



# Using resident feedback to inform budget and ARPA funding decisions



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Town of Normal, IL











# The Platform for Community Input & Insights

We start from the belief that —→

**Local government  
keeps our world  
running**



**300+ local governments  
use Zencity every day to  
build trust, improve services  
& increase satisfaction**

”

The platform allows us to  
**understand the needs and  
concerns of our residents to  
make the best decisions.**

- Todd Gloria, San Diego Mayor



# Hearing from your entire community is **challenging**

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**It's hard to reach beyond the STPs**  
for community input and participation

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**It requires significant effort & resources**  
to continually collect and analyze community input



# Zencity makes it **easier** to gather meaningful input

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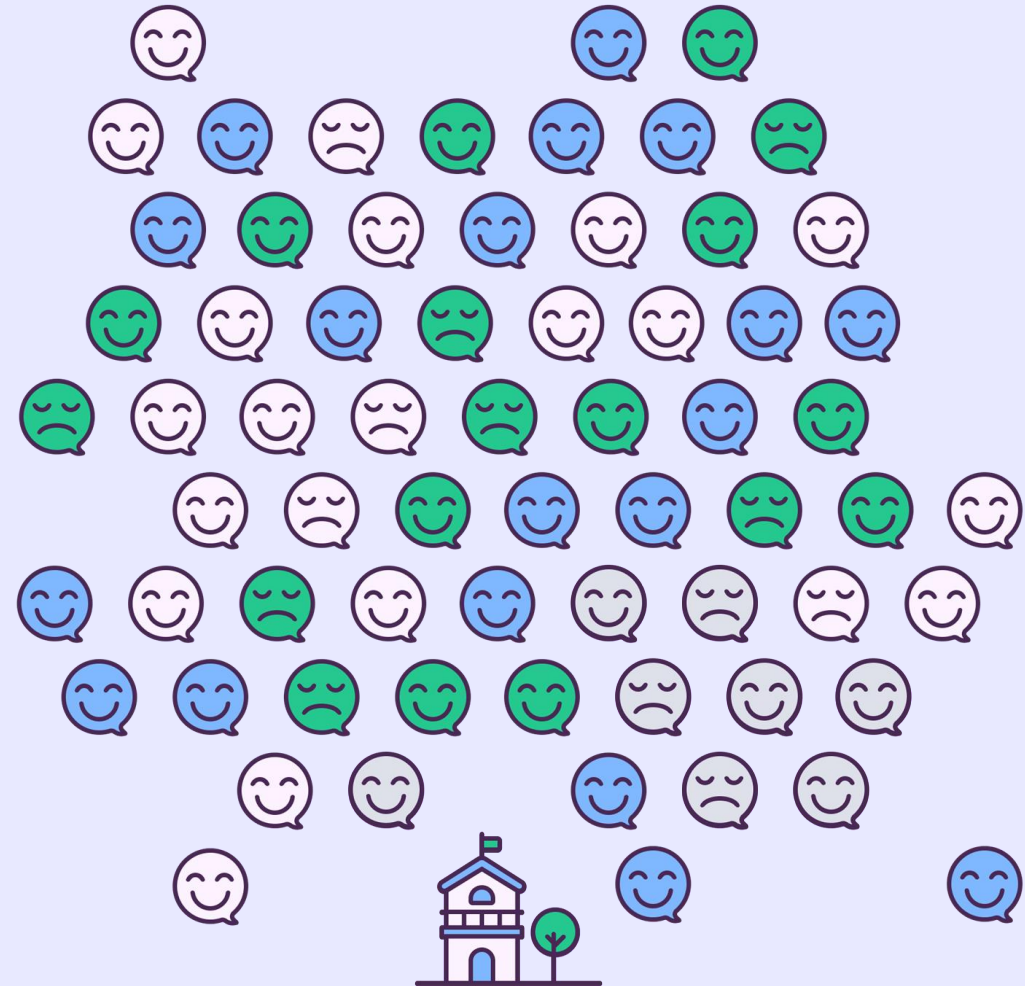
## Hear from many more voices

by lowering the barriers to participation

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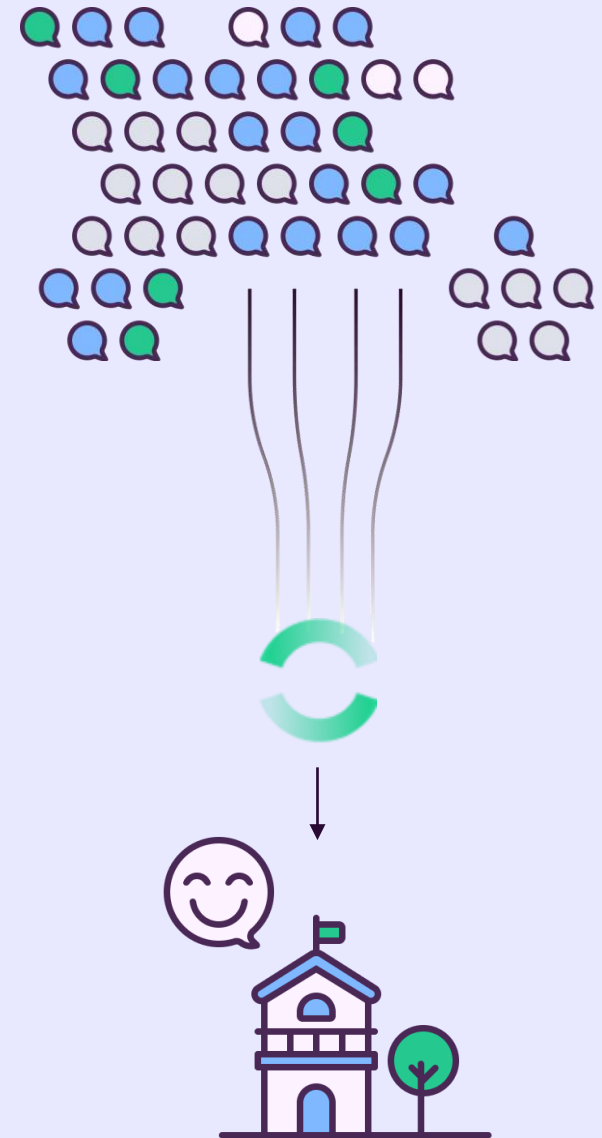
## Easily get meaningful takeaways

extracted for you from your community's input



**One platform that  
reaches more voices  
in your community &  
turns that input into  
actionable takeaways**

Here's how it works →





# More ways to be heard



## Organic input

### Understand the conversation

across publicly available  
sources, like social & local  
media and 311/211 tickets



