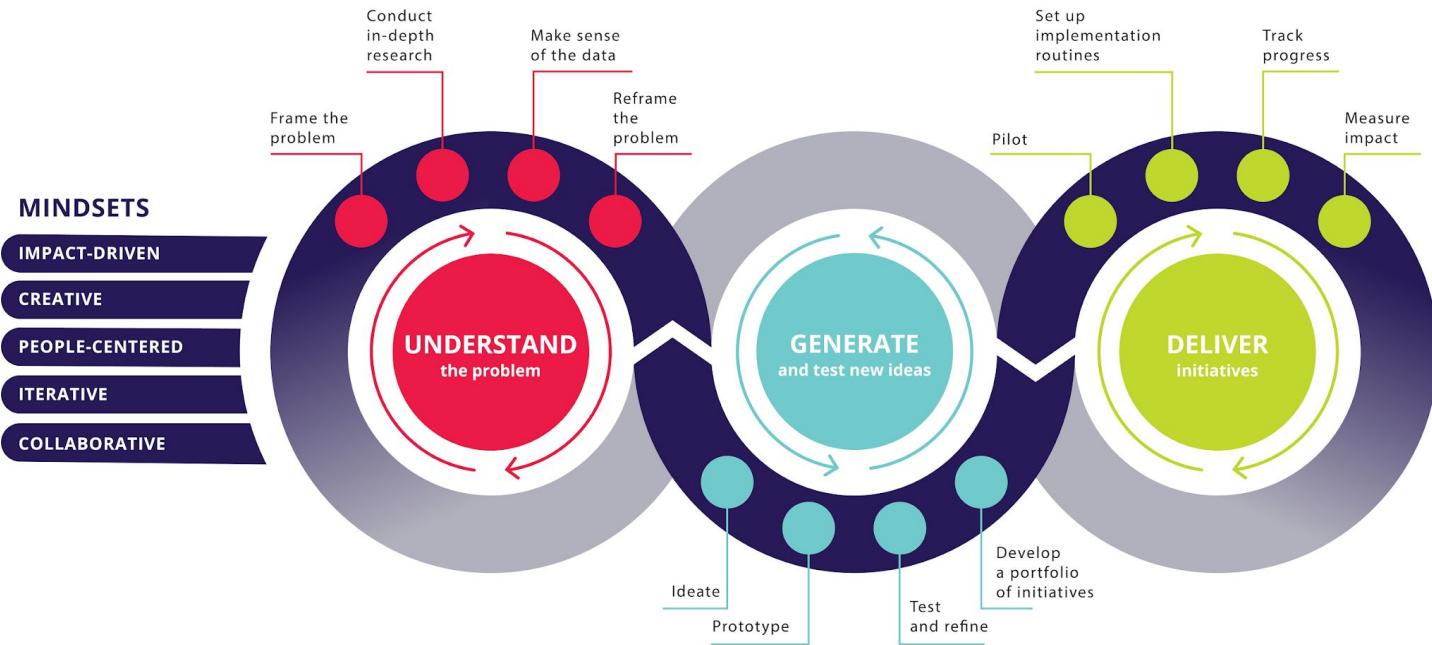# Public Innovation: Research, Ideation, and Testing for Better and Bolder Outcomes

Abby Miller, Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation (BCPI) at Johns Hopkins
Brian McGough, Centre for Public Impact (CPI)

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Innovation is a problem-solving approach that creates tangible, measurable impact for residents by improving public services.

Traditionally, we might solve problems like this…

We meet in a room with our regular colleagues to identify a solution.

We feel stuck, but rely on ideas that feel familiar, certain, and realistic because new ones feel risky.

How is innovation different? Let's follow Boise

In Boise, **rising housing prices** and **low housing stock** made it challenging for residents to find and keep affordable rental housing.

This lead to **displacement, homelessness**, and **feelings of disconnection** in the City.

