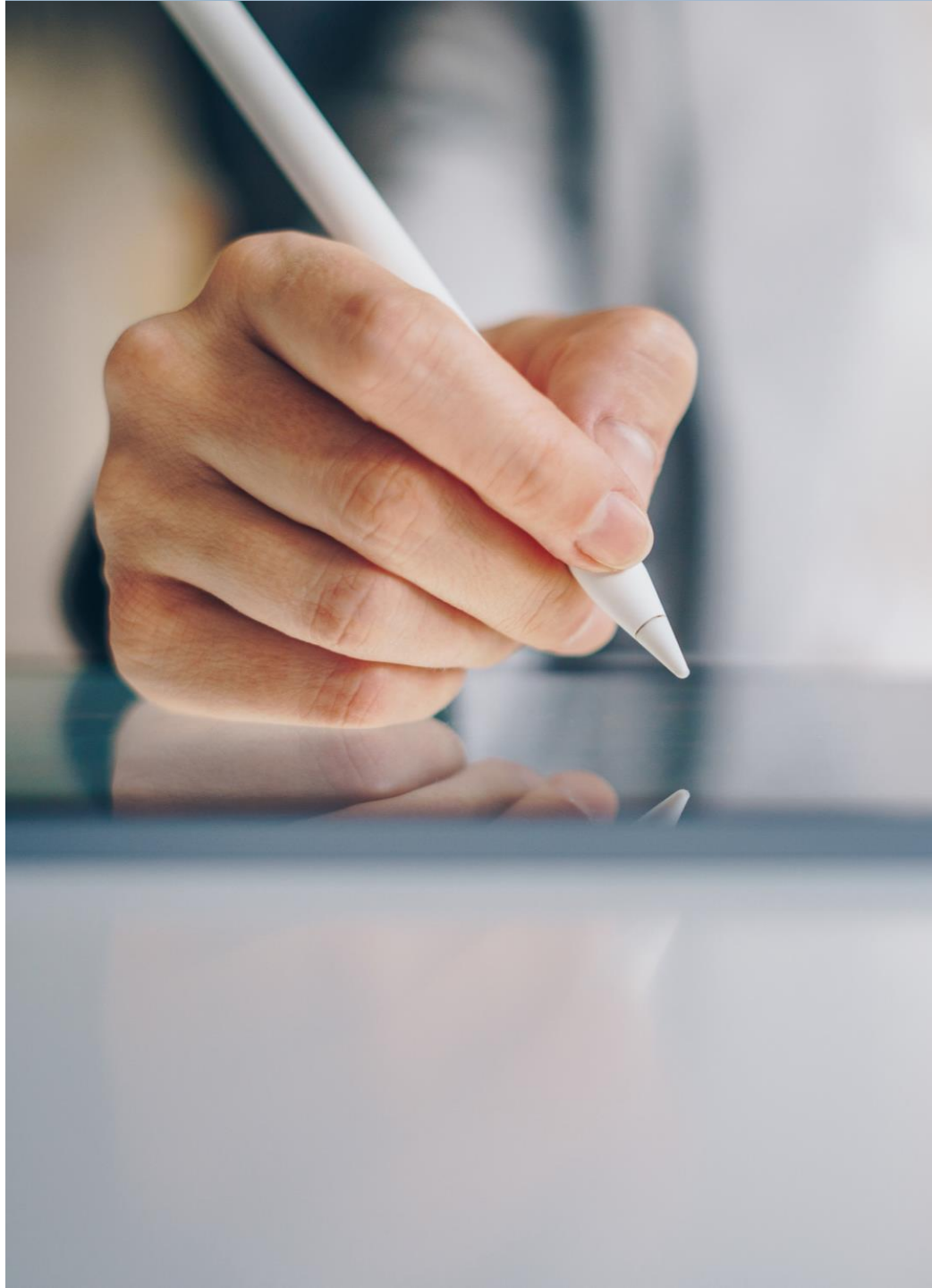
“Transparency isn’t even the solution. If you’re being transparent doing bad things, the things are still bad.”
- Käthe Lemon, President and Co-Owner of RedPoint Media Group

3. Stewardship Requires Accountability, Not Just Infrastructure

True digital stewardship comes from culture, education, and ethical responsibility, not just policies or tech safeguards.

“If you’re pumping out code faster than you can vet, you’re going to cut corners.”

- Chris Karaplis, CEO of Simply Embedded



4. Human Connection is Essential, Even in Tech-Centric Systems

People, not platforms, are what build trust, even in the most technology-driven systems.

“You can have all of the tech in the world, but if you can’t create a personal connection with people, they’re not going to believe what you say.” - Mayor Gondek

5. Digital Trust is a Relational, Participatory Concept:

Digital trust is a two-way relationship where both communities and companies must actively invest to sustain it.

“If you want to have a voice on key decisions, you need to make sure that you are part of the process.”

