



# **Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**UPDATE – May 2020**

Prepared by the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality's Center for Applied Urban Information and Knowledge and the Office of the Mayor

## **Background**

This report is an update to “Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – Updating Document,” which was published by the Office of the Mayor in cooperation with the Tel Aviv Global and Tourism Administration in April 2020. To see the original report, click here: <https://bit.ly/3afIiR4>

The current update includes information about the Municipality’s ongoing activities in response to the coronavirus pandemic, covering the period from mid-March 2020 through the end of May 2020. The report details activities in the fields of work routines; preservation and enforcement of public order; municipal education; provision of services to weaker populations; culture and assistance to artists; assistance to owners of businesses in the city; identification and utilization of new opportunities; community activities for city residents; partnerships; tourism; budget estimates; and strategies for the “day after the pandemic.”



Photo: Kfir Sivan

Tel Aviv-Yafo, May 2020



## **Management routines and intraorganizational work during the coronavirus crisis**

- Meetings of the Director General's Forum on Zoom – increased to three meetings a week
- Internal municipal information portal – In light of the importance of ongoing updates, transparency and data integration, a data management infrastructure was established to enable the Municipality's various units to update their activities. This infrastructure – which includes meeting summaries, reports, resident satisfaction surveys, public announcements and more – allows managers to share updates and maintain orderly documentation of municipal activities. The portal has been a major tool for learning and drawing conclusions about what works and what needs to be improved.

## **Enforcement and preservation of public order**

The pandemic dictated a different order of priorities in the public sphere. In the weeks immediately following the outbreak of the crisis, municipal authorities engaged in preserving order, increasing enforcement, and increasing the feeling of safety throughout the city. The Municipal Security Patrol, known by its Hebrew acronym Sela, focused on carrying out essential tasks for emergencies. These included: increased assistance in the community, preservation of public health and enforcing emergency regulations. At the same time, the drastic reduction in the number of people and vehicles entering the city, and in the number of businesses still operating, lowered the need for enforcement of city bylaws.

Gradually, as restrictions were lifted and the city transitioned to new routines for living with the coronavirus, the emphasis shifted and Sela, along with the city's Inspection Division, acted to enforce the "Purple Badge"<sup>1</sup> guidelines issued by the Israeli Ministry of Health to facilitate the safe reopening of businesses. Their responsibilities also included preventing large gatherings; preserving public order in the face of the growing

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<sup>1</sup> Issued by the government, the Purple Badge regulations stipulate certain conditions and actions that are required for the reopening of schools, businesses, offices, etc. The regulations allow each sector to return based on conditions specific to it, including matters such as: maintaining a certain distance between employees and/or customers; supplying protective equipment and hygiene products; installing partitions; restricting the number of people present in the same space or elevator; and so on.



social protests; maintaining order at small neighborhood street pubs; dealing with the homeless population; preventing violence and vandalism; responding immediately to calls to the Municipal hotline (Moked 106) and the police hotline (Moked 100); and reinforcing the sense of personal safety in potential hotspots such as Jaffa and the area around the Central Bus Station.

As the return to routine widened, Sela and the Inspection Division were able to go back to enforcing the regular traffic regulations, especially regarding serious parking violations. These included unauthorized parking in spaces reserved for neighborhood residents and parking in areas designated for drop-off and pickup at educational institutions, in school parking lots and in the parking lots of municipal buildings (all of which had been permitted during the early days of the crisis due to the fact that schools were closed and most municipal workers were working from home). Other activities that had been temporarily halted, such as enforcing traffic regulations using cameras placed above public transport lanes and towing illegally parked vehicles, were also resumed.

Likewise, daily parking fees at municipal parking lots returned to their normal levels after being reduced in the first weeks of the pandemic.