## Proactive input

### Gather feedback

on any issue using  
recurring & one-time  
scientific surveys



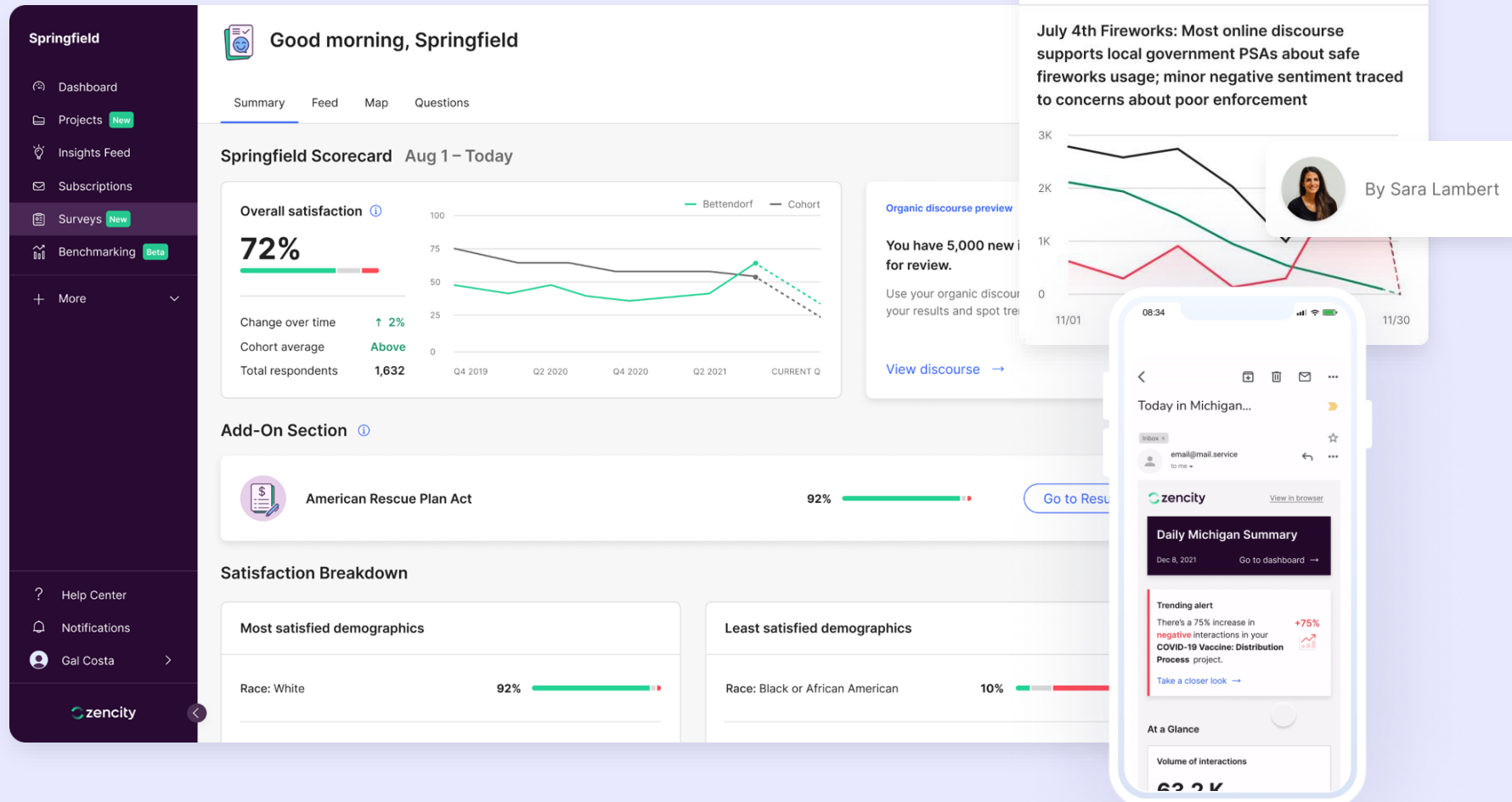
## Collaborative input

### Shape & discuss ideas

over interactive digital  
forums, together with  
your community

# More resident voices

# Actionable insights at every login



AI algorithms to group your data by departmental focus

Filterable dashboard to browse data over time and by topic

Automated alerts & email roundups of your data

In-depth insights, reports & strategy from our experts

# So you can

**Know**  
what's going on



**Answer**  
specific questions



**Collaborate**  
with residents



**Measure**  
your performance



**all from one platform.**

“I've been studying this area for years, and Zencity is the most robust and innovative solution I've seen”.