The **City needed new ideas** to address this problem.
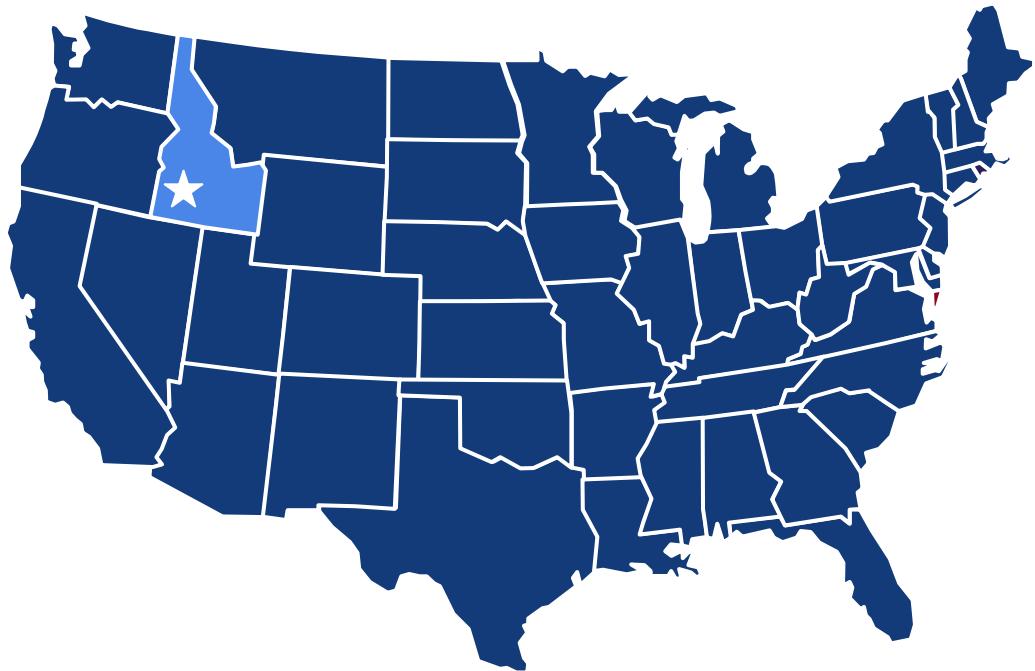
Innovation helps us get "unstuck" by starting with questions about the what, who, and why of the problem.

| Challenge	Questions
Solve the Boise housing crisis	***What*** ● What is the problem, exactly? ● What data do we have to better understand the challenge? ***Who*** ● What resident groups are most impacted by the housing crisis? ● What are their experiences with housing? ● What do they need or want to improve their situation? ***Why*** ● What systemic forces contribute to the housing crisis? ● What happens if we don't solve this issue?

We use in-depth research to help us understand how residents and stakeholders experience the problem in day-to-day life.

Observations of rental units helped the team experience the problem in real time.
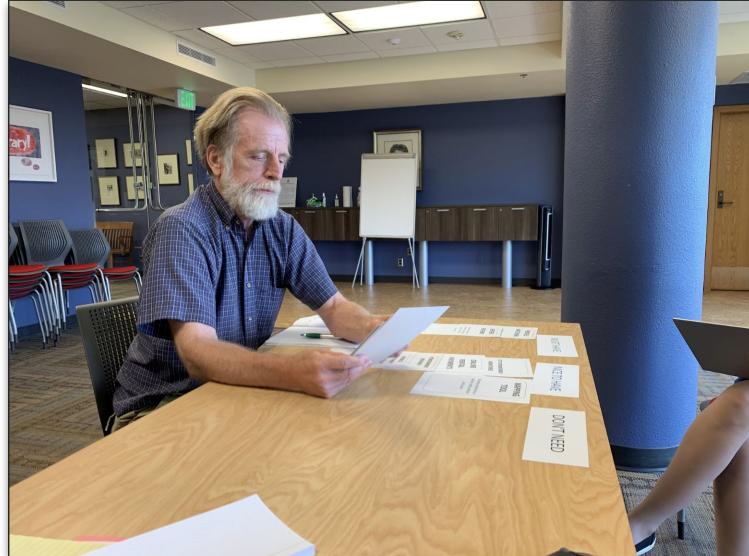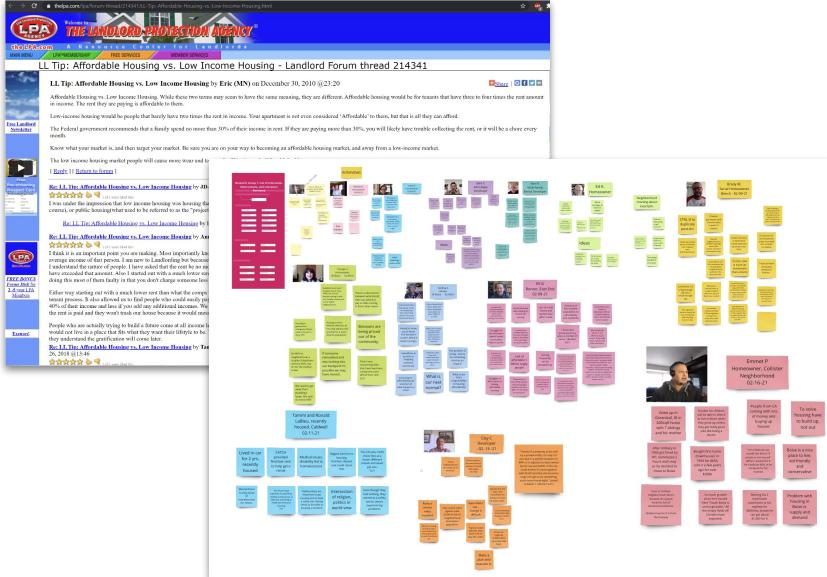

