



קרן תל אביב
THE TEL AVIV
FOUNDATION

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Dear Friends,

I recently did an interview with MERCER, one of the world's leading consulting and research firms, which publishes global city rankings, including Quality of Life. In the interview, I highlight the principles that drive our work. As we draw to the end of 2019 and reflect on all we have achieved and our vision for 2020, I would like to share some of these with you, our partners. One of the biggest challenges facing Mayors across the globe today, is how to create a sense of community and connection in a big city. For Tel Aviv-Yafo, I am guided by my own upbringing to create what I call "kibbutz in the city". The Municipality tries to envision each neighborhood as a kibbutz, and provide the best and lowest cost services to residents – whether in education, culture or social services. In recent years we have dramatically expanded the range of services provided, and leverage the Municipality's community, leisure, and cultural assets for the benefit of our residents. And like on a kibbutz, we try to make it all close to home. The fact that every neighborhood has schools, kindergartens, a community center, a cultural hall and the like is, among other things, meant to enable residents to build a sense of community with their neighbors.

The role of Mayors is changing. In Israel, this is accentuated by the fact that our national government has become paralyzed in many areas due to the current political deadlock. In the past, "national" issues were the more substantive and fundamental matters, while "local" issues were more mundane - infrastructure and construction, public transportation, early childhood education, public spaces, etc. Today, national leadership can no longer meet the growing needs of citizens, which means Mayors find themselves navigating major issues and decisions unlike before. I call Tel Aviv-Yafo "the social home front of Israel" as we provide services not only to our residents, but also to residents from dozens of cities around us – from aiding special education students, youth at risk, and children of asylum seekers to providing programs for excellence – as everyone is looking for solutions in the big city. We do this out of a sense of social responsibility and Zionism. Fortunately, we have the capacity to do so.

Today, Tel Aviv-Yafo is known as a city with one of the world's strongest startup ecosystems and a relatively high quality of life. There are lots of ingredients to our success, but the most important element is the secret sauce: the spirit of the city and its values. Cities with a strong creative class are said to have the three 'T's: Technology, Talent, and Tolerance. Technology can be bought; talented people can be attracted. So why is technology booming more in Tel Aviv-Yafo than in cities far richer and bigger than ours? Because the third ingredient cannot be bought or brought in – tolerance. It is no coincidence that there is a correlation between cities with prominent startup scenes (San Francisco, New York, London, Berlin) and cities where a strong LGBTQ+ community flourishes, multicultural communities thrive and minorities find a home. For only in a city where human rights and freedom are respected can a creative and entrepreneurial economy grow. And this respect Tel Aviv-Yafo provides.

I invite you to continue to be an active partner to this vision and, specifically, to the projects and programs we are planning and delivering to achieve it. As we celebrate Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, I am grateful to our many partners around the world who help Tel Aviv-Yafo light the way. I wish you all a Happy Hanukkah and a successful new year ahead.

Yours,

Ron Huldai
Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yafo
Chairman of the Tel Aviv Foundation