### **Formulation of the “Red Neighborhood” procedures**

The Municipality created a municipal preparedness procedure for the closure of neighborhoods within its city limits if it should become necessary to lock down certain areas due to a fresh outbreak of the virus. The declaration of such a lockdown will be made at the national level by the Ministry of Health and other relevant national bodies.

**The method:** 1) monitoring rates of infection among city residents; 2) locating anyone who was in contact with someone who tested positive for the coronavirus; and 3) being willing to impose a lockdown on a particular neighborhood. Lockdown measures include isolating the neighborhood through controlling residents’ entrance to and exit from the designated “red zone”; preventing residents from being on the streets; transferring people who are sick or self-quarantining and are unable to meet the quarantine regulations to accommodations designated for that purpose; taking care of the neighborhood population; and responding to a range of other needs.



**Incident management:** A Community Emergency Department will be responsible for managing the local command center, which will be housed in a community center (the first choice) or in a municipal building close to the neighborhood under lockdown, as decided by the Security and Emergency Services division. The Community Emergency Services director will be responsible for managing the incident in the neighborhood, including overseeing the Municipality's support units that are taking part in the operation. The director will mobilize additional position-holders to facilitate smooth, continuous functioning of the command center.

**Readiness:** Directors of the divisions that make up the department will be asked to prepare a shelf plan relevant to his or her field for the city's various neighborhoods. The emergency plan will contain all the data required for optimal management of the incident.

### **Promoting democracy and freedom of expression under pandemic regulations**

Faced with a sharp rise in the number of groups, organizations and other bodies seeking to hold protests in Tel Aviv-Yafo during this period, the Municipality instituted new arrangements in Rabin Square, the expansive plaza in front of City Hall where large demonstrations usually take place. The changes brought the square into compliance with the guidelines issued by the Israeli Ministry of Health and the emergency legislation related to the pandemic. Some 250 stickers, measuring 60x60 centimeters each and bearing the slogan "Preserving democracy – preserving health," were affixed to the ground at two-meter intervals. The stickers indicated where demonstrators were allowed to stand while adhering to social-distancing regulations. In addition, the Municipality allowed activists to borrow "activism kits," which contained a mobile loudspeaker system, a microphone and a mobile podium. Rules for using public spaces for protests were clearly and accessibly outlined on the Municipality's website, along with a form to request permission for holding a demonstration.



## Education in the city – prior to the reopening of schools

- Helpline for parents: The educational-psychological service provided parents with counseling on issues like relationships, parenting and education at all age levels (from kindergarten through the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in both mainstream and special needs schools).
- Assistance for parents of children with special needs: Tablets and creative activity kits were distributed; the dedicated Facebook page called “The Special Ones” was upgraded with added content and a question-and-answer option; parents were able to remotely access professionals for counseling on how to best support their children and cope with the new and complex reality we face.
- Parents’ service center: In routine times, the parents’ service center offers various types of lectures, events and trainings for parents. To provide extra support for parents during the pandemic, the parenting program was transferred online.
- Facebook pages: The Municipality’s Education Administration maintains a dedicated Facebook page called “Education in Tel Aviv-Yafo,” as well as Facebook groups geared to particular age groups such as “Elementary Schools in Tel Aviv-Yafo,” “High Schools in Tel Aviv-Yafo,” “Municipal Kindergartens in Tel Aviv-Yafo” and more. These pages provided updated information about the steps being taken by the municipal education system, as well as presenting study and enrichment content, lectures and guidance sessions for both children and parents.

## Reopening the educational system

### **Guiding principles**

- **Certainty** – During these days of profound uncertainty, clear municipal policy is required to instill a sense of certainty
- **Graduality** – The reopening process must be gradual and accommodate the psychological, emotional, family and professional issues resulting from the pandemic
- **Autonomy** – Principals and educational staff should be encouraged to come up with creative solutions that comply with the Ministry of Health guidelines
- **Transparency and information sharing** – Educational staff and parents must be informed in a timely manner about any steps or decisions related to the return to routine.



