

Hello, my name is Tsila Hayun, and I am the owner and founder of Hotam Culture Initiator, a company that initiates cultural projects and provides content consultancy for cultural institutions and museums. This includes advising traditional institutions aiming to expand and update their traditional areas of activity to become more active and contemporary.

Two years ago, I was approached by the Rishon LeTzion Museum, an historical urban museum, to propose a program outlining the museum's transformation and to suggest activities not only within the building but also on the streets of the city's historic heart.

This is Rishon LeTzion



ראשון לציון
היום - מבט מעל

Rishon LeTzion (literally “the first of Zion”) is the fourth largest city in Israel. It's in the center of the country, 16 kilometers – about a half-hour drive – from Tel Aviv.

The city was founded at the end of the 19th century, in 1882, when the land of Israel was part of the Ottoman Empire.

This community was part of the first wave of immigration to the Holy Land. They built one of the first moshavot, rural cooperative communities, in the country.

In those first years, some of Israel's most famous social, educational and cultural foundations and symbols were established and created here in Rishon LeTzion. For example, Israel's national anthem, "HaTikva" (meaning 'hope') was composed in one of the houses in the Moshava, which would later become part of the historical museum.

Rishon LeTzion is also the home of Hebrew education. Education based on the Hebrew language, an ancient Biblical language revived in the 20th century. The first Hebrew School and one of the first kindergartens were established in Rishon LeTzion.



מבנה בית הספר העברי הראשון, נוסד בשנת 1887



The first Hebrew orchestra played here too.



Israel became an independent country in 1948. In 1950, Rishon LeTzion officially became a city.

The Rishon LeTzion Museum – which tells the story of this pioneering community and its seminal contribution to shaping Israeli culture – stands in the historical heart of the modern city.



החצר ואחד המבנים

Let us focus on the current situation and challenges.

The city's vision is to become a strong symbol of cultural legacy, with its historical center testifying to the roots of national cultural values.

Having said that, Rishon LeTzion's urban development and expansion has been west of the old center. New neighborhoods are being built, commercial areas and shopping malls are sprouting up and the old, historical center has lost its status as the focal point of the city.



Most of the old buildings were destroyed or sold and replaced by new ones lacking any significant character.

In the 80's, the Municipality bought some of the remaining historical buildings from private owners but did not do anything with them. They and other historical sites became neglected, and any businesses that remained no longer served as economic or commercial attractions.

If you walk through Rishon LeTzion today, you will find it hard to identify the buildings and spaces that were once home to the pioneering founders. Decades of neglect have almost erased its original identity and the historic area is now subsumed within an urban architectural landscape in 70's and 80's style.

In the early years of the 21st century, the Municipality launched an effort to renovate and preserve the city's historical center. They were able to renovate the facades of many buildings.

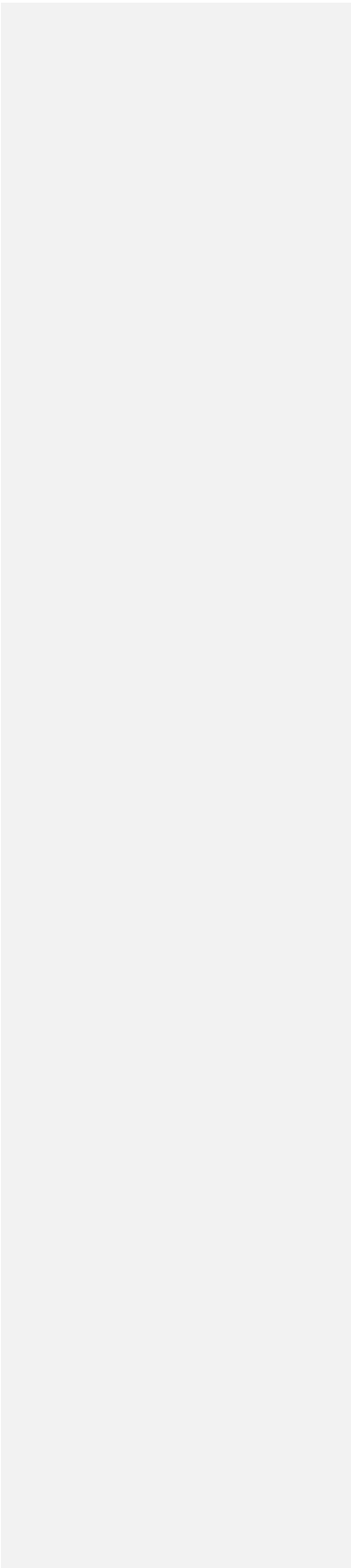
However, the bigger vision is to transform the entire historical area of the city into a new hub, attracting tourists and visitors from all over the country.