Interviews gave teams an opportunity to ask nuanced questions about renting.

Innovation marries the primary data with secondary data to tell a comprehensive story about the problem.
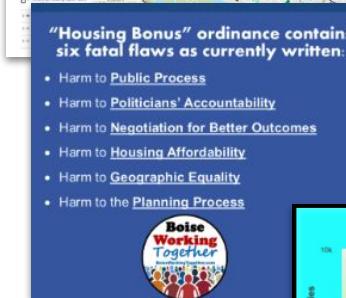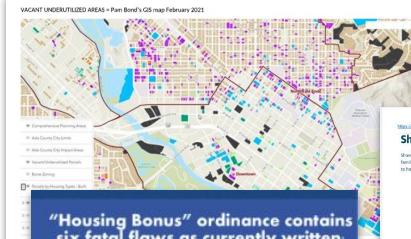
Primary data

Notes from interviews + analysis of online Boise forums
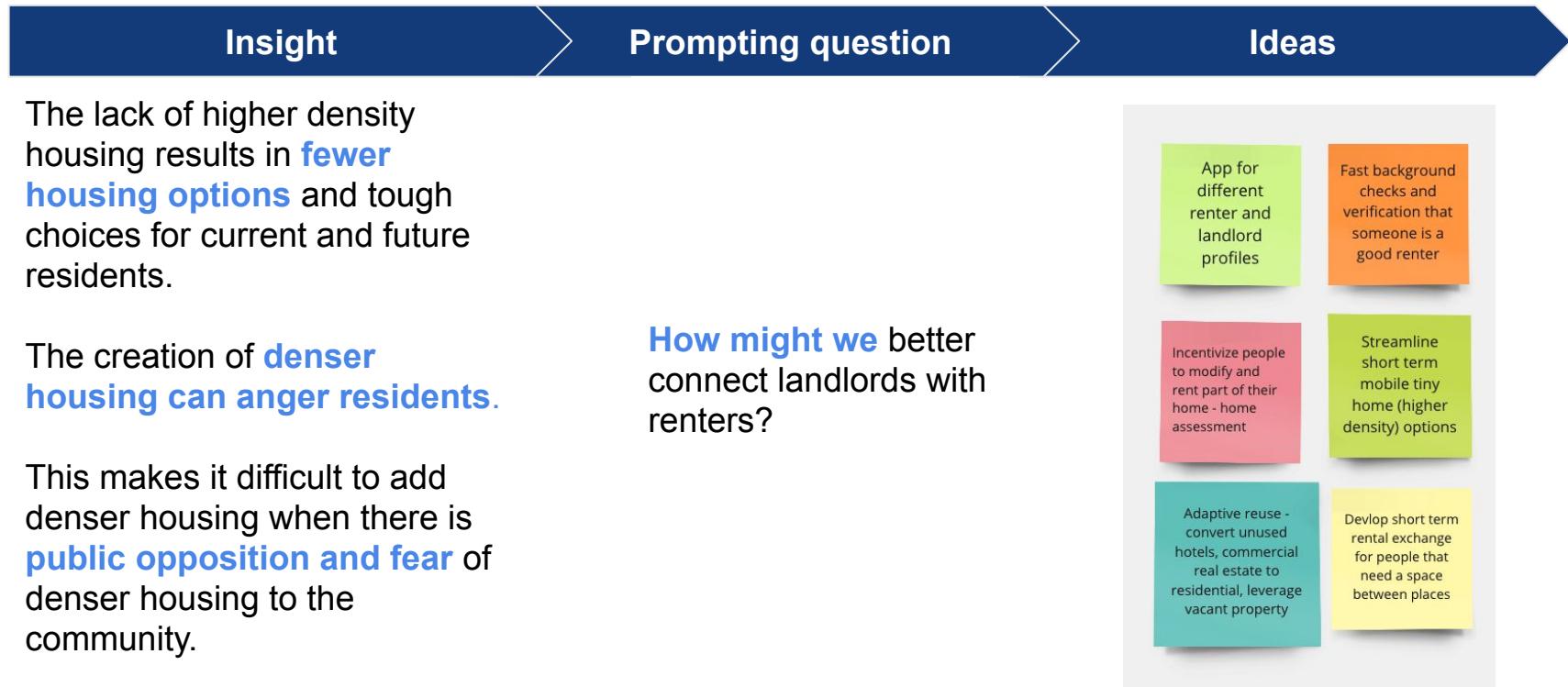