## **Operational preparedness throughout the educational system, in compliance with the guidelines**

- Cleaning and disinfecting all of the surfaces, the schoolyards, the classrooms and all other spaces
- Purchase and distribution of personal protection equipment (PPE) and other devices: thermometers, masks, gloves and alcohol gel for all staff members
- Deploying in compliance with the social distancing guidelines: organizing and dividing the school's spaces (classrooms, lavatories, playgrounds, etc.) to comply with social distancing rules
- Hanging signs detailing the guidelines for pupils and staff members
- Building an appropriate timetable with the help of the teaching staff and the enrichment program staff
- Preparing the psychological service to support pupils as they gradually return to their routine
- Organizing and training to enter and exit educational institutions without crowding
- Conveying the guidelines and explaining all aspects of the return to the classrooms

## **The role of the educational-psychological service in providing treatment and emotional support during the return to the new routine**

- Online counseling by the psychological service staff for pupils and parents
- Initiated meetings: support groups led by professionals for the parents of preschool children, in cooperation with the early childhood division of WIZO, an NGO that maintains a nationwide network of preschool programs
- Providing information that is inclusive and emotionally attuned in Hebrew and Arabic about the new routine in kindergartens and schools

## **The return to school of children with special needs**

**April 19** – All of the city's schools for children with special needs returned to limited operation in compliance with the guidelines governing the arrangements, including social distancing and building a suitable schedule. Afternoon support and treatment centers were opened by the Ministry of Education.

**April 21** – Fifteen schools and 100 kindergartens for children with special needs started operating in compliance with the guidelines



**April 22** – Two hundred small classes in 30 elementary schools and 12 high schools began to operate. The schools' administrative staff came back to work in order to ensure a safe, orderly and well-functioning learning environment.

**May 5** – Following a period when school transportation operated only partially, transportation was arranged for all pupils in special education kindergartens (from both the city and its metropolitan area). The pupils were divided into small groups for the ride to and from school, in accordance with the guidelines set down by the ministries of Education and Health.

### **Opening of childcare services for teaching staff**

Before the official school reopening, 130 kindergarten classes were opened for the children of teaching and administrative staff so the parents would be able to go back to work to prepare for the upcoming return without worrying about childcare.

### **The return of preschoolers and grades 1 through 3**

- After consulting with Forum 15 and with the Union of Local Authorities, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality decided not to open its elementary schools on May 3, as the Ministry of Education instructed them to do, but rather to wait a day or two longer (May 4-5). This allowed the schools to make optimal preparations for the long-awaited return. Other local authorities followed suit and chose not to open on May 3.
- The “capsule” plan for opening preschools and grades 1-3 was based on a gradual return to routine, with classes divided into fixed groups of 15 pupils each. Each group would attend school for five hours three times a week, always occupying the same tables in the same section of the classroom. The placement of the tables strictly adhered to the social distancing requirements with a two-meter separation between one group and another.
- Shared meals and snacks were discontinued and pupils had to bring their own food and eat at their own desks, rather than sitting together as usual.
- Entrance to kindergartens and elementary schools was restricted solely to staff members and pupils upon presentation of a health declaration (a temperature report and a short questionnaire). Parents and others were not allowed to enter.
- The group that was not physically present at the school on any given day was instructed to take part in the remote learning program.



## **Return of grades 11 and 12**

**May 10** – Pupils in grades 11 and 12 came back to the classroom for intense studies in preparation for the upcoming matriculation exams (*bagrut*)

**May 17** – All schools were now open and operating, as the last group of pupils kept at home – those in grades 4 through 10 – returned to school

## **Coronavirus testing for educational staff**

Given the high rate of infection in educational institutions, the Municipality pressed for widespread testing for school staff members. The first round of tests was carried out among those working in schools for children with special needs (who are defined as at risk of infection) and then expanded to include the other schools.

