



# 5 Ways to Leverage Resident Feedback Data for Better Performance Management

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# **5 Ways to Leverage Resident Feedback Data for Better Performance Management**

Effective performance management is essential to local government organizations. It sets clear goals and expectations, and further enables cities, towns and counties alike to align their systems and resources with strategic objectives.

One of the most powerful tools, if not one of the most essential, in performance management for local governments revolves around resident feedback. Resident feedback lets an organization know if it's actually moving the needle and providing residents with solutions that help ensure and improve their quality of life and well-being. Resident feedback highlights the effectiveness of local policies and initiatives, but it can also be the canary in the coal mine that provides cities leaders with an early warning and understanding of pitfalls and potential problems.

But resident feedback is not always easy to measure or figure out. The citizen engagement tools that cities have usually turned to for feedback gathering, like town hall meetings and surveys, share a few shared drawbacks: low engagement rates, limited scope in terms of topics and issues raised, and an inability to track data in real-time.



This can make gathering relevant resident feedback limiting, especially if there's a hot-button issue that a city needs to get a grasp on quickly.

This is where technology comes into the picture. Technologies, like [Artificial Intelligence](#), help to enhance and improve the resident-feedback gathering process by providing a broader overview of what people think. Local governments today have the power to aggregate feedback from a multitude of sources, create and track quantifiable metrics, and gain insights - in real-time - all with the click of a mouse. Cities and counties can better measure and quantify what their citizens think about their actions in a clear fashion, meaning better and more effective performance management. This, in turn, results in better connected and more efficient government bodies providing more effective services.

Still, local governments need to define how to assess and measure resident feedback to help them evaluate what their citizens are thinking and direct how they will use technology to take a data-driven approach to performance management. So let's look at five ways to approach resident feedback data.

Evaluating resident feedback data from different angles is important for facilitating better government performance, and will give you a clearer understanding of how residents feel about local government-run policies and initiatives.



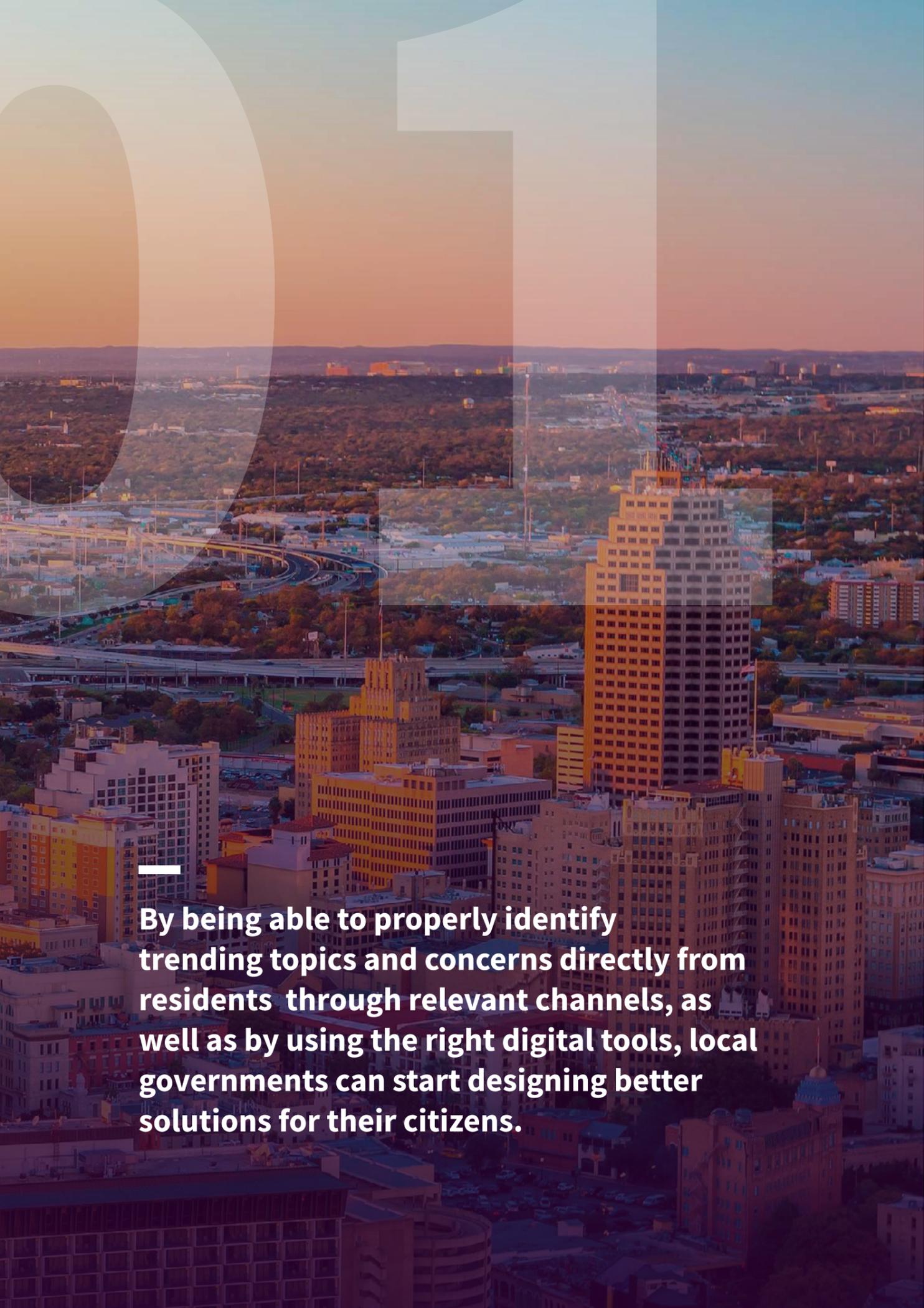
# #1: Identify What Your Residents Care About