What do I want to be when I grow up?

"I want to have roots and wings. Why should anyone relinquish their roots if their hearts desire wings? Roots lose so much when they are trapped in the ground and cannot rise to view the awesome sight of the tree they are part of and the huge forest the tree is part of too. And the birds on the tree who do have wings... they lack that grip on the ground. Their nests are dependent on the mercy of the winds and the might of the tree, under the shelter of whose branches they are protected. And therefore I have finished. When I grow up I want to be a person with roots and wings."

These sentiments, expressed by Israeli author and poet, Amnon Shamosh, are the spirit and inspiration for our roaming paths. They ask to tell the story of the city, the story of place, through the stories of the local people.

We understand that a city marching forward, facing the future, needs to preserve its past. Rishon LeTzion's past does not hold any resplendent architectural value and did not leave a significant material legacy. But it does bear the stories of the founders' vision and ideals. Those pioneers




who left an old homeland and aspired to establish a new society on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

We propose that the city illuminates this story with bright, shining lights...

Our challenge is to find a way of “marking” the historical buildings, distinguishing them from the surrounding urban jungle, and creating an experience that allows them to tell the story of the past, using modern tools while rising above the daily rush and bustle of a 21st century city.

The heart of this complex is the Rishon LeTzion Museum who is located in Founders’ Square.



מעוצב:גופן: 14 נק', גופן עבר עברית
ושפות אחרות: 14 נק'



The museum spans an area of 3300m² and stands in the complex housing some of the founders' first historic buildings, An old stable built in 1883, a pharmacy and a doctor's clinic that later became the community's first post office. and an old hotel that Now it's an exhibition hall and municipal gallery.



אחרי השיפוץ

One of the buildings houses the city archives, one of the most important collections of the period. The Archives Team also manages the "Family Album" project, which actively documents and preserves the histories of the city's founding families.

In addition to the museum buildings, the Municipality bought and renovated another 10 buildings in this historic area.



בית יד לבנים לפני השיפוץ



בית יד לבנים משופץ



גן המושבה



גן המושבה היום



בית הכנסת לפני השיפוץ



בית הכנסת לאהר השיפוץ

Our program was divided into two parts: Renewal of the museum and presentation strategies within the historic city.

1. The Museum's Development Program

The heart of the historic city – Rishon LeTzion Museum – expresses “the uniqueness of location” and serves as a major factor in cultivating identity, connection and belonging for the local citizen. This approach is very much in tune with the search for roots that characterizes our times.

The program views the museum as a central complex, a beating heart pulsating through the entire historic area. It won't be another closed campus, one address among many, but a central hub disseminating cultural

treasures and activities across the historic city. A number of roaming tracks will branch out from this historic heart. The roaming and exhibition tracks will imprint a refreshingly new character upon the historic city and share the story of place and people with both casual visitors and tourists.

Current Situation and Action Plans

The museum currently operates as a **closed complex** and is most definitely not the heart and soul of the historic city. This is something that needs to change. We have proposed a transformation in the entrance area and its attendant functions, and we have suggested creating an entrance gateway connected to the city's main square.



Here's what we plan to do:

1. Expand the permanent exhibition to cover major themes in history and tradition not addressed in existing exhibitions.
2. Designate some of the renovated historical buildings for exhibition space, instead of their current roles housing offices and other operational functions.
3. Update exhibitions created many years ago using a variety of innovative techniques, and matching them to the requirements of the different groups of visitors the museum wants to attract.