## **Responses designed for weaker population groups**

### **Assistance for children and youth at risk**

- Day centers and residential facilities: The Municipality's 12 day centers and two residential facilities continued to operate throughout the entire period. Their staff members were defined as essential workers and the children stayed in the residential facilities without going out and with virtually no visitors allowed in. The staff worked 24/7 in order to maintain a safe, calm and stable environment for the young residents.
- Caring at Night: The night patrol teams of counselors continued their ongoing efforts to locate and assist youth at risk throughout the entire period. The teams' mission is to provide immediate solutions in the field for alienated young people in distress. During the pandemic period, they also supply information about the Ministry of Health's guidelines to combat the coronavirus.

### **Prevention of sexual violence**

In response to the growing number of reports on the social networks about sexual violence, the Municipality, in partnership with the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, offered workshops for educational staff members; online lectures for parents, in



elementary-school and high-school pupils, who produced their own videos on the subject.

### **Assistance to those engaged in prostitution**

The Municipality issued a public appeal to organizations to help with the distribution of food vouchers to people engaged in prostitution. Ten organizations joined forces with municipal bodies to raise NIS 140,000 (more than \$40,000) that was distributed in two payments.

### **Employment solutions**

As the crisis forced a record-breaking number of workers to join the ranks of the unemployed, the Municipality's "Opportunity Center" geared up to provide city residents with solutions tailored to meet their needs. The center offered access to an employment coach, as well as an employment psychologist or social worker, and connected jobseekers with employers who were hiring new workers. The center also runs regional Facebook and WhatsApp groups that collate and make accessible information regarding rights and employment opportunities; presents online courses and workshops for the acquisition of new skills; and operates a helpline for those who were fired or laid off due to the pandemic.

### **Mediation center for landlords and tenants**

As it became more difficult for tenants to pay their rent, it looked increasingly likely that a wave of tenant-landlord conflicts was on the way. To help resolve these situations, the Municipality proactively set up a mediation center for tenants and landlords, in cooperation with the Israel Bar Association.

### **Culture and assistance to artists**

- **"Israel Is Connected"** – In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the city-run Enav Cultural Center, the Municipality initiated an ongoing series of musical performances, short-story evenings, concerts, and story hours and plays for children – all of which were livestreamed on municipal digital platforms.



- The “Vital Signs” festival – The Municipality, in cooperation with the Yehoshua Rabinowitz Foundation for the Arts, organized a festival to support musicians and encourage the creation of original material. The festival hosted 28 musicians who live in Tel Aviv-Yafo in a week of performances from their homes and clubs (without a live audience) that were streamed on social media.
- The “Exit Strategies” festival – Held at the end of May, this unique art exhibition ventured out of the virtual realm into the real world, inviting the public to safely discover 40 works of art and artistic experiences scattered across the city in outdoor locations.
- The Cinemania festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque – This competition offered prizes for the creation of short (under two minutes) videos shot while under quarantine.
- The Tel Aviv Museum of Art’s outdoor screening project – The municipal art museum screened films on the walls of buildings throughout the city during the evening hours.
- Contact with artists and those working in the field of culture – Alongside conversations and focus groups with artists and people working in that field, an emergency team was set up with the goal of strengthening the resilience of the arts community in Tel Aviv-Yafo. The team learns about the problems facing the city’s artists, connects them with the relevant municipal officials and helps to fund new projects.

