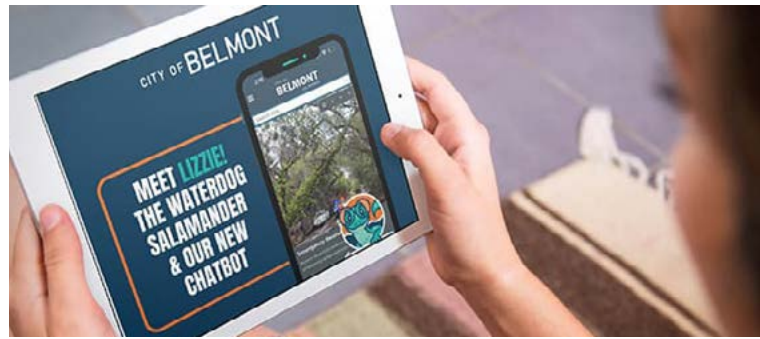




Belmont turned an AI launch into a community experience.

As **Belmont, California**, prepares to celebrate its 100th birthday, the city is also looking ahead to what the next century of local government service can look like.

For Belmont, that future includes a new website, a more seamless digital experience, and an AI-powered digital agent named Lizzie, created to help residents find information and connect with city services more easily.

While many organizations approach AI as a technology project, Belmont approached it as a community experience project, finding ways to involve residents, reflect local identity, and build trust from the very beginning.

A DIGITAL FRONT DOOR BUILT AROUND RESIDENT NEEDS

Belmont serves a vibrant community in the San Francisco Bay Area. As the city prepared for the launch of its new website, staff identified an opportunity to improve how residents find answers online and access city information in the interim.

Its current website has become difficult to navigate over time, with outdated content, too many navigation paths, and information that can be hard for residents to find quickly. As the city works toward a new website, **Government Experience Agent (GXA)** gives Belmont another way to help residents get pointed in the right direction, even as the broader digital experience continues to evolve.

MUST HAVE SOLUTIONS

Government Experience Agent (GXA)

“We’re not trying to remove the touchpoint of human interaction but rather, have someone there at all times to help guide you, to then find what you need or talk to who you need more efficiently.”

Elizabeth Tsachres,
Communications Officer,
City of Belmont.



"We thought it would be helpful when we move to the new website, and people are learning the new navigation, that they'll already have familiarity with Lizzie," said Elizabeth Tsachres, communications and community affairs officer for the City of Belmont. "Our website is the front door of City Hall. We're in such a digital era that by having that chatbot, it's almost like we have someone in front of City Hall pointing you in the right direction."

For Belmont, that point is important. Lizzie is not designed to replace people or remove human connection from local government.

"We're not trying to remove the touchpoint of human interaction," said Elizabeth Tsachres. "But rather, have someone there at all times to help guide you, to then find what you need or talk to who you need more efficiently."

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY INTO THE LAUNCH

One of the most distinctive aspects of Belmont's launch was the decision to involve residents in shaping the personality of the city's new digital assistant.

Before launching GXa, Belmont invited community members to participate in a public campaign to help name the digital agent. Through surveys and social media outreach, residents were able to vote on Belmont-inspired names.

The community ultimately selected "**Lizzie**," a name inspired by the waterdog salamanders associated with Waterdog Lake and Open Space Preserve, a beloved local destination.

"We of course wanted to use our branded colors, but also wanted it to relate to our open space park," said Elizabeth Tsachres. "Everyone in our community knows about Waterdog Lake. When you think of Belmont, that's a big part of it."

Belmont also designed Lizzie to feel trustworthy and approachable. The city worked with a graphic designer on the character and persona. The result is an assistant that reflects the city's brand, geography, and sense of place.

That local connection helped make Lizzie feel less like a generic digital tool and more like a part of Belmont's community experience. The city has already extended Lizzie into launch materials, stickers, future event ideas, and even a custom 404 error page for the new website.



WHY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT MATTERS

Community involvement is not a one-time campaign tactic for Belmont. It reflects how the city approaches public service.

"We take pride in involving our community," said Tsachres. "Government is not always a trusted place for some people. If we can involve them as much as we can, and we have the capacity, why wouldn't we?"

That mindset felt especially important when introducing AI.

Trust in government cannot be assumed, especially when a new technology is involved. Belmont saw an opportunity to make the launch more transparent and participatory by giving residents a role in shaping the experience.

That approach helped turn the launch into something residents could recognize, respond to, and feel some ownership in.

TESTING, TRANSPARENCY, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Belmont also took a careful, hands-on approach to preparing Lizzie for launch. Before introducing the agent to the broader community, the city put meaningful work into testing how it responded to real questions, reviewing the content behind those answers and identifying where residents might still run into confusion or gaps.

"We did a lot of internal testing. We sent it to both our commissions and council, and even some community partners, to test it," said Tsachres. That testing helped Belmont pressure-test the experience through the lens of the people who know the community and its services best. The process helped the city refine Lizzie's responses while also surfacing opportunities to improve the website content residents rely on.

Even with that preparation, Belmont was transparent in its rollout communications: Lizzie is not perfect.

"She's a new team member, who will learn and improve over time," Tsachres said. That openness is an important part of Belmont's launch strategy, setting realistic expectations, while inviting the community to play an ongoing role in shaping a better digital service experience.



BUILDING THE NEXT ERA OF RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

As Belmont celebrates **100 years**, the city is also investing in a more accessible, responsive, and resident-centered future. In the Bay Area, residents often bring high expectations for digital service. Belmont is meeting that reality in a way that still feels personal to the city.

"The Bay Area is fast-paced, and that is a part of our reality in the services that we provide," said Tsachres. "We are willing to rise to that occasion, and because of our small-town feel, we can also have dialogue with our community."

That may be the heart of Belmont's approach: modern service delivery, grounded in local trust. Lizzie gives Belmont a new way to help residents navigate online services, find answers, and connect with City Hall. Just as importantly, the launch shows how governments can introduce AI with personality, openness, and a strong sense of community.

By combining community engagement, thoughtful implementation, and a clear focus on resident experience, Belmont is demonstrating how governments can introduce AI in a way that feels approachable, trusted, and genuinely useful.

As Belmont celebrates its centennial, Lizzie represents more than a new digital tool. It is part of the city's investment in the next era of resident service, one designed to make local government easier to access, easier to understand, and more responsive to the community it serves.

GXA, POWERED BY AWS

Government Experience Agent (GXA), powered by AWS, helps governments meet residents 24/7 with intelligence, accuracy, and simplicity. GXA uses AWS Cloud Infrastructure — including Amazon Bedrock — to provide residents with instant access to jurisdictionally accurate information delivered in plain, conversational language. GXA uses Amazon Relational Database Services — including Aurora PostgreSQL 16.4 and Amazon KMS — to provision each customer with a dedicated, isolated database, ensuring data is never shared or impacted by other tenants. Bedrock also provides strong, government-grade safeguards to block inappropriate interactions that would undermine trust.

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