WHEN EVALUATING RESIDENT FEEDBACK, ONE OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL STEPS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE IS IDENTIFYING WHAT RESIDENTS CARE ABOUT - OR WHAT'S TRENDING IN A CITY. HERE THE TIP IS THE SUBJECT MATTER ITSELF: BEFORE CITIES CAN EVEN START DESIGNING NEW PROJECTS OR INITIATIVES, THEY NEED TO BE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE TOPICS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES THAT RESIDENTS ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT.

This can range from complaints about trash not being picked up as frequently, to a lack of public transportation in their neighborhood.

While face-to-face communication at town halls and community meetings, and calls made to hotlines like 311 are still important, it's vital that government organizations today explore, analyze, and use feedback from online forums, social media, and other digital channels where residents are sharing tons of information about the communities they live in. Technology, such as Zencity's Artificial Intelligence platform, helps to sift through vast quantities of data and provide a clear overview of what residents think about their city or county. With [people living their lives and communicating their satisfaction or displeasure more than ever online](#), the informal feedback presented in these open digital spaces can only help local government organizations grow and improve their services and responses towards residents.





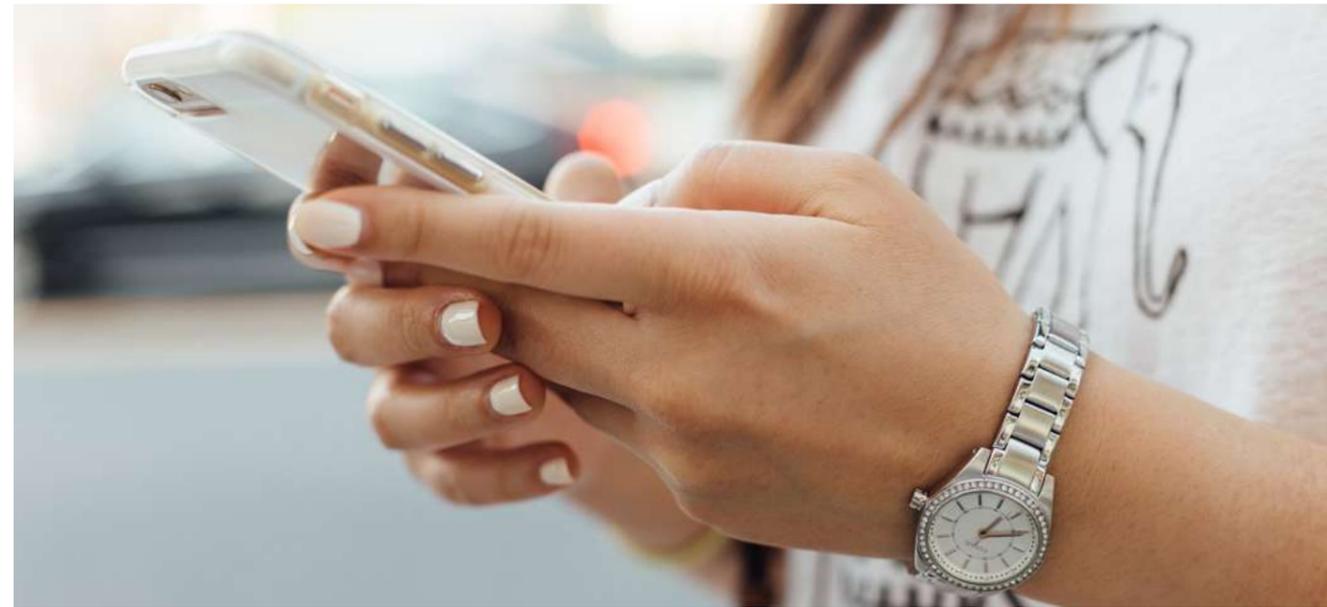
**By being able to properly identify trending topics and concerns directly from residents through relevant channels, as well as by using the right digital tools, local governments can start designing better solutions for their citizens.**

## **San Antonio, Texas**

The City of San Antonio decided to take an innovative approach to understanding what their residents care about with its [311SA app project](#). The award winning 311 project lets residents go beyond notifying the City about issues and problems they encounter, and encourages them to interact with other members of their community, follow what issues their friends are talking about, and connect with other residents to discuss these topics on other social media channels. The result is that the City is able to have a better understanding of what problems exist, what's concerning for residents, and even implement ideas that it might not have otherwise thought about thanks to the resident participation within the system.