### **Community activities for city residents**

- The Golden Parks program: Each morning from 8-10 a.m., the Municipality offers activities for elderly residents in municipal parks throughout the city. Called Golden Parks, the program provides a respite for golden-agers so they can enjoy spending time outdoors while also protecting their health
- Digitaf in the parks: At the other end of the age spectrum, the Municipality organized performances and activities for young children in the open areas of public parks
- The Tribal Campfire – Celebrating the holiday of Lag B’omer at home: Due to the pandemic and the need for social distancing, the bonfires that traditionally mark this holiday were prohibited this year, much to the dismay of the country’s children and youth who eagerly await this event all year long. The Municipality



prepared a booklet full of suggestions for content related to the environment, as well as alternative and virtual activities to mark the holiday together with adults

- Participation in the “Flower for a Survivor” program: Flowers were distributed to Holocaust survivors with the assistance of more than 700 young volunteers from the Israel Scouts Federation
- Livestreaming Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony, which took place in April at the Cameri Theater, Tel Aviv-Yafo’s municipal theater
- Producing a TV broadcast called “Songs in the Square” featuring popular performing artists to mark Israel’s Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, held in Rabin Square, the large plaza in front of City Hall
- Distributing bouquets accompanied by a letter of appreciation in Hebrew and Russian to 250 veterans of World War II on Victory Day (May 9), which commemorates the surrender of the Nazis in 1945

## **Sports**

### **Exemption from fees for the use of Premier League facilities**

With the return to action of the basketball and football (soccer) Premier Leagues, and in light of the tremendous difficulties faced by Tel Aviv clubs due to the pandemic, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality decided to waive its fees for Tel Aviv teams for the duration of the crisis. This applies mainly to premier league games in both sports that are due to be held in municipal sports facilities until the end of the season.

### **Business owners in the city**

Beyond the actions already taken to help struggling businesses in the city, the Municipality undertook further significant steps, including:

- Pressing for a program to exempt these businesses from paying municipal taxes (*arnona*) and sharing with the government the cost of its implementation, to the tune of tens of millions of shekels. Despite the added burden on its cash flow, the Municipality decided to maximize relief for businesses by immediately applying the full 25% exemption (that is, offering full exemption from *arnona* payments for three months), rather than deducting it as a discount spread over the entire year.



- Advancing payments to its suppliers at a cost of more than NIS 500 million
- Repaying NIS 3 million to business owners after deciding to grant a three-month exemption from the licensing fees for erecting an enclosed space outdoors and for operating at night, as well as a four-month exemption (February through May) from permit fees for placing tables and chairs on the sidewalk
- Granting a three-month exemption from payment of permit fees for signage
- Launching an online platform for Purple Badge declarations: Businesses that comply with the government's detailed guidelines for safe reopening can sign a declaration stating that they adhere to the list of safe practices, and thus display a Purple Badge indicating that they conform to the regulations. The Municipality launched a user-friendly digital platform for submission of the declarations. It also provided information about the program to tens of thousands of relevant businesses (segmented according to the type of business) and distributed notices explaining the regulations to be displayed on storefronts. After a two-week running-in period, the Municipality began enforcing the Purple Badge regulations.
- Formulating a program for the immediate reopening of restaurants and bars: To prevent the collapse of the food and beverage industry (Tel Aviv-Yafo's 2,500 restaurants, cafes and bars employ about 70,000 people) and get the workers back on the job, the Municipality urged government action to enable immediate reopening. To that end, it submitted a program to the national government proposing the full resumption of operations in compliance with the Ministry of Health's regulations, as well as additional conditions and criteria. The program covered diverse aspects of the sector's business operations, placing a strong emphasis on cleanliness, social distancing and protecting the health of workers and customers. Health officials were invited to a Tel Aviv restaurant to observe a demonstration of how the program would work.
- Using the public space for the benefit of businesses: After restaurants, cafes and bars were permitted to seat diners at tables rather than relying on takeaway, and in order to facilitate social distancing, the Municipality allowed a temporary expansion of the space outdoors where the placement of tables and chairs is permitted. Hairdressers were allowed to place a few chairs outside their shops to prevent crowding inside. About 1,000 chairs were placed in central public spaces, both for the enjoyment of city residents and to provide additional outdoor



seating for customers of the food-and-beverage businesses. Naturally, the chairs were arranged two meters apart, in compliance with the Ministry of Health

regulations. The large plaza in front of City Hall became “Rabin Square Beach,” dotted with lounge chairs and sunshades for the use of the public.