- Prof. Stephen Goldsmith, Harvard  
Former Deputy Mayor of NYC



# Cities and Counties use Zencity to



Go beyond the  
vocal minority

Communicate data  
with Council

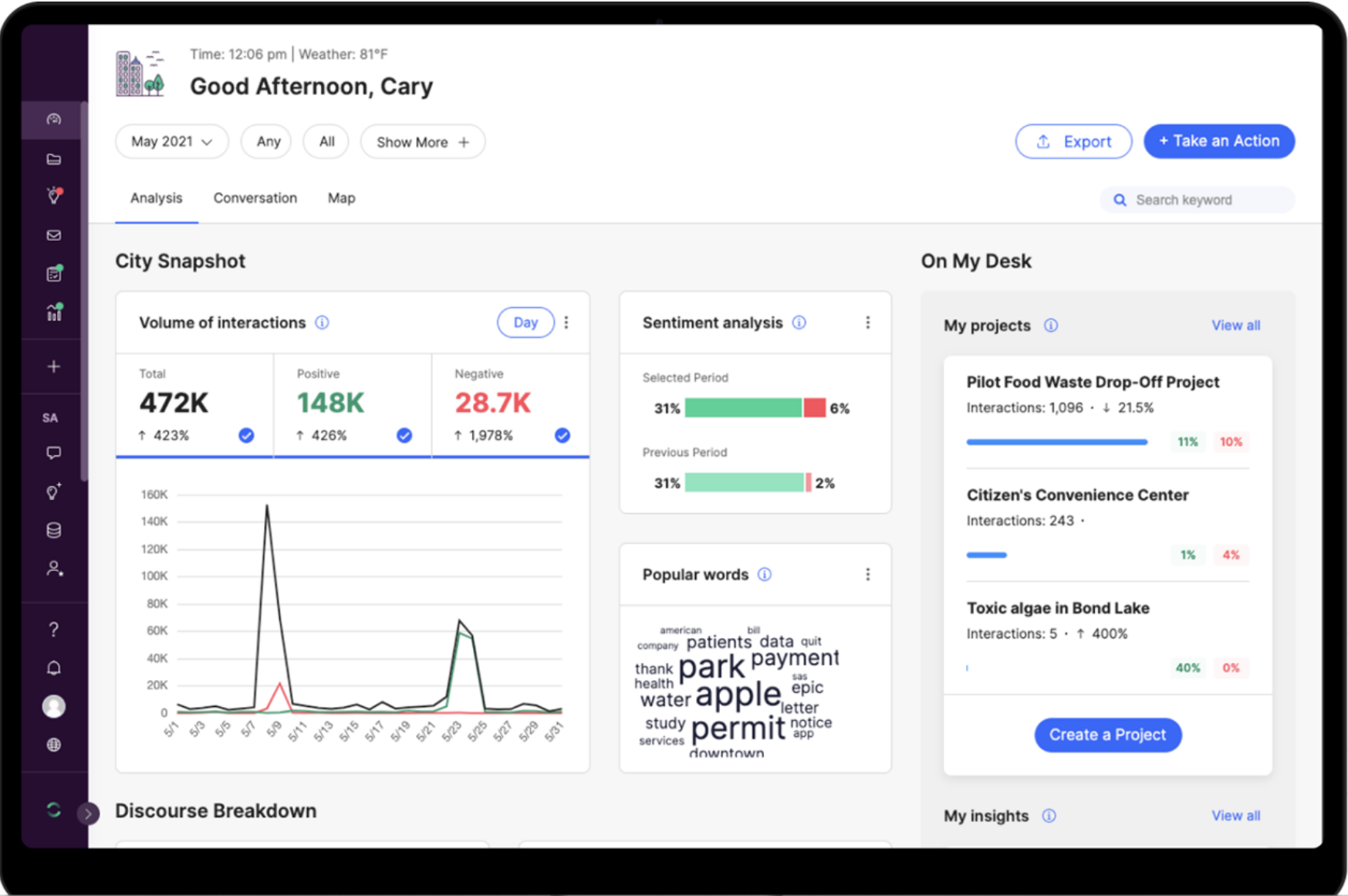
Measure the impact  
of their work

Increase inclusivity  
in decision making

Stay one step ahead

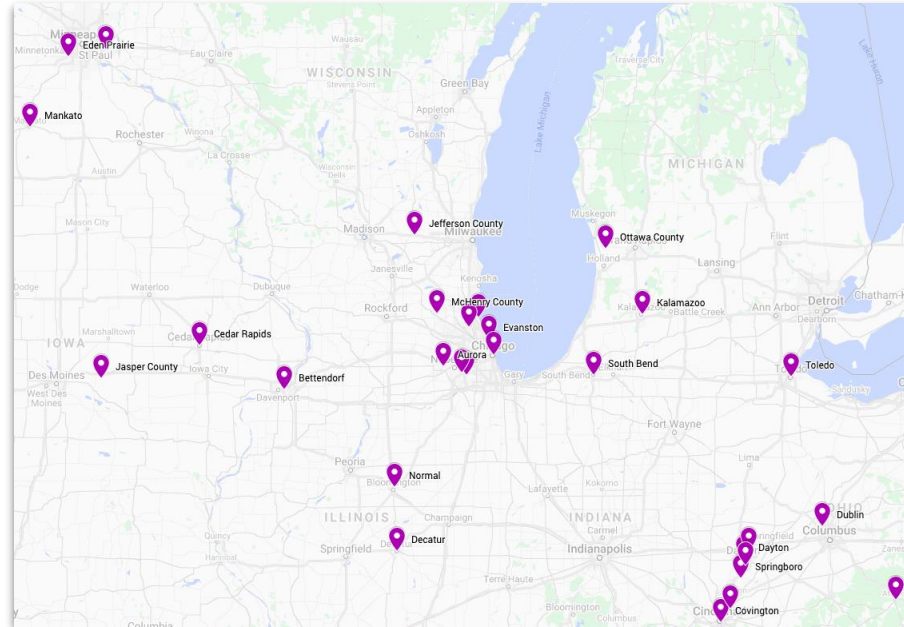
Own the narrative  
of their story

# From Data... to Dashboard... to Insights



# The Zencity Midwest Network - 2022 Snapshot

- Cedar Rapids, IA
- Lemont, IL
- Normal, IL
- Lake Forest, IL
- Jasper County, IA
- Evanston, IL
- Decatur IL
- Aurora, IL
- Ottumwa, IA
- Dayton, OH
- Geauga County, OH
- Washington County, OH
- Fairfield County, OH
- Guernsey County, OH
- Kenosha, WI
- Lorain, OH
- Dublin, OH



- Huber Heights, OH
- Blue Ash, OH
- Owasso, OK
- Miami County, OH
- Kettering, OH
- Midland County, MI
- Calhoun County, MI
- Kalamazoo County, MI
- Kent County, MI
- Lenawee County, MI
- Ottawa County, MI
- Wyandotte County, KS
- Garden City, KS
- Delavan, WI
- Chicago, IL
- Michigan Department of Health
- Michigan Economic Development Cooperation