## #2: Identify Data Sources

**DATA IS THE NEW COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE. IT'S DIFFICULT TO DESIGN PUBLIC INITIATIVES AND PLAN STRATEGICALLY WITHOUT DATA, AND ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MEASURE THE OUTCOMES OF A CITY'S EFFORTS WITHOUT IT. BY EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF ACCESS TO A WIDER RANGE OF DATA SOURCES AND INTELLIGENCE, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SERVICES AND MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR RESIDENTS.**



They'll also be in a better position to accomplish and measure #1 - what their residents really care about because broadening data channels means tapping into more resident discussions and concerns from a wider community perspective.

There are a great many data sources that serve different purposes and reach different demographics. City and county-sponsored surveys and polls, various local government-run social media accounts, external blogs, and other sources, are all windows into the needs of residents. It's worth remembering that some sources might be more relevant to certain ages, certain socio-economic groups, specific periods of time, or they might simply be best suited to particular topics.

[Mapping which channels are used and when is important in developing a municipal approach based on data.](#) Data sources can vary and can come from both external and internal channels such as official city sites, contact emails, 311 calls, local news, social media, and more.



It's important that local government organizations don't depend on just a few sources, but rather that they layer the information technology enables them to have at their fingertips for a holistic understanding of what's happening in their community.

The emergence of new technologies can be harnessed by local government leaders to tap into and analyze hundreds and sometimes thousands of sources, in parallel, in real-time, in a quantitative and objective way - something that is virtually impossible to do manually.

Having access to multiple sources and perspectives will equip cities, towns and counties with a deeper understanding of the needs and aspirations of their residents, and help them make decisions based on a greater depth and diversity of feedback. Organizations can then implement a coherent process to support their strategic policies and build a better future for their communities.



**Leveraging multiple data sources is an important part of the listening process in proactive governance. It allows local governments to connect with the majority of their citizens and to better understand resident feedback to enhance their performance management.**

