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Reinventing Permits: Leveraging AI in Municipalities

As the digital revolution advances, artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as an indispensable tool for municipalities that want to improve their services. The technology is proving to have massive, transformative potential in a number of areas, including municipal permitting.

Using conversational AI to serve citizens

Conversational AI, such as chatbots and virtual assistants, can be a boon for interactions between citizens and municipalities. These modern tools are based on advanced technologies such as RAG (retrieval-augmented generation). Unlike conventional AI, which usually relies on its initial training to generate responses, RAG can draw on massive databases to create specific, personalized responses.

For example, an RAG chatbot can answer complex questions by accessing municipal by-laws, urban development guides, and document archives. This capability is not only useful for citizens, but also for municipal employees, who often have to navigate through a mountain of information to make quick decisions.

Today, more than 30 municipalities across Québec have adopted AMI, a smart municipal assistant specifically developed for municipal needs. In Saint-Lin-Laurentides, for example, a quarter of visitors to the municipal website use this AI tool. With a satisfaction rate of 83%, it's clear that these solutions are meeting the growing expectations of citizens, while easing the workload of administrative departments.

AI agents: Towards intelligent automation

Beyond simply answering questions, AI agents have the ability to automate full sequences of administrative tasks. This includes processes that are often seen as cumbersome or complicated, like writing minutes, decision summaries, and reports. But their potential doesn't stop there.

As the housing crisis rages on, these tools will become invaluable by allowing municipalities to process construction and renovation permits much more quickly. AI agents can automatically scan submitted documents to identify missing or non-compliant elements,

shortening the timeframe for project approval. It's an incredible opportunity to meet the growing demand for housing and support municipalities in their sustainable urban development efforts.

The towns of Contrecoeur, Carignan, and Saint-Lin-Laurentides are currently working on this innovative solution as part of the AMI Permis project. The tool allows citizens to apply for permits online and receive feedback on missing and non-compliant elements before they even submit their applications. This pre-check prevents needless back-and-forth and shortens processing time once the applications are submitted.

A long-awaited revolution

Society is at a turning point, where it has become essential to adopt modern technologies like AI to meet today's challenges, including the housing crisis. Citizens are increasingly expecting municipalities of all sizes to employ modern, effective tools. The benefits of these technologies go far beyond simplicity and speed; they enhance transparency, improve citizen satisfaction, and free up human resources to focus on strategic issues.

By taking advantage of solutions like AMI, municipalities can not only meet current needs, but also prepare for a future where public services will need to be both efficient and innovative.

