

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 2, 2026  
**To:** Common Council  
**From:** Deputy Mayor Christie Baumel, DPCED Director Matt Wachter  
**Subject:** Legistar #93419 Authorizing Actions to Accept a Two-Year Fellow from the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative's City Hall Fellowship Program

### **Summary**

This memo accompanies Legistar #93419 which authorizes the City to take several actions that would allow us to employ a Harvard graduate fellow for two years, with salary, benefits and other employment expenses paid for by the Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship program. Specifically, the resolution would authorize: creating a 2-year LTE (Limited Term) position in the Mayor's Office, amending the Mayor's Office operating budget to accept the grant funding, and entering into an agreement with Harvard regarding the fellowship. The fellow's work would be in support of the City's housing agenda – specifically focused on helping simplify and clarify the development review process needed to obtain a permit for new housing development to create a more efficient and easier-to-navigate system that would save both City staff and applicants time.

### **Background & Description**

The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative at the John F. Kennedy School of Government administers the Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship program. The program places graduates of Harvard master's or professional degree programs within "city halls" across the nation, working with city leaders developing new approaches to address key priorities. This is a competitive program that Madison has been able to benefit from. We were awarded a fellow through this program in 2024, who has been working with the Sustainability Team in the Mayor's Office from summer 2024 to summer 2026 and has helped advance numerous bodies of work related to sustainability in the building sector. We have now successfully competed a second time, as detailed below.

The Mayor's Office and the Department of Community, Planning, and Economic Development (DPCED) applied for and were awarded a fellow to work for the City for two years to help address the housing crisis in Madison. The city has identified aspects of the

housing permit process as creating barriers to housing. We recognize that the current process suffers from:

- Outdated technology that requires too many manual steps
- Highly detailed code requirements that may not add enough value to justify the work required
- Inability to increase staffing commensurate with growth in permit volume due to fiscal restraints imposed by the State legislature
- Confusion about processes from the development community, especially newcomers to the market

We need to make our development process simpler and more efficient to save both applicants and staff time, and to improve clarity and communications with applicants about the process.

The Bloomberg Harvard fellow in Madison will work interdepartmentally to review and improve both our development permit process and our transparency around it to create a more predictable process for applicants and a more efficient process for both applicants and staff. There are a number of changes that can be made incrementally or as a package to simplify and clarify the process.

To improve efficiency, the fellow will review our current process map, help us identify and prioritize options for improving efficiency; select and complete some projects (e.g. incremental process improvements or code changes); and identify clear next steps. To make the process easier to navigate, the fellow can identify where clarity is most needed and create effective communication materials for the city's website, application instructions, and potentially other media to improve understanding of the process and ultimately reduce applicant missteps that can add time and cost to a project.

The two-year fellowship spans from July 2026 to July 2028. During that time, the fellow is proposed to be a limited-term employee (LTE) of the City, with salary and benefits reimbursed through the fellowship program grant from Harvard. The position is proposed as a Comp Group 19 Range 26 position of "Legislative Analyst," a non-civil service position which can be directly appointed by the Mayor. Consistent with the expectations of the Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship program, this position will be hired into the Mayor's Office and will be co-supervised by the Mayor's Office and the DPCED Director. The Bloomberg Harvard program is interested in placing fellows in the offices of mayors and/or city administrators to ensure top-level support and assistance in conducting their work. The program also encourages placing fellows as actual employees of cities where they work to create stronger relationships with and full integration in city systems. The

fellows work will work interdepartmental, coordinating with all agencies that are engaged in the development permit review process.

This resolution would authorize the creation of this LTE position in the Mayor's Office operating budget, amend the 2026 budget to accept the grant funds into the Mayor's Office budget that would cover the full costs of the fellow's employment here, and authorize the City to enter into an agreement with Harvard related to the fellowship grant. Specific costs authorized include: an annual salary of \$107,750 plus one mid-point cost of living adjustment; benefits up to a 33.1% benefits rate; up to \$4,000 reimbursement for relocation expenses for the fellow; up to \$500 for software or media subscriptions necessary for the fellow's work.