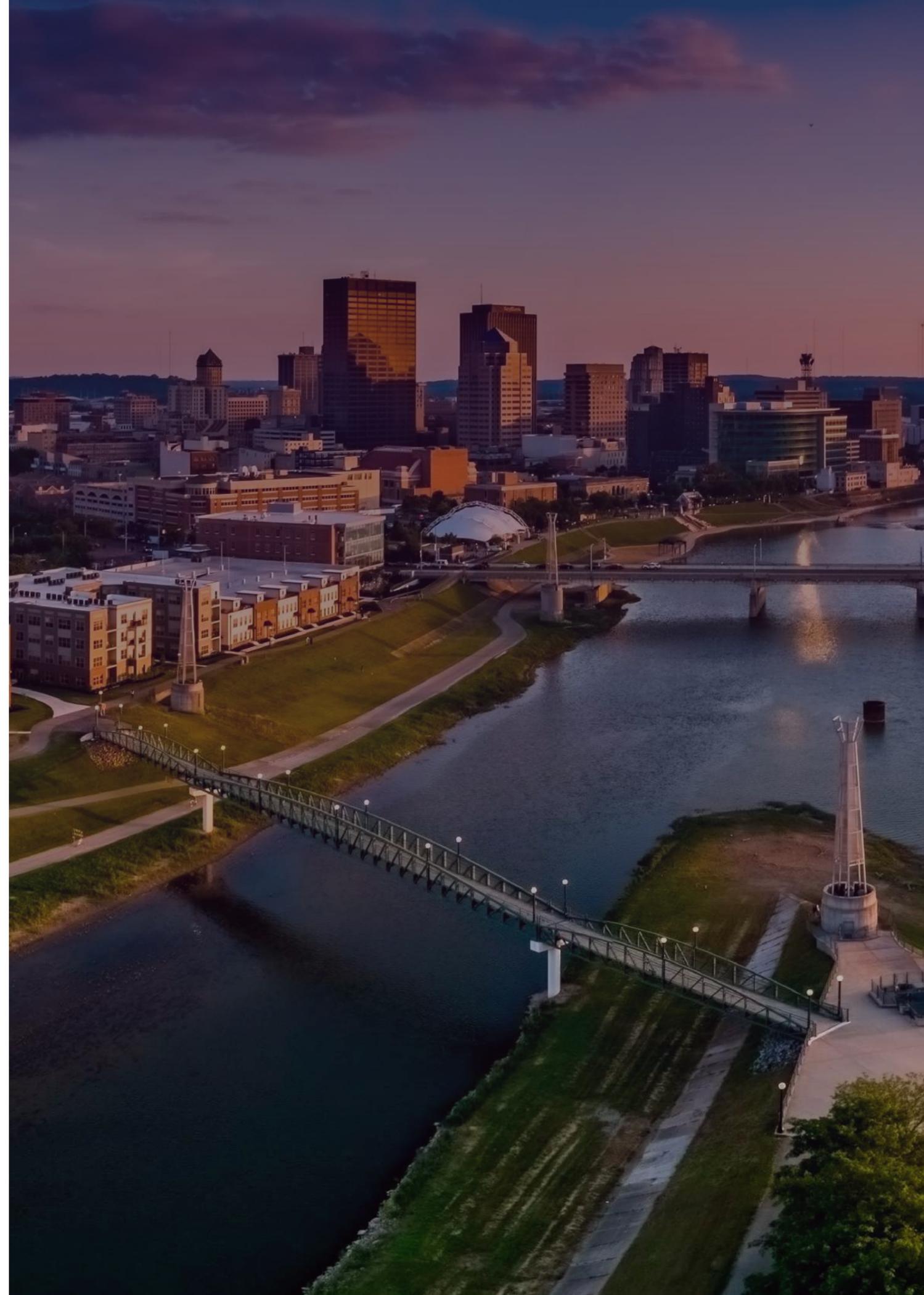
### **West Sacramento, California**

City leaders in West Sacramento are making an effort to let [all residents' voices be heard](#). The City still holds town hall meetings, but residents who can't attend can contribute to the community discussion by posting on social media and other online channels. As a result, department heads factor in nearly 20,000 monthly online interactions that may have [otherwise been ignored](#).

## Dayton, Ohio

[The City of Dayton had to act quickly when the water main to the city broke.](#) The volume of phone calls overwhelmed its call centers, and they needed to reach out and provide information to residents to let them know what was happening as it tried to fix the issue, while at the same time being able to monitor if its response was addressing its residents' concerns and complaints.

Dayton used Zencity to identify and gather information from thousands of social media posts and other digital channels to understand, in real-time, if it was communicating effectively. By identifying other data sources and potential lines of communication, the City was able to formulate the best response, and to effectively and successfully communicate with residents while managing the crisis.



# #3: Location, Location, Location

**GEOLOCATING FEEDBACK HAS BECOME  
A VALUABLE ASSET FOR CITIES.**

**IT CAN OFFER A CLEAR PICTURE AND  
BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT'S  
HAPPENING AT A PARTICULAR LOCATION  
OR IN A SPECIFIC NEIGHBORHOOD,  
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN USE  
THIS INTELLIGENCE TO PLAN FUTURE  
INITIATIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY,  
MEASURE THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT  
PROGRAMS OR POLICIES MORE LOCALLY,  
AND SEE HOW DIFFERENT ISSUES IMPACT  
VARYING COMMUNITIES IN THE CITY  
DIFFERENTLY.**



Technology can be an incredible tool for making this happen by leveraging geolocation software that extracts data from written online content. This kind of geolocation goes much, much farther than what's traditionally thought of with social media location - which has to do with where a person is based. With better geolocation data, cities can now do things like know where they need to deploy emergency services during a flood. With geolocation data at its fingertips, cities can do a better job of localizing solutions, reaching out to affected residents, and establishing public trust.



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**Geolocating data is another way to measure and understand resident feedback and can help drive better initiatives and policy changes by identifying where a local government organization needs to act and how it might prioritize differently in different neighborhoods. It also can cities and counties understand how resident concerns and priorities differ by location, which also ties back to #1 - identifying what residents care about.**

### **Boston, Massachusetts**

The City of Boston teamed up with a group of software developers to create an app [to collect location data](#) while driving. This information has been useful from many performance management perspectives. For example, it saved the City no less than \$200,000 a year by determining which roads were most in need of repair. It logged where there were bumps in the road, and this data was translated into mapping where to fix the roads – a big win for the City.

## Beaverton, Oregon

The City of Beaverton instituted a ban against car camping on its city streets in response to complaints by residents and local businesses. The ban resulted in extensive media and community discussions on the topic, resulting in a community-proposed solution to implement a [Safe Parking](#) program, which provides homeless men and women living in their vehicles a safe place to park, as well as access other services.

Beaverton used Zencity's geo-location technology to monitor and to breakdown the resident feedback by neighborhood. It helped the City to understand how locals felt, and to answer any concerns that they may have had, especially in the neighborhoods where the program was going to be implemented directly. By tailoring its response based on location, the City was able to successfully launch the program with the support of the community.



## #4: Measure Engagement on Specific Topics

TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND RESIDENT FEEDBACK, A LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO MEASURE IT. HOW MANY COMMENTS, SHARES, OR LIKES WERE GENERATED BASED ON CITY PROJECTS? HOW MANY POSTS APPEARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OR BLOGS AND ARTICLES ON A TRENDING TOPIC? AND IS IT A COUPLE OF PEOPLE MAKING A LOT OF NOISE, OR IS THERE A GROUNDSWELL OF OPPOSITION TO AN INITIATIVE?