Old and New entrance

New



Old



Slide 18: Changing the Entrance

4. Create compatible physical and technological conditions for important archival activity. And place it in an open, visible and

accessible position because it represents the beating heart of the museum.

The Main Challenge

Our main challenge is how to highlight the historical city in an old urban complex.

The program involves the creation of 'roaming paths' along which the casual visitor or the tourist interested in local history can experience the city's story. Through the men and women who built, dreamed, initiated and lived their lives here to make it the large, vibrant and city it is today.

We believe that the human perspective – personal stories, pictures and characters – when integrated into the city's architecture, will allow the city to tell its story. Because the story of the city – any city in fact – is none other than the stories of the people who built and lived in it throughout the ages. **Rishon LeTzion will tell its story by strategically positioning the stories of its fathers, mothers, sons and daughters all along the 'roaming paths.'**

To this end, we have created exhibition points in each of the important historic public buildings, some of which I have mentioned – the winery, the synagogue, the well, the park, the orchestra's home, Beit HaAm ("The People's House"), and others.

At each location, an interactive exhibit will tell the story of that home or location through different media.

Roaming Paths in the Historic City

The historic city roaming paths will start at or reach the museum's main entrance and meander through the main sites. Each path – decorated and enhanced by storytelling and content-rich exhibits – will also take the visitor to notable and memorable spots, where their unique charm remains intact.

For example, an audio presentation surrounding the synagogue through which the visitor will be able to hear worshippers singing in traditional fashion.

Or the sounds of the famous Rishon LeTzion Symphony Orchestra, playing in the Beit HaAm ("The People's House") area, in the plaza where they used to perform.

And all of these points will be indicated on a special downloadable travel map.

The paths will be branded using the historical path logo.

Each path will have a different theme and a different color.

A map will show the walking area and content points and appear as a "smart" street sign, upon which there will be a picture of one of the local historical characters and a short explanation. You can also download the map and the contents onto your smartphone. A printed map will also be

available at the museum or at other places around the city. The map can be downloaded at the Municipality's website and potentially through the historic city's planned WiFi network.

Sample Paths

- **The Dreamers/Entrepreneurs' Path** – telling the stories of founders, industrialists, pioneering farmers, major philanthropists, etc.
- **The Courageous Path** – investors, fighters, social activists, etc.
- **The Breakthrough Track** – female pioneers in various fields
- **The Artists/Philosophers' Track** – authors, poets, artists, etc.
- **The Community Track** – leaders, committee heads, Rabbis, major union founders
- **The Hebrew Track** – school teachers, kindergarten teachers, Hebrew authors
- There will be 10-12 personalities along each path, photographed life-sized characters positioned along the way with his or her particular story printed on the exhibit.



איכיליי ויילקין 1880







Where appropriate, the story of a particular person will appear next to its relevant historic location, for example a home or place of work.

The walk along the roaming paths will also be enhanced by a vocal experience – popular folk songs of the place and time.

Songs of Dreams and Visions

Hebrew folk songs are an important part of Israeli identity and culture developed over the years. Each generation sang its songs, many of which carry the themes of personal and national dreams and yearning.

Therefore, to stress the individual visions of the founders, we will accompany each with a “dream” song selected from the classic Israeli songs from each historical period. Using a simple app on their phones, visitors will be able to listen to the songs at central points along the paths. Some points will also be operated via solar energy and the song will play as the visitor approaches.

Similarly, visitors can request their own “dream” songs and recommend they be included in the central song database.

Sculptural Elements in the Streets

To reinforce the walking experience, we propose that 3-4 urban installations – appropriate in content and spirit to the historic city – be positioned along the way. For example, video art on the synagogue walls.

The Mayor of Rishon LeTzion has approved our program. We hope it will be budgeted shortly and we will be able to start work. We have no doubt this program will revive the heart of Rishon LeTzion's historic city and instill the pulse of the past into contemporary urban experience.

Acknowledgements

The planning process was conducted in close cooperation with the museum team, particularly Museum Director, Mrs Nava Kessler, who is the driving force behind the change, together with the Curator Yona Shapira **and the entire team. I want to thank them all for the amazing journey we have been through together and of course I thank you all for listening.**