

# The Lab for Urban Empowerment – Strengthening Aging Neighborhoods

**Merhav - Movement for Israeli Urbanism (MIU)**  
Quality urbanism for a successful Israeli society  
[www.miu.org.il](http://www.miu.org.il)

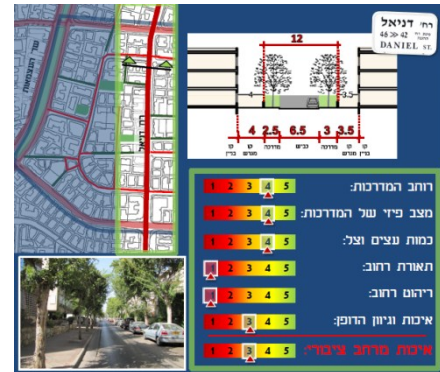


## The Lab for Urban Empowerment – Strengthening Aging Neighborhoods

Currently there are over 500 depressed urban residential neighborhoods in Israel. Built by the Israeli government cheaply and quickly following massive waves of immigration in the 50s, 60s and 70s, these run down housing projects & neighborhoods constitute the largest part of Israel's housing stock, yet they are also the most neglected. Their residents suffer from poor access to commerce, jobs, services and public transportation. They lack walkability and security and offer a general atmosphere of desolation and poverty. Through the *Lab for Urban Empowerment*, Merhav is developing a **people-centered, environmentally focused, replicable** process or "tool" for the transformation of these neighborhoods into places characterized by high quality of life and renewed development—without pushing the residents out of their homes and communities. The tool is based on Merhav's "10 Principles for Good Urbanism".

The *Lab for Urban Empowerment* began following Merhav's realization that the customary approach regarding strengthening city/town centers in Israel has focused on the renovation of the central commercial area alone, ignoring the rundown and underused neighborhoods around it. This approach has proven to be unsuccessful as it fails to strengthen the residents of the neighborhoods close to these centers. Conversely, Merhav's Lab for Neighborhood Empowerment emphasizes a holistic approach, which treats the neighborhoods, its public spaces, residential housing and the connection to the city/town center.

Through the implementation of this tool in municipalities throughout Israel, Merhav seeks to fundamentally change the discourse around the issue of urban living in Israel from that of *growth through sprawl* to that of *renewal and intensification*, encouraging decision makers and residents to implement smart, sustainable urban planning policies that enhance urban quality of life, provide diverse housing opportunities and encourage local economic development by reinvigorating depressed urban neighborhoods.



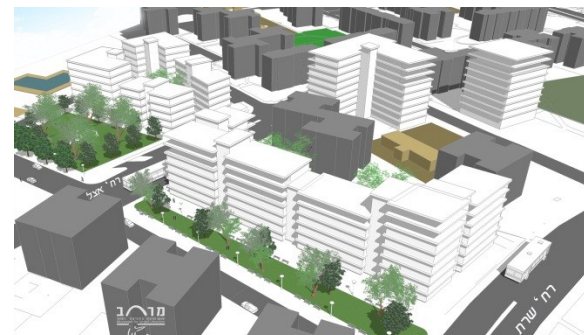
**Due to their poor design - Most Israeli cities do not provide their residents affordable access to economic, social and cultural opportunities to realize their full potential as individuals or as a community.**

**More than 90% of Israelis live in urban towns and cities**

**Merhav promotes urban environments based on people centric public spaces.**

**Quality urban environments that enable access by a variety of transit options.**

**Quality urban environments that are compact, vibrant, provide many opportunities and potential uses, and are designed with respect to the local community, culture the environment and landscape.**



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