# Flipping the narrative from negative to positive

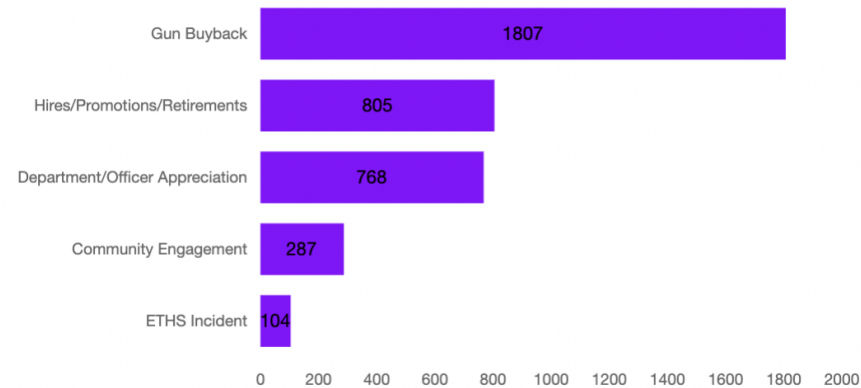


## Official channels drive positivity in Public Safety discourse; posts about December's gun buyback event attracts the most positive attention



Nov 1, 2021 - Jan 30, 2022

### Drivers of Positivity (number of positive interactions)



In the past three months, [official posts about Public Safety](#) have generated **9.2K interactions**- an increase of 162% compared to the previous three months.

Official discourse on Public Safety was significantly more positive than negative in sentiment (43% and 6%, respectively), and accounted for 84% of all positive interactions in the Public Safety Category. An analysis of these conversations reveals the **types of posts that elicited the most positive interactions**:

**[Gun Buyback \(1,807 positive interactions\)](#)**: Official posts about December's gun buyback event elicited 91% positive sentiment, reflecting **widespread resident support**. Interactions primarily consisted of 'likes,' 'loves,' and 'shares.' Although comments reflected some negativity, **several commenters praised the police department and expressed enthusiastic support** for the event. Notably, the [most popular post](#) (by far) came from the mayor's Facebook page.

**[Hires/Promotions/Retirements \(805 positive interactions\)](#)**: Posts about new cadets, promotions, and retirements drew widespread positivity, as residents left many 'likes,' 'loves,' and congratulatory comments. In particular, [EPD's video](#) of their promotion ceremony on January 18 **elicited significantly more comments (almost all of them positive) than any other post**.

# **Plan, Measure & Report**

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**Your ARPA Community  
Engagement Strategy**

# The questionnaire

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## Part 1

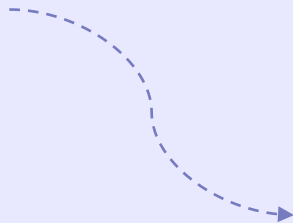
Overall Quality of Life

## Part 2

Satisfaction from county services

## Part 3

Dynamic section



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**Live feed for  
immediate feedback**

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**Cross reference insights  
with organic data**

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**Consolidate surveys &  
avoid survey fatigue**

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**Flexibility for timely  
issues**

### [ARPA EXAMPLE]

- a. For each chosen category, please rate your prioritization:
- i. Support public health response to the pandemic
  - ii. Address negative economic impacts of the pandemic
  - iii. Replace public sector revenue losses
  - iv. Provide premium pay for essential workers
  - v. Improve water and sewer infrastructure
  - vi. Improve broadband infrastructure
  - vii. Provide equity-focused services

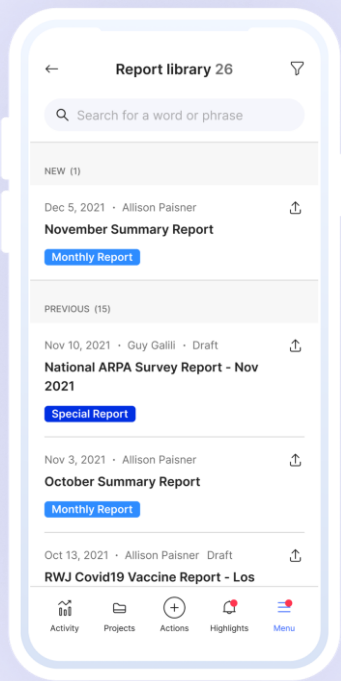
### Open ended

- a. What other opportunities should Placer County consider?



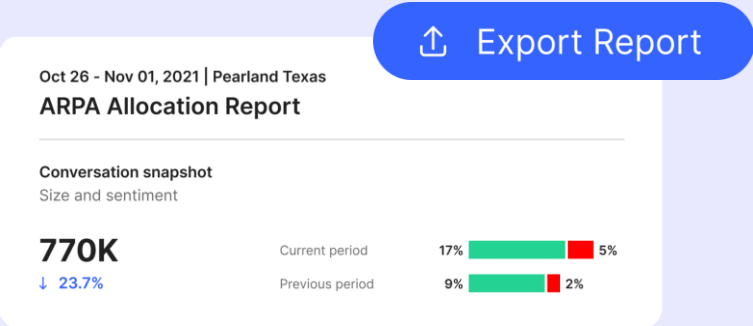
# Make a plan of action from one platform