Measuring engagement means understanding whether people commented, shared, or liked posts about an initiative. It helps make resident satisfaction more quantifiable for performance management. Sometimes an event, policy, or initiative sparks a huge public debate. Other times, nobody responds; perhaps they didn't notice, or even if they did notice – they didn't care.

Part of the advantage of measuring engagement is defining whether the feedback actually comes from a **small, but vocal** minority, or an actual large, representative group of residents. Understanding the impact of citizen engagement can help cities evaluate resident feedback to create stronger performance management strategies.



**While not all feedback carries equal weight, measuring engagement is part and parcel of good performance management, whether evaluating an ongoing project or initiating a new policy.**

### **Town of Cary, North Carolina**

The [Town of Cary was suddenly flooded with e-scooters](#) and became the talk of the town. The Town needed to provide its recommendations to the Town Council, and even though there was loud and vocal opposition through traditional channels, like council meetings, the Town decided it needed to take a data-driven approach to understand what residents really felt about the new transportation mode. Using the Zencity platform's AI technology, the Town found that while there was a little bit of positive and negative engagement, the majority of the residents had a neutral view, which, in turn, helped the Town formulate its policy.

# #5: Evaluate Resident Sentiment

**FINALLY, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS NEED TO KNOW HOW PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT A PARTICULAR POLICY OR PROJECT: ARE THEY EXCITED? OPPOSED? APATHETIC?**

**SENTIMENT MATTERS BECAUSE IT LETS AN ORGANIZATION KNOW WHAT RESIDENTS THINK OF CERTAIN EVENTS, PROGRAMS, AND INITIATIVES, ALLOWING THE CITY, COUNTY, OR TOWN TO RESPOND IN-KIND.**

Successful governments should be aware of the emotional state and cues that residents send in response to policies and everyday management of their community. Decoding these cues with the use of technology and being more in tune with resident sentiment allows local governments to engage in strategic planning and budgeting more effectively. For example, if residents respond positively to an event that a city or county organized, such as an outdoor concert at a local park, the city or county may consider turning what was planned as a one-time event into an annual one.

That is a good lead to the important reminder that feedback isn't necessarily all bad. And while it's easy to get weighed down by complaints, it's important to hear what residents feel is being done well.





Most often, this kind of feedback is happening in informal channels - and if a city isn't engaged in these channels and measuring the sentiment of resident discourse, it might miss this. Back to the event example, residents taking selfies at a free, city-sponsored concert or posting about the great time they're having is actually positive feedback for the city, even if the resident isn't flat out calling up their local rep to say "great job on that free show you put on". Part of a good performance management strategy involves understanding how to review positive sentiment too.



**Measuring sentiment with the use of technology is one of the ways of making resident satisfaction more quantifiable. Furthermore, it's a means of helping local governments leverage resident feedback to improve policies and future initiatives.**