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Secondary data

Policy analysis, literature reviews, economic data

With these inputs, we can tell insightful stories that prompt us to imagine solutions with resident needs at the core.

Insight	Prompting question	Ideas

The lack of higher density housing results in **fewer housing options** and tough choices for current and future residents.

The creation of **denser housing can anger residents**.

This makes it difficult to add denser housing when there is **public opposition and fear** of denser housing to the community.

How might we better connect landlords with renters?

App for different renter and landlord profiles

Fast background checks and verification that someone is a good renter

Incentivize people to modify and rent part of their home - home assessment

Streamline short term mobile tiny home (higher density) options

Adaptive reuse - convert unused hotels, commercial real estate to residential, leverage vacant property

Devlop short term rental exchange for people that need a space between places

From there, we test our assumptions and collect more data — starting with questions about our ideas before building more sophisticated solutions.

Prototype 1: Landlord <> Renter Service

This basic storyboard helped Boise answer: "How would residents and landlords better connect to find housing?"

Prototype 2: Accessible Housing (ADU) Proposal

This basic wireframe helped Boise answer: "Would residents feel incentivized to build ADUs?"

By iterating and refining, innovation builds confidence in the solutions that will work—and those that won't.

BASEMENT CONVERSION   CONVERTED GARAGE   DETACHED ADU   ATTACHED ADU
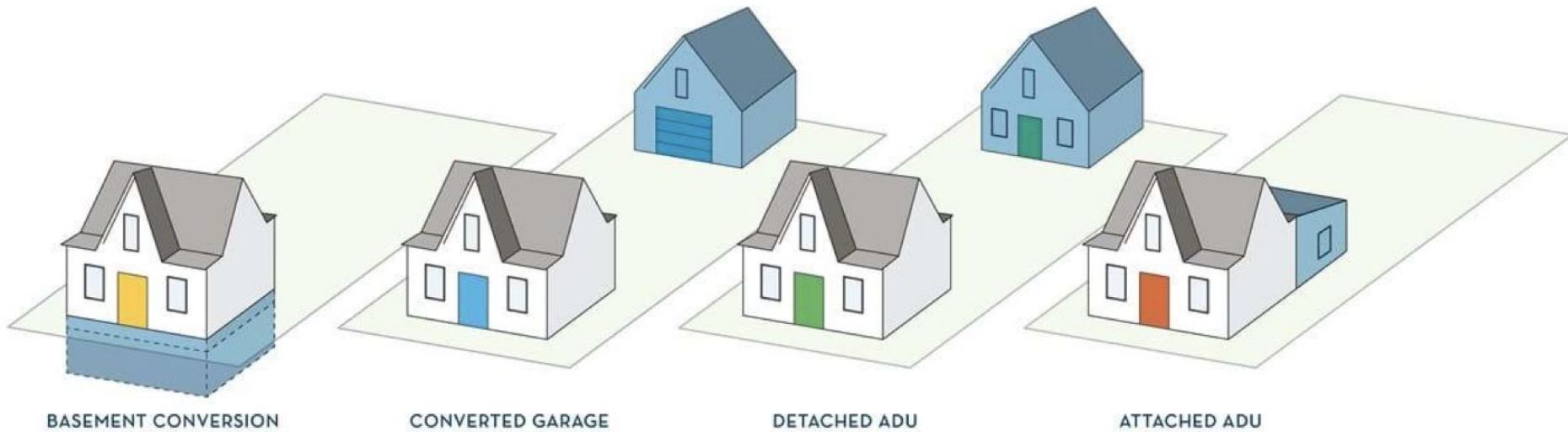
*Image from City of Boise, Accessory Dwelling Units Code

Innovation has the potential to transform City Hall, our way of working, and the solutions we can design and implement

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