- Aly Khan Musani, CFO & COO at Symend

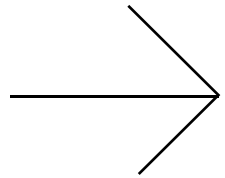
Ecosystem Challenges

Without aligned incentives, digital privacy, transparency, and stewardship struggle to gain traction because ethics are rarely rewarded commercially.

“Prioritizing ethical tech and transparency means creating demand... regulation infrastructure only goes so far.”

- Jacqueline Lu, CEO and Founder of Helpful Places

Ecosystem Challenge 1: Misaligned Incentives

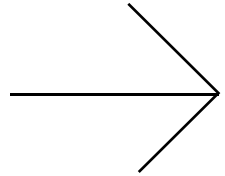


Digital trust plays very different roles across public and private sectors, making collaboration toward common goals challenging.

“Trust is built by doing the better thing for the consumer rather than yourself.”

- Käthe Lemon, President and Co-Owner of RedPoint Media Group

Ecosystem Challenge 2: Bridging Different Mandates: The Public and Private Tech Sector



For Indigenous communities, digital trust must center on self-determination, consent, and data sovereignty — building from a foundation of cultural relevance and local control.

“Threats to Indigenous data are a continuation of old processes of extraction and exploitation.”

- Tahu Kukutai, Professor at University of Waikato

Ecosystem Challenge 3: Data Sovereignty

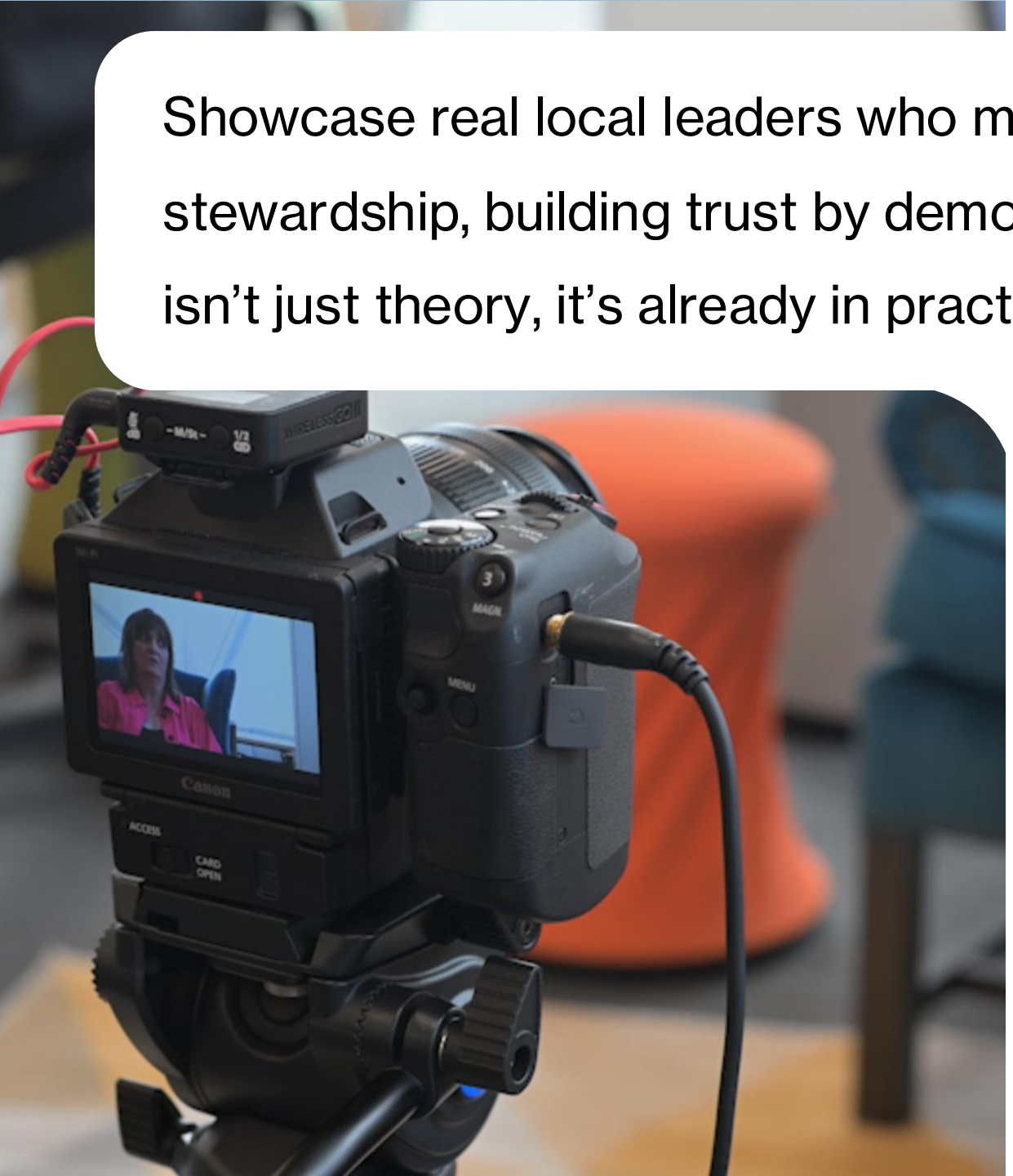
External Case Studies

External Research + Case Studies

Entity	Action	Outcome
San Jose x tech procurement	Application of Social Procurement Principles to Digital Goods	Started GovAI Movement
Estonia DataTracker	Targeted & Personalized Transparency	Tool for citizens to access data and hold collectors accountable
Amsterdam Tada Manifesto	Reshaping Tech Culture	Movement around a culture of stewardship and principles