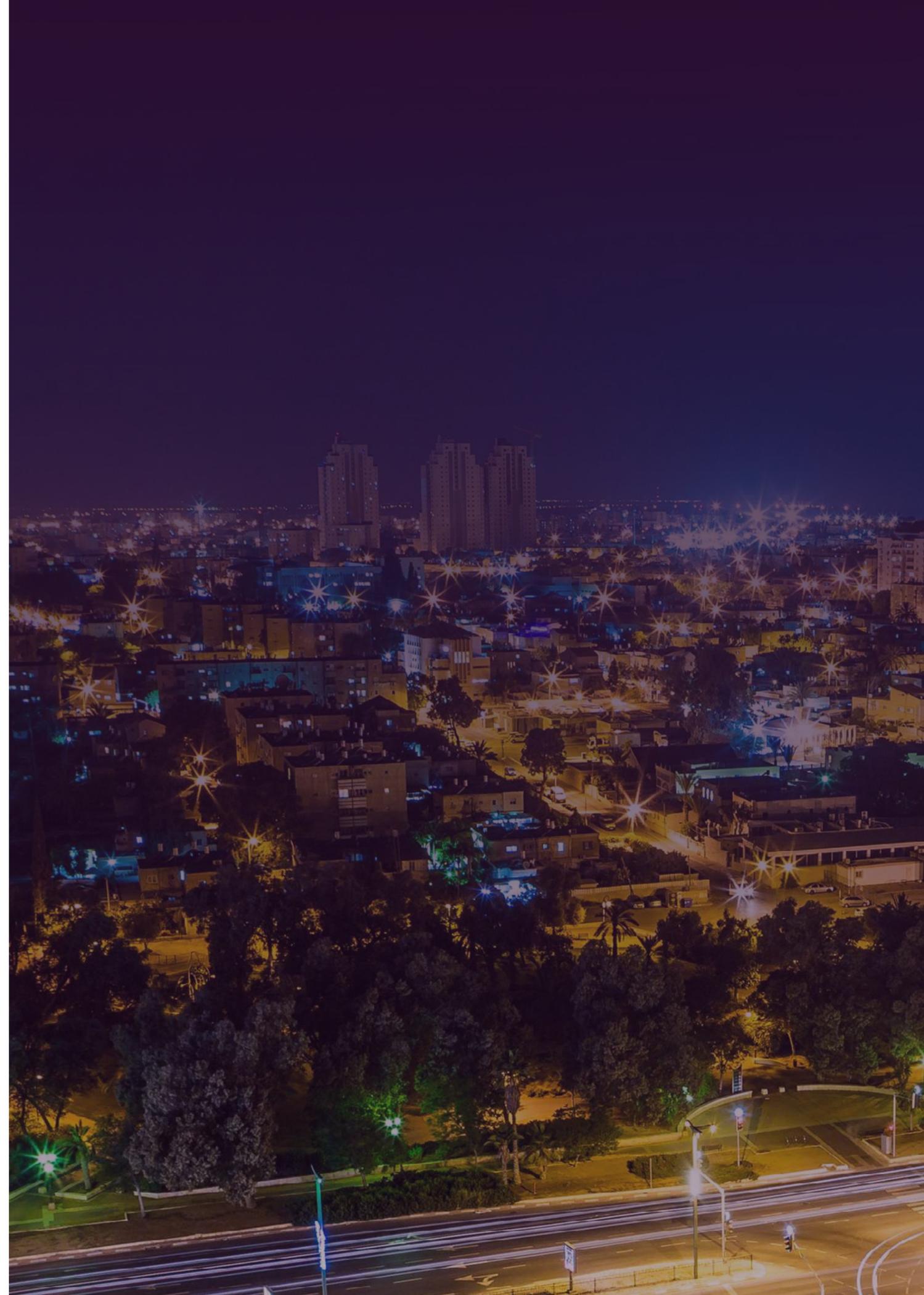
### **Corona, California**

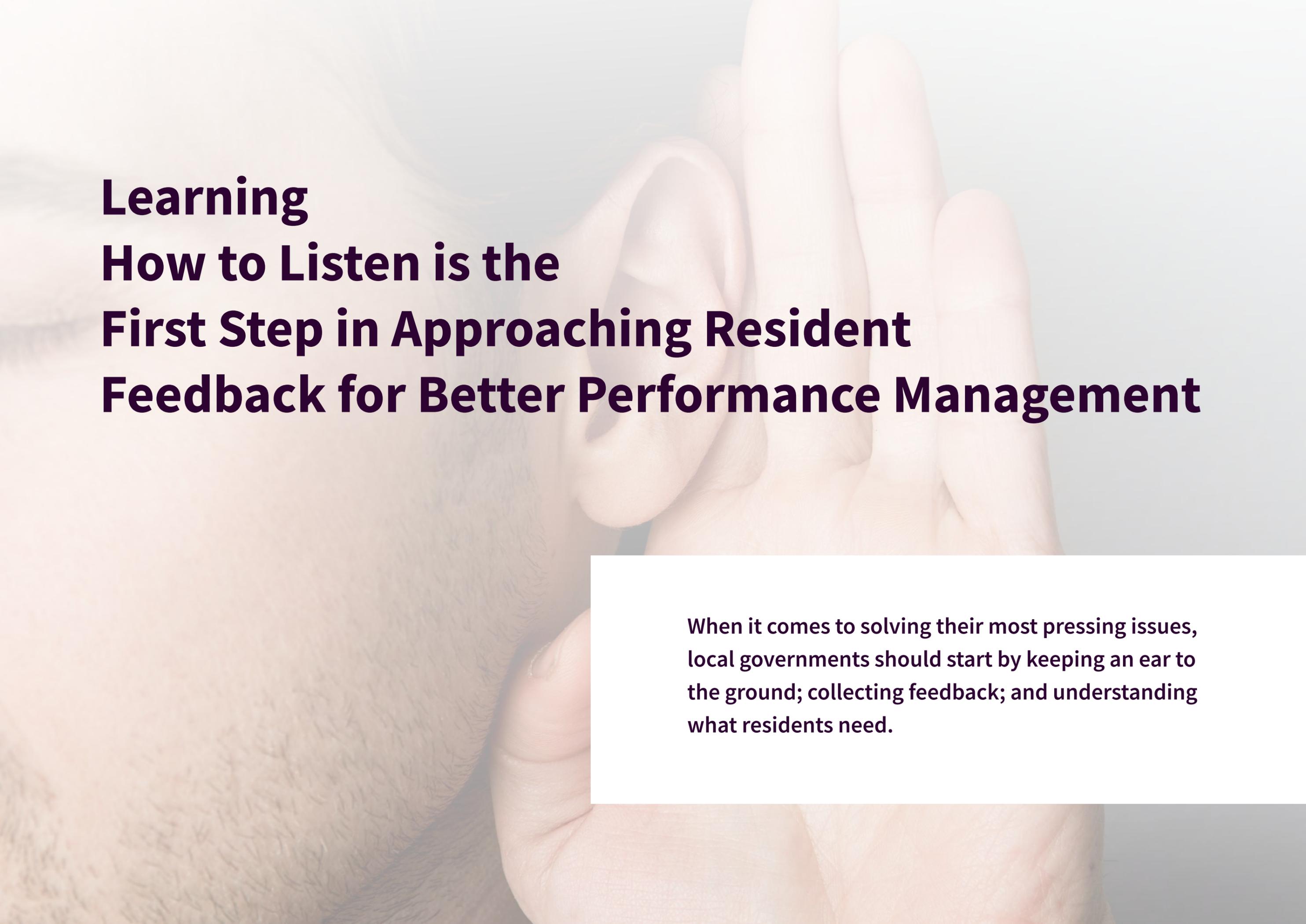
[When a deceased infant was found by the local police department in the City of Corona, California](#), it rocked the community and caused negative backlash both by residents and in the media against the City and its [Safe Surrender policy](#). The City of Corona used AI to monitor the situation and identify what was causing the negative discourse -- in this case misinformation about both the incident and the policy. The City used technology to implement a proactive, data-driven approach to handling the crisis which satisfied residents and also opened the doors for better communication between both sides. It then knew it was effective by tracking both a change in engagement levels on the issue but also a change in sentiment.