01  
Analyst reports on  
your engagement data



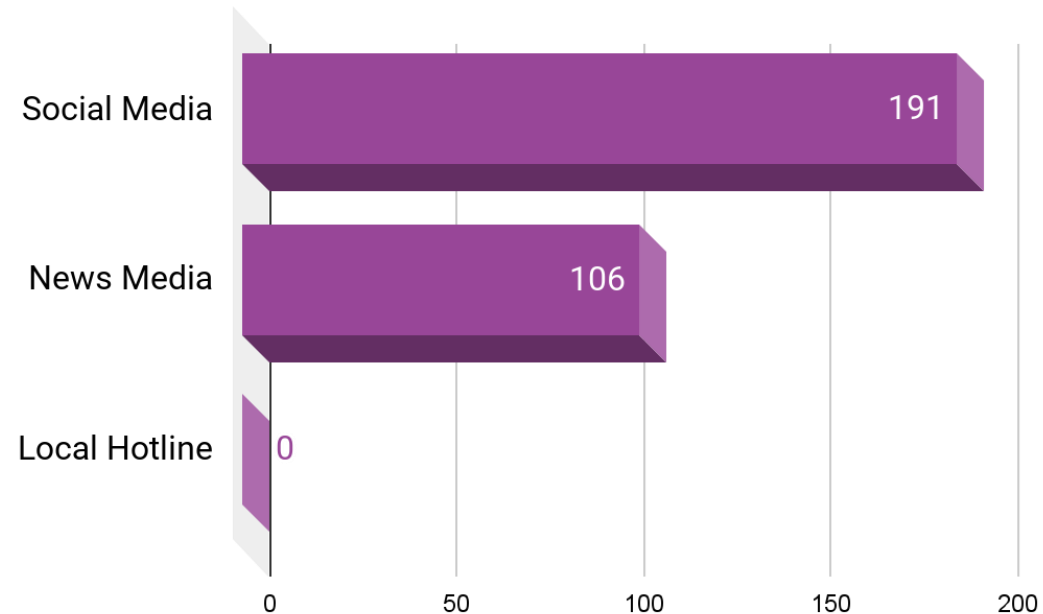
02  
Professional report  
creation tools

Hear from all corners of your community for  
equitable ARPA allocation that makes an impact.