Recommendations

Showcase real local leaders who model privacy, transparency, and stewardship, building trust by demonstrating that ethical technology isn’t just theory, it’s already in practice in Calgary



Ethical Tech Practices Video

Margo Purcell
CEO, InceptionU

Align the City’s purchasing decisions with digital ethics by rewarding vendors who prioritize privacy and transparency

Social Procurement Ethical Tech Expansion

Provide residents with personalized, easy-to-understand data about sensors in their neighborhoods to improve trust by making transparency accessible, relevant, and actionable.

Public Sensor Transparency Platform (Web Tool)

Description: Monitors bicycle and pedestrian traffic in Bellline/Sunalta area.

Data Collected

- bicycle count
- pedestrian count

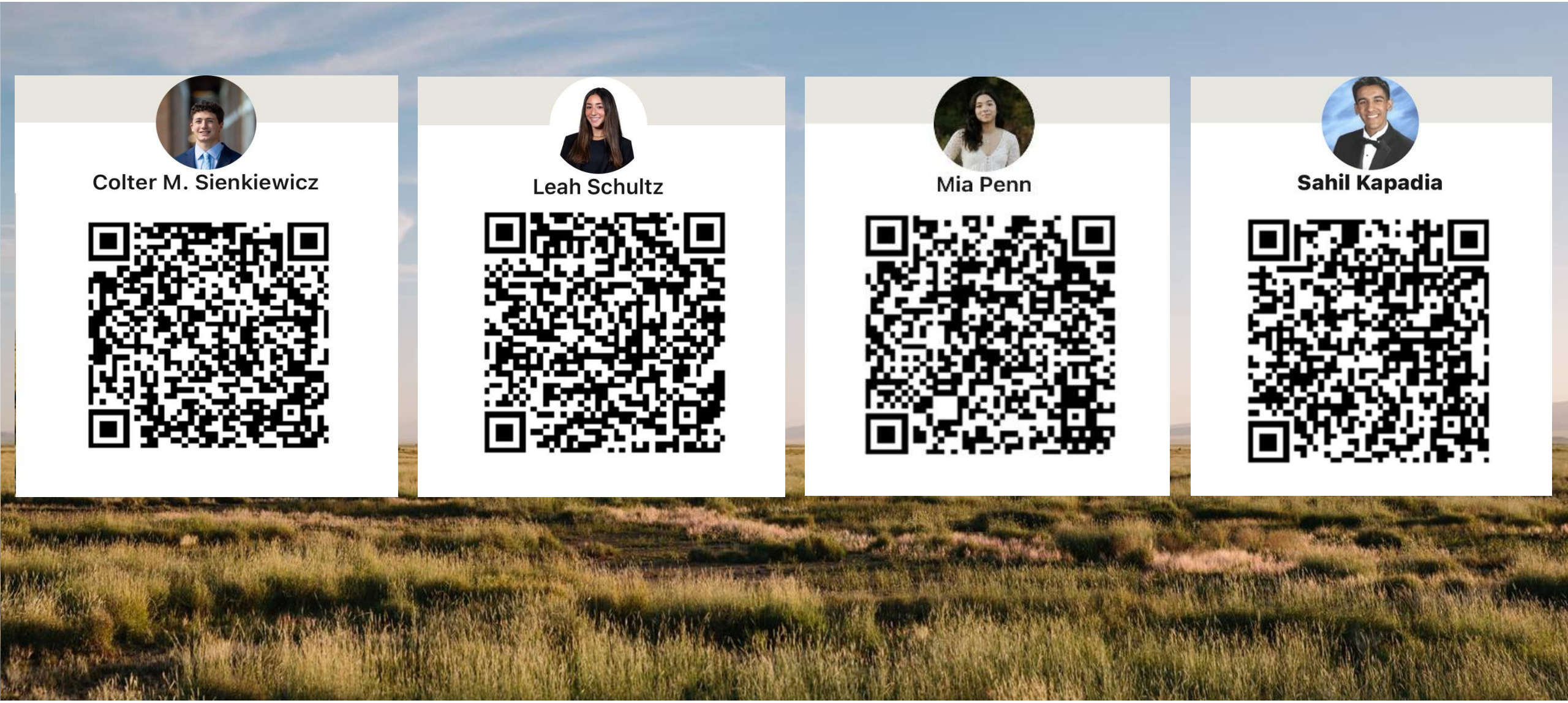
Status: active

Installation Date: 2023-01-30

Last Maintenance: 2025-05-19

AI Assistant

How does this help the city?



Panel + Q&A