- Providing assistance for merchants in the outdoor markets: Before the opening of the markets, the Municipality helped merchants from the Hatikva and Carmel markets and the Jaffa Flea Market with arranging advertising and organizing deliveries. In addition, the Municipality worked with the health authorities to prepare for the markets’ return to full operation, in cooperation with the market merchants. It was agreed that certain regulations would be mandatory, including: the wearing of face masks at all times, easily available hand-sanitizing materials, increased presence of inspection patrols, a ban on sit-down eating and adequate signage explaining the regulations. The Municipality fenced off the entrances to the markets, pasted social-distancing markers on the ground, delivered a copy of the official regulations to all merchants and hung posters with the Ministry of Health’s guidelines at the market entrances.
- Continuing the “Support Jerusalem Boulevard” project: Construction of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area’s new light-rail system carried on during the coronavirus crisis and as a result, Jerusalem Boulevard, Jaffa’s main thoroughfare, remained closed to traffic. This has severely impacted the small businesses that line the once-busy boulevard. During the crisis, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, in cooperation with the “colu” app, continued to run its “local currency” project, in which customers at participating businesses along the boulevard get a cashback reward funded by the Municipality.
- Offering walking tours to support local business: After the food-and-beverage businesses reopened, the Municipality launched a series of walking tours in tourist sites throughout the city as a way of helping local businesses. The tours were offered free of charge upon presentation of a recent receipt for at least NIS 20 from one of the city’s many restaurants and cafes.
- Launching a public campaign to encourage buying at local businesses: Numerous promotions were run on all of the city’s advertising platforms, including: posting videos promoting local shopping on the social media; putting up giant billboards and more than 500 smaller signs in prominent sites throughout the city; cooperating with and promoting the businesses; creating a



dedicated page for businesses on the Municipality's website; promoting food-and-beverage businesses through the city's DigiTel resident's card; and using the flyers that accompany municipal tax bills to boost local businesses.

- Contact with business owners: The Municipality maintained ongoing contact with the owners of diverse types of businesses and organized for them online meetings with various city officials, including the Mayor, as well as with the heads of organizations representing the wide range of economic activity in the city. Additionally, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Economy and the Small Business Authority, the Municipality operated a helpline that offered responses to questions related to business operations during the pandemic.

### **Seizing opportunities**

- Remote working: In order to prevent the spread of infection and adhere to the Purple Badge restrictions on the reopening of offices and businesses, the Municipality's offices followed the directives regarding the number of workers present in each space (depending on its size), the distance between them and the use of dividers to separate between workers. To maintain proper functioning while complying with the directives, the Municipality had to reduce the crowding in its offices so it allowed some workers to work from home. This arrangement is possible only when there is operational flexibility and the ability to monitor workers' effectiveness and productivity. The Municipality, which views this situation as an excellent chance to try out new tools, plans to examine how these findings can be of use in the future.
- Construction and infrastructure work: As noted in the previous report that dealt with the first weeks of the crisis, the coronavirus crisis generated opportunities for stepping up the pace on major public works projects. [This video](#) presents some of the work that was carried out while the streets and public spaces were practically empty.

### **Partnerships**

- Domestic partnerships: The Municipality has helped its partner local authorities buy personal protection equipment and shared knowledge relating to the management of municipal volunteers, communications on the social media,



assistance to business owners, recommendations for strategic planning or preparing for a lockdown, among other topics. Tel Aviv-Yafo's partner local

authorities include the local councils of Daliyat al-Carmel, Dir al-Asad, Dimona, Bnei Brak and others.

