



The Regional Council of Yoav

Building communities



Background



Yoav is a rural Regional Municipality comprised of 14 multi-generational communities, most of which were formed