Q: Why do governments need Zencity?

Only a very small fraction of Americans ever attend public meetings to discuss local issues that matter to them. Zencity helps local governments hear from a much broader set of residents—the ones who may face barriers to participation such as the lack of time or ability to reach meetings, language barriers, or a lack of knowledge that participation is even possible. Zencity believes that everyone's voice and opinion should be heard, so it brings the conversation to local government leaders, rather than putting the burden of participation on residents.

Q: Where are you getting this data?

Zencity only takes data that is either completely open and public (meaning everyone can see it with a Google search) or owned by the local government (like 311, 211, or city hotline service requests). Zencity incorporates data from a combination of sources including official city channels such as 311, a common avenue for resident complaints, official city-managed Facebook and Twitter pages, and the city's website. Zencity also incorporates data from open, public, social media channels and web sources, like public Facebook groups, Twitter hashtags, and keywords. Zencity doesn't collect this information on any "human" level – it is all automatically collected and filtered by their software product.

Q: Does Zencity enable my government to conduct surveillance of social media feeds?

No, it is not possible to conduct surveillance with Zencity, and using Zencity for any attempted surveillance is a violation of the company's Terms of Service.

1. Most data is collected from completely open outlets, such as pages and public groups, and only the content of the post is kept—not any information about the user posting or commenting on it.
2. Zencity never accesses personal profiles, and only collects data from private groups with explicit permission from group admins. Where Zencity does have permission to collect data from private groups, Zencity does so in the same way as with public groups—without any information about the users posting or commenting.
3. Zencity never keeps or displays any user or profile data at any point, or any other personal information. In fact, Zencity always anonymizes all of the data. In the case of social media, Zencity's technology automatically always anonymizes the user posting and obscures any names that may be used or tagged in a comment or post. In the case of incorporating city data (such as 311), Zencity never holds any personally identifiable information in its system at any point.

Q: Can I opt out of Zencity seeing my posts

Because Zencity is never looking at your private posts, there isn't anything to opt out of—Zencity simply aggregates the public information that already exists. But what is posted online on public pages and forums is accessible to anyone.

Q: Does the government know what I am posting on social media?
If you post publicly on Facebook or other social media, members of the government could theoretically see it—and that's true for anyone when you post publicly. That's not what Zencity is doing though. Zencity collects, anonymizes, and analyzes public posts and comments to help local governments better understand the topics that matter most to their residents. Identifying information, including your name, or the names of people you tag, will never be collected.