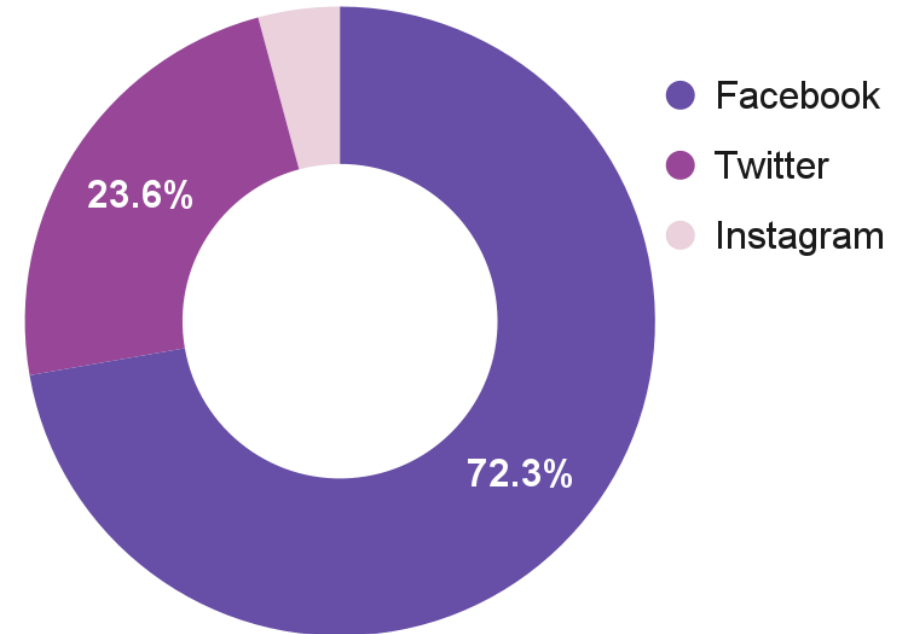


# Zencity in Normal - Total Number of Data Sources: 297

## Channels Breakdown

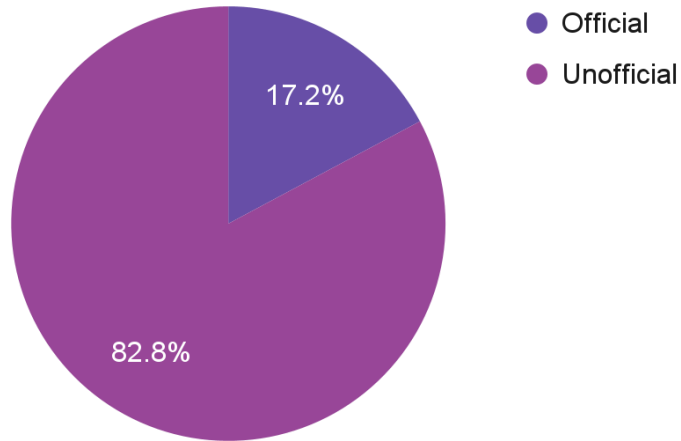


## Social Media Breakdown

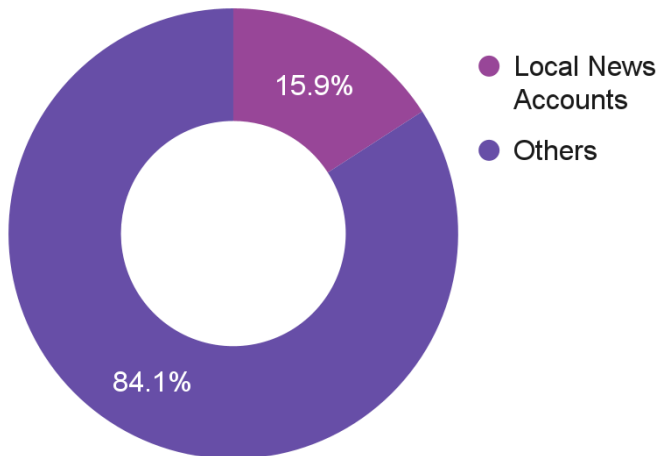


# Zencity in Normal - Coverage breakdown

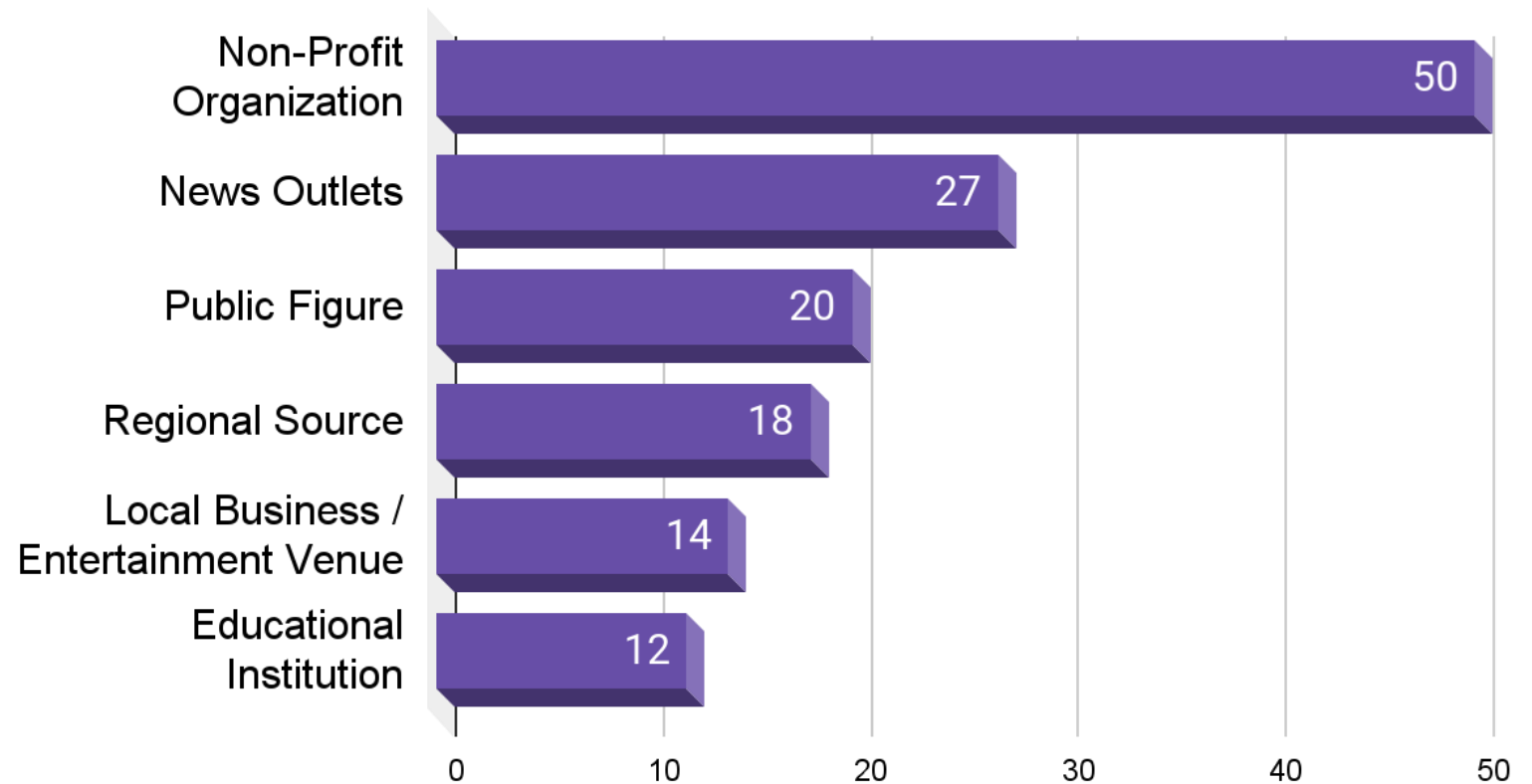
Social Media: Official vs. Unofficial



Social Media: Unofficial Breakdown



Social Media: Unofficial Breakdown





# Town of Normal, IL

Using resident feedback to inform  
budget and ARPA funding decisions



**Pamela Reece**  
City Manager



# Town of Normal - FUN FACTS!

- Population: nearly 54,000
- 23<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Illinois - centrally located along three interstates and historic Route 66
- The Mayor and six Council members, all elected at-large, lead the Town of Normal under a council/manager government form.
- Home to Illinois State University, Heartland Community College, Rivian Motors and Carle BroMenn Hospital
- The Children's Discovery Museum is part of the Town's Cultural Arts Department and offers three floors of hands-on learning for children
- Constitution Trail offers more than 45 miles of paved trail throughout Normal, Bloomington and McLean County
- The town-run, historic Normal Theater serves as a venue for classic films





# How can resident feedback inform funding and budgetary decisions?



- Ensuring ARPA funding is spent in an impactful and equitable way is imperative for every local authority's recovery and a resilient bounce-back into normalcy.
- Town leadership wanted to make sure its **recommendations for ARPA funding allocation were based on the needs of the entire community**, and not just a minority of residents who made their preferences heard.

# How can resident feedback inform funding and budgetary decisions?



## 2021 Timeline

- September - Town of Normal desires resident input on use of ARPA funds
- October - The Town deploys a Zencity Pulse Survey
- November - Zencity presents results to Town staff
- December - Town staff presents ARPA recommendations to Council