## Be'er-Sheva, Israel

The City of Be'er-Sheva wanted to get an understanding of how residents felt about the level of cleanliness within the city's public spaces and how important it was to them. With the Zencity platform, the city analyzed data from over 21,000 data points on social media and calls to their 311 call center. The data showed overall negative sentiment due to two main factors.

Based on this, the city designed and implemented a strategy that involved the operations of the sanitation department, local enforcement of public spaces, and the City's communication team. To track the performance of its new, three-pronged strategy, a key element for the city has been measuring citizen sentiment and seeing whether it can move the needle from negative to positive on the subject of cleanliness - something it can continuously monitor in real-time and over-time, thanks to technology.





# **Learning How to Listen is the First Step in Approaching Resident Feedback for Better Performance Management**

When it comes to solving their most pressing issues, local governments should start by keeping an ear to the ground; collecting feedback; and understanding what residents need.

It's not an easy task. But understanding different types of resident feedback data and tracking key metrics is an important part of proactive governance, helping cities and counties understand resident feedback, and knowing how to prioritize initiatives. Effective ways to leverage resident feedback include identifying trending topics, measuring volume and engagement on specific topics, evaluating sentiment, understanding which geographic areas of the community feedback is coming from and how the feedback differs from neighborhood to neighborhood, and mapping out which data sources are used for which audiences and topics.

Local government organizations need to know when to engage with citizens using traditional tools like town meetings, phone calls, or going door-to-door with a clipboard; and when it works better to take advantage of social media, blogs, and online forums where citizens are regularly expressing themselves and providing positive and negative feedback.

These benchmarks will help cities gather and assess resident feedback more accurately, understand results, and discover trends, for smarter performance management and more strategic decision-making.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN STILL USE MORE TRADITIONAL TOOLS AND METRICS (SUCH AS POLLS), BUT LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY OPENS THE DOOR FOR BETTER ANALYSIS OF RESIDENT FEEDBACK, AND ULTIMATELY LEADS TO MUCH BETTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT.**

[Learn More About Zencity's AI-based Tool for Better Performance Management in Your City](#)