- The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group: As a member of this global network of cities, Tel Aviv-Yafo joined in the group's declaration in May urging the adoption of sustainability principles when planning exit strategies from the pandemic.
- Global Resilient Cities Network (GRCN): The Municipality joined the GRNC's recently established coalition, Cities for a Resilient Recovery (C2R), which will provide full accessibility to a knowledge-sharing platform with updated information from all over the world, plus programs and tools and methodologies for municipal planning to strengthen resilience. The group's webinars (in partnership with the World Bank), as well as documents dealing with emergency actions taken by cities worldwide, are distributed to the Municipality's management on a weekly basis.

## Tourism

- Leadership roundtable: The Municipality held an online meeting with leading figures in the hard-hit tourism industry, attended by the Mayor, the Municipal Director-General, the Ministry of Tourism Director-General, the President of the Israel Hotel Association, senior municipal officials, representatives of the nightlife and tourist attraction sectors, and others.
- The "Blue Sea, Purple Badge" initiative: To bolster the case for opening the city's beaches, the Municipality formulated a list of directives and then staged a demonstration of their implementation for health officials. After the government approved the reopening, the Municipality decided to open only 10 of its 13 official beaches for the current season, due to budgetary constraints. Municipal teams prepared the beaches in strict compliance with the Ministry of Health's directives, which included: cleaning and sanitizing all beach facilities and restrooms; hanging informative signage in conspicuous places; providing



explanations for beachgoers, who were required to observe the regulations requiring masks and maintaining social distancing among both individuals and groups; lowering the water pressure in the outdoor showers to prevent water from spraying all over the place; and closing beachside changing rooms.

### **Budgetary arrangements**

From the very start of the coronavirus crisis, the Municipality updated its work plans and municipal budget to prepare for the unknown. As the weeks went on, the budgetary picture became somewhat clearer: Municipal revenues would decrease, mainly due to the blow suffered by the businesses and the drastic drop in the city's volume of activity. Moreover, due to the directives from the various government ministries, the Municipality was forced to cover the considerable expenses related to the pandemic, such as: buying equipment; cleaning and disinfecting public spaces; assisting the needy; providing support for the city's diverse communities; and increasing expenditures on formal and informal education to ensure compliance with government directives. Thus, the municipal work plan was updated repeatedly to reflect the frequently changing situation. One major step was to freeze municipal development projects so that the funding could be diverted toward balancing its operating budget. As the situation improves, the Municipality will determine the pace of reactivating the projects that were suspended and expanding the ongoing activity that had to be cut back.

### **The "Day After"**

- Municipal brainstorming teams: As noted in our previous report in April, which dealt with the first weeks of the crisis, the municipality's management was already devoting considerable time and thought to preparing for the "day after." At the current juncture, the very concept of the day after is still shrouded in fog, since it is not yet clear what Israel's exit strategy will be, how it will be implemented and how long it will last. Thus, the Mayor and the Director-General identified the city's main challenges in the future, which subcommittees will work on planning for:
  - ✓ The business sector – recovery and the return to routine operations



- ✓ Social and community services, especially for those in need, including management of volunteers
- ✓ Culture – recovery and the return to routine
- ✓ Intraorganizational change – adapting and improving the Municipality's working methods (allocating resources, knowledge-sharing, technological integration and a fresh examination of fundamental principles and perceptions, etc.)
- ✓ Transportation – reaching conclusions about the significance and consequences of various courses of action and learning for the future. Some initial lessons have already been learned during the pandemic regarding the reduction in air pollution in areas where traffic diminished dramatically. Steps were taken to turn roads into pedestrian malls where priority will be given to pedestrians and non-polluting forms of transport. These pedestrian zones are expected to benefit the city's many residents and visitors who will enjoy strolling in a safe, accessible and inviting municipal space that will facilitate social distancing.
- ✓ Other topics under discussion include the public space, financial stability, education, and social and gender equality.

### **Academic research**

The Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality will provide a database for use in academic research by researchers at Tel Aviv University. Among the topics to be studied are the effects of the pandemic on the real estate market, the community, transportation and the local business sector; examination of the role of the local authority during times of crisis; and others.



