



## How the City of Corona is using Artificial Intelligence for Crisis Management and Proactive Governance

### Case Study // Corona, CA

The City of Corona, California, is home to just over 150,000 residents. In the summer of 2018, a Safe Surrender incident rocked the city. Safe Surrender is a way to safely and legally surrender a newborn infant, no-questions-asked. In Corona, an abandoned, deceased infant's body was found by the Corona Police Department. **The incident went viral and dominated discussions in the city both on social media and on the local news.** Along with this spike in conversation, significant misinformation began circulating both about the incident itself - including rumors of a murder - as well as about the city's Safe Surrender policy and how the City managed such incidents.

### The ZenCity Solution // Real-Time Resident Engagement

Corona began working with ZenCity as part of a strategic vision of becoming more data-driven. The City turned to ZenCity as a **social AI tool** to help them better connect with residents and engage with the silent majority. ZenCity automatically aggregates thousands of city-wide, resident-generated data points from sources like social media, local news platforms, 311 and more. With the use of advanced AI, the data is categorized and sorted to analyze the topics being discussed and the sentiment of the feedback being given by Corona's residents. **The ZenCity platform visualizes the real-time data it's collecting and transforms it into actionable insights about Corona by converting citizen feedback in the form of otherwise unstructured data into valuable, quantitative metrics.**

When the Safe Surrender incident occurred, the City was able to **immediately identify a significant rise in the volume of discourse on the topic, city-wide.** Additionally, it could see that the discourse was **overwhelmingly negative**, and was dominating resident conversations. ZenCity's ability to automatically categorize and sort the data helped the City to understand *what* the residents were communicating about and *why* the sentiment was negative.

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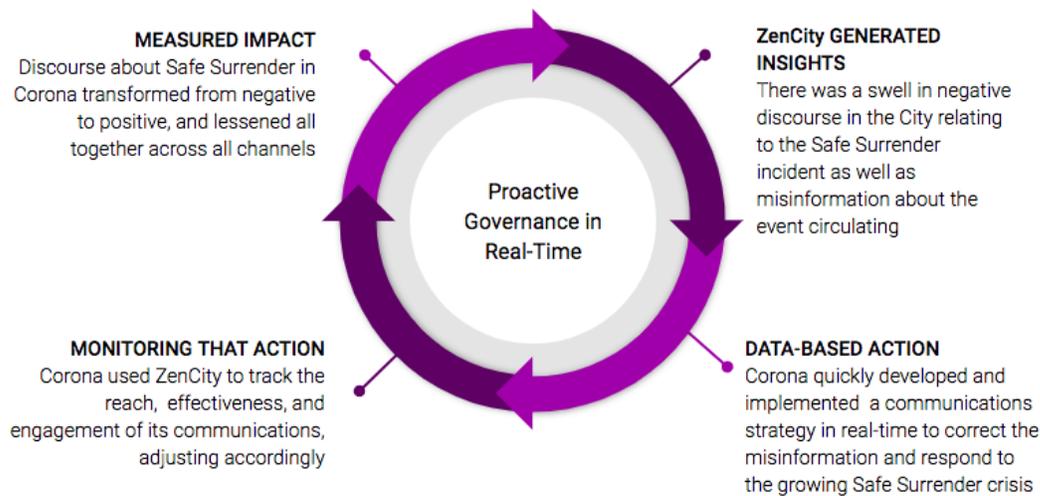
“ Thanks to ZenCity, we were able to take something that was very negative in the city and turn it into something positive. ZenCity helped us transform an unfortunate incident into an opportunity to communicate with our residents about the right way to do things and how we, the City, can help.



**Chris McMasters**  
Chief Information Officer  
Corona, CA

## Proactive Governance // Transforming a crisis into an opportunity with a smart communications strategy

Corona used ZenCity's insights to quickly develop and execute a communications strategy in real-time, and then track the effectiveness of that strategy. In doing so, Corona transformed a highly sensitive and negative incident into an opportunity to communicate with residents.



Once it succeeded in transforming discourse in the City, Corona took two other important steps.

**First**, through ZenCity's topic analysis, it learned that residents weren't familiar enough with the Safe Surrender program. **Corona took action.** It began raising awareness and educating the public about the program in coordination with local media, emphasizing the program's legal protections and confidentiality. **And it saw results.** Residents began discussing the policy and expressing their opinions on it. **Next**, learning that residents had thoughts on how to improve the Safe Surrender program, **Corona began opening public dialogue channels** so that residents' opinions could inform future policy changes, thus **engaging residents in defining policy.**

ZenCity's platform helped Corona throughout the lifecycle of this unfortunate event. At first, the data alerted Corona to a significant rise in negative discourse about the Safe Surrender incident. Then, as the tool tracked the discourse, its AI provided nuanced insight into how residents were responding which helped city leaders **leverage this information to take data-driven actions and better communicate with residents and local media.** The effectiveness of this communications strategy was then tracked on the platform, and the City watched sentiment transform from negative to positive. The City not only corrected misinformation and took the opportunity to educate residents about the Safe Surrender program, but also created a space for integrating residents into the process of informing future policy. In doing so, the City met a broader goal of becoming more data-driven and improving its engagement with residents.