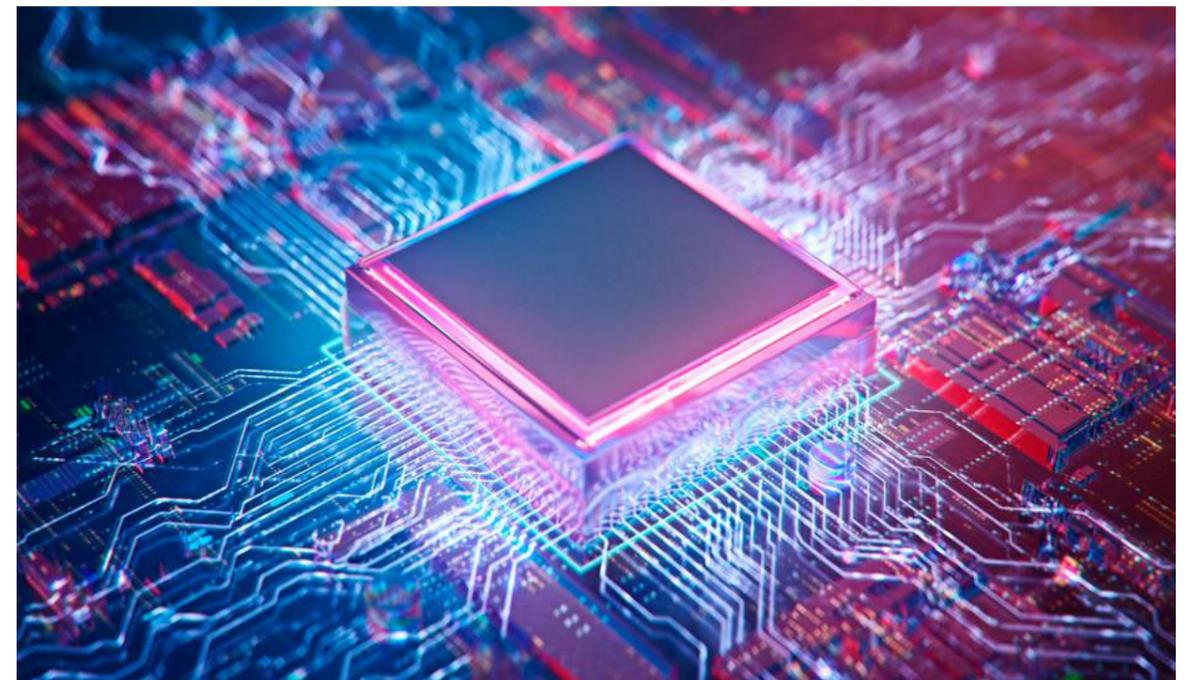


# A Brief Intro to AI:

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is a field within computer science that focuses on teaching computers to do things like you would with people. It's a process where a machine learns from the data it's presented with, and improves and changes its response in time. This allows machines to "think more intelligently" and even predictively.

When it comes to cities, AI, can help cities streamline projects and decision-making, all while it learns more about relevant data points for a city. AI is able to provide a teams-worth of manpower for a city by connecting to and analyzing vast quantities of data in a short period of time, especially with departments that might have a limited number of hands and resources available to process the data otherwise.

This means that a city is able to save time, money, and accomplish more by making relevant, data backed decisions for the benefit of its residents.



# Getting Started with Resident Feedback

TECHNOLOGY AND BEING DATA-DRIVEN WILL TAKE YOU TO THE NEXT LEVEL BUT UNTIL YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS IMPLEMENTED A RELEVANT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION, THERE ARE STILL A FEW WAYS YOU CAN GET STARTED ON COLLECTING MORE ACCURATE AND RELEVANT RESIDENT FEEDBACK.

## #1: Identify What Your Residents Care About

Step 1: Design a quick online survey that asks residents what they care about most and distribute via different social media channels.

Facebook       Twitter       Nextdoor

Step 2: Ask three departments you usually don't engage with, that interact with residents regularly, about the top issues they hear about from the community:

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## #2: Identify Data Sources

Review and identify where the bulk of your information is coming from and identify what channels are missing from your current list. Identify five new channels you could look into.

*1. Facebook Page:*

*2. Local News Outlet or Blog:*

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### #3: Location, Location, Location

Identify the areas in town where the feedback is physically coming from. For example, from which neighborhood are you receiving more city hotline or app reports, or where were there more attendees to neighborhood meetings, etc. Once this is mapped out, it will help to identify where people are less active through traditional channels. These are the locations where it might be worthwhile to review and understand what is happening there.

#### Active Neighborhoods

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Less Active Neighborhoods

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### #4: Measure Engagement on Specific Topics

Start defining what type of engagement has more weight. Submitting a comment on a city site form vs physically going to a town hall? Social media posts with lots of likes on the city's Twitter account or the comments on the city's Facebook account?

More Relevant

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Less Relevant

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## #5: Evaluate Resident Sentiment

Step 1: Find three examples of positive feedback about your city through informal channels. For example, an Instagram tag at a city event, a local news story that portrays something the city did well, and so forth.

Positive Feedback Examples

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Share the examples with the relevant departments.

## Positive Feedback - related departments

Example 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Example 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Example 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3: Think of one lesson you can pull from each particular project or initiative and apply to future strategic planning.

### REPEAT:

Now apply that same approach to an example of negative feedback. It's important to identify if residents are dissatisfied with what the city is doing, or with the city itself and the service it provides.

Step 1: Find three examples of negative feedback about your city through informal channels. For example, a Facebook post about litter at a local park, etc.

## Negative Feedback Examples

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Share the examples with the relevant departments.

## Negative Feedback - related departments

Example 1: \_\_\_\_\_



# About Zencity

Zencity is reinventing the way cities are making decisions.

Our AI-driven platform helps local governments translate what people want in their cities more effectively and eliminates the guesswork from policymaking.

With close-to-zero integration, we gather and analyze millions of data points from multiple online and offline resident interactions. Then we deliver reliable, real-time insights that help local governments better prioritize resources, track performance and connect with their communities. Together with our partner-cities, we're setting a new standard for performance management in local government.

[Start Using the Power of AI Today](#)

[info@zencity.io](mailto:info@zencity.io)

<https://zencity.io>

(347) 632-1225



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