# Make sure residents know their feedback is needed



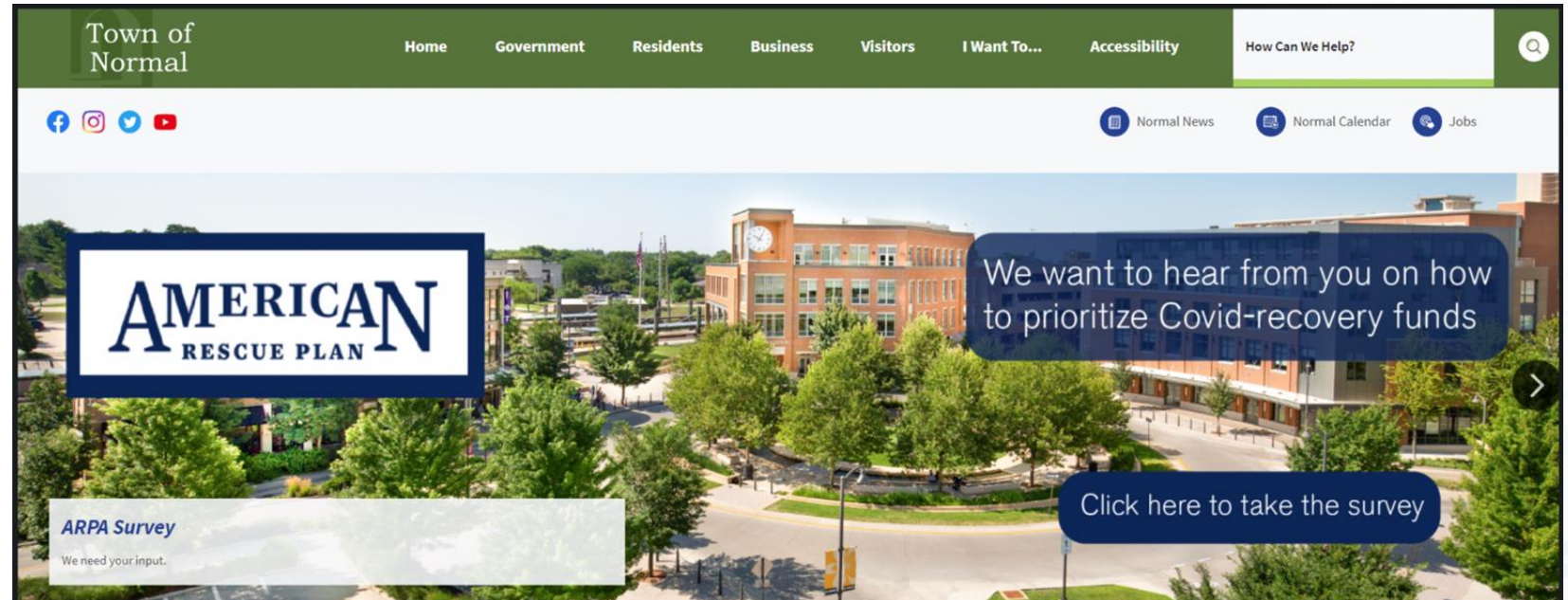
Town of Normal - Government

★ Favorites · October 11 at 11:00 AM · 🌐

The Town of Normal launched a survey, <https://surveys.elucd.com/to/hE20nNP7>, to collect feedback from residents to help prioritize investment areas to address related to the COVID-19 impact and recovery.

Cities in the United States received significant funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, address economic fallout and lay the foundation for recovery.

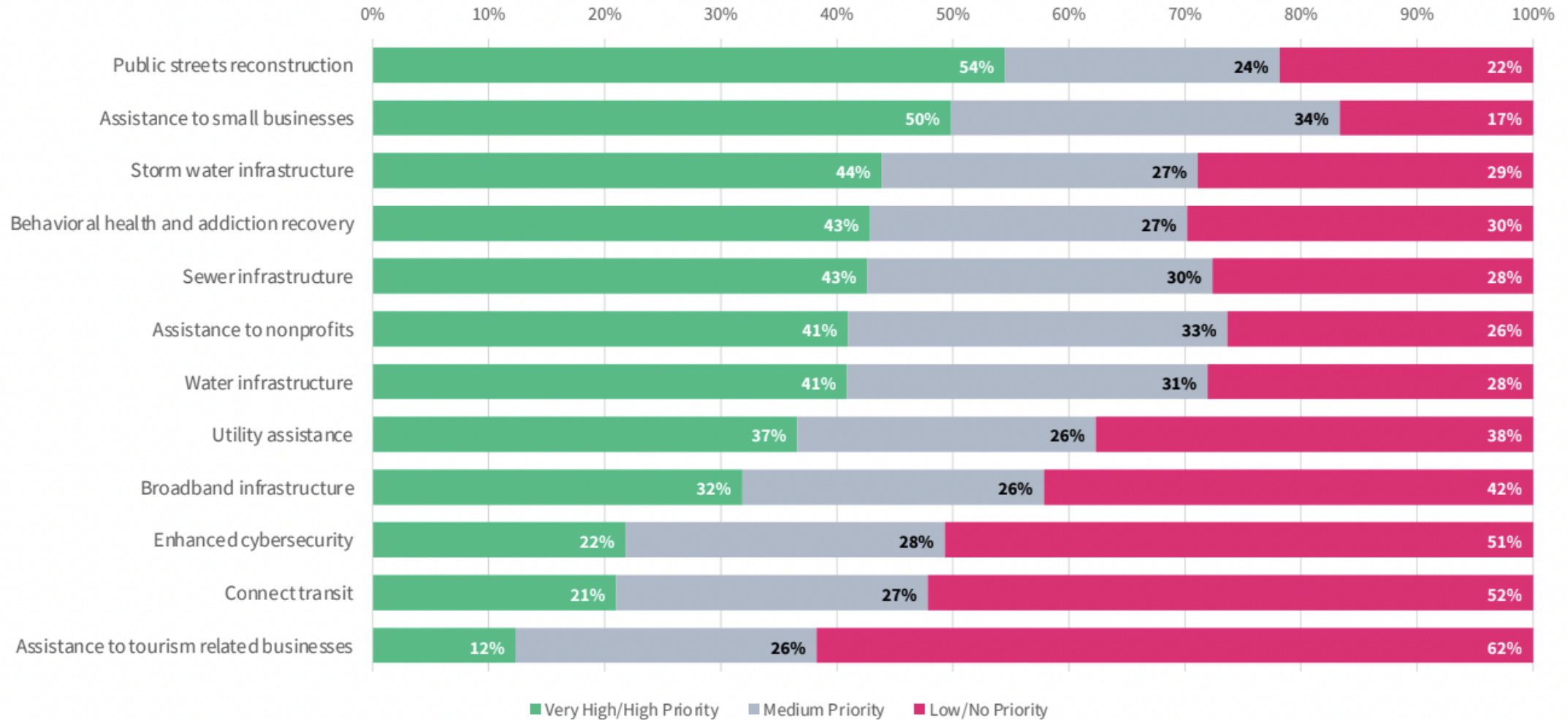
The Town of Normal is slated to receive \$10.8 million over the ne... See More