## Comparative statistical data on the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality's operations during the coronavirus crisis

### General data – The city of Tel Aviv-Yafo (as of December 2018)

- Population: 451,500
- Education
  - Number of students: 58,954
  - Elementary school pupils: 31,714
  - High school pupils: 22,047
  - Pupils with special needs: 4,500 (of whom 2,000 are in special education schools)
  - Children and youth at-risk: about 900 in dedicated programs
- Social services
  - Households known to and cared for by the Social Services Division: 22,293
  - Elderly residents: 69,971
  - Households below the poverty line: 18,141 (35,106 people)
  - Homeless people: 611
  - Substance abusers: 176
  - Foreign population: 38,500 (this includes documented foreign workers, undocumented foreign workers, tourists without valid visas, asylum seekers and refugees)
  - Businesses in the city: 73,745
  - Residents registered with DigiTel: about 200,000
  - International partner cities: 43



## **Data on the Municipality's activities during the coronavirus crisis**

- DigiTel

Between March 13 and May 10 – 54 types of DigiTel communications were distributed to residents, totaling 2,670,753 emails that contained 1,511 separate items

106 Municipal Call Center – Since the crisis began, the center has received a total of 13,773 calls about the coronavirus, dealing with the following topics:

- Requests for food baskets: 4,504
- Information on Health Ministry directives: 2,496
- Queries about the directives regarding gatherings: 1,663
- Reports about gatherings that violate government directives: 1,191
- Requests for assistance for an older person: 1,138
- Reports on businesses operating in violation of the directives: 757
- Queries about feeding street cats: 404
- Requests for assistance with medications: 362
- Queries about the Purple Badge directives for safe reopening: 356
- Queries about the directives of the Home Front Command: 343
- Requests for accompanying an older person: 220
- Reports of failure to wear masks in public spaces and businesses: 166
- Requests for purchase vouchers from Social Services: 68
- Queries about going to public parks, playgrounds and beaches: 58
- Requests to cordon off public parks with barricade tape or repair torn barricade tape: 33



- Queries about the operation of schools for children with special needs: 12
- Queries from residents who must self-quarantine and ask for accommodation: 2

About 200 residents began using the new functions on the 106 app and the panic button.

- **Main responses in resident satisfaction surveys**

The most frequent requests were: performances in public spaces; ways to volunteer during the crisis; ways to make information more accessible on the Municipality's website; building a study plan for the city's schools; financial assistance (tax relief, cancellation of tickets and rent assistance); support for weaker populations; and increased trash collection. Also, expressions of gratitude for the interest taken in the city's residents.

- **Information and enforcement**

The Municipal Security Patrol (Sela) handled 13,503 incidents since the crisis began (compared to 8,115 in the parallel period last year)

- **Education in Tel Aviv-Yafo**

- The Big Brother project – More than 400 young people helped about 600 elementary school pupils with their studies. The program is set to end now that the schools are back in operation.
- Number of pupils who received laptops: 750
- Number of calls to the parent support helpline: 50
- Number of children and youth using municipal clubhouses and residential facilities: about 900



- **Social services and community**
  - Number of elderly residents contacted by phone: 36,156
  - Number of hot meals distributed to the elderly: 211,446 with the help of 2,980 volunteers
  - Number of home visits: 52,520
  - Number of families that received food vouchers: 9,599 received vouchers worth a total of 2 million shekels (jointly funded by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, and the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality)
- **Assistance for those who lack official standing in Israel from Mesila, the Aid and Information Center for Foreign Workers and Refugees**

Since the beginning of the crisis, Mesila has distributed:

- Close to 6,000 vouchers for purchases
- 800 food packages
- 600 hot meals
- 300 kits with games and activities for children
- More than 1,000 packages of diapers and baby formula
- 100 tablets
- 600 kits containing masks, gloves and alcogel