# Key takeaways from the survey

Question: Please rank the following opportunities to use ARPA funds



# Key takeaways from the survey

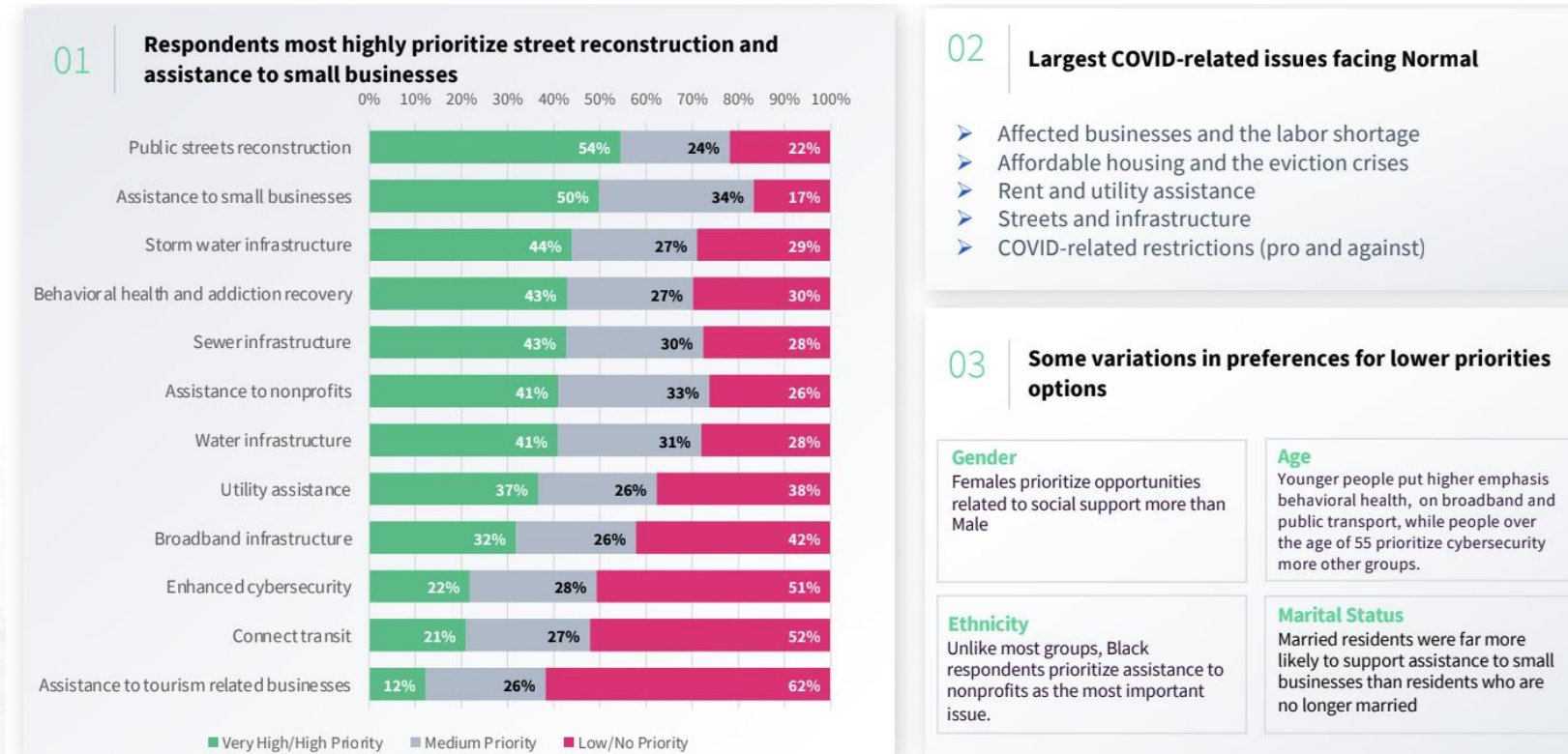
**Age:** Ages groups differ in their prioritization when it comes to mental health, which is underprioritized by people over the age of 55. Younger people put higher emphasis on broadband and public transport, while people over the age of 55 prioritize cybersecurity more other groups.

Category		18-34	35-54	55+	Female	Male	White	Black	Other
01	Public streets reconstruction	55%	52%	55%	52%	53%	53%	49%	61%
02	Assistance to small businesses	51%	50%	50%	54%	45%	51%	43%	48%
03	Storm water infrastructure	43%	45%	46%	40%	45%	44%	45%	44%
04	Behavioral health and addiction recovery	46%	47%	37%	53%	32%	45%	40%	40%
05	Sewer infrastructure	41%	43%	46%	39%	44%	41%	47%	48%
06	Assistance to nonprofits	42%	43%	42%	48%	35%	39%	57%	52%
07	Water infrastructure	40%	41%	44%	38%	40%	41%	35%	42%
08	Utility assistance	39%	35%	36%	46%	27%	37%	40%	36%
09	Broadband infrastructure	36%	26%	31%	35%	32%	33%	32%	33%
10	Enhanced cybersecurity	19%	19%	33%	22%	20%	21%	25%	19%
11	Connect transit	27%	15%	17%	25%	16%	21%	26%	24%
12	Assistance to tourism related businesses	12%	14%	12%	13%	12%	13%	9%	12%



# How did the data impact decision making in the Town?

- The data provided by the Zencity report affirmed ARPA recommendations made to Council represented the needs of the entire community





## How did the data impact decision making in the Town?



- The Town learned about how much residents prioritized **assistance to small businesses**. Based on those results, the Town decided to use the funds for **an additional staff member for the Small Business Development Center**.
- The demographic analysis of the survey showed that access to **broadband internet**, while not a high priority when looking at the big picture, was a **definite pain point among specific groups of residents**. This reaffirmed the decision to allocate funds for broadband in the upcoming budget.



An aerial photograph of a city street intersection, viewed from above. The image is dimly lit, with a dark, moody color palette. A semi-transparent green banner with a white border is positioned horizontally across the center of the image. On this banner, the text "Q&A" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the text, there is a small white icon of a hand pointing upwards. The background shows a grid of streets with cars parked along the sides and driving in the lanes. Buildings of various heights and styles line the streets, and trees are scattered throughout the scene. The overall atmosphere is urban and somewhat somber due to the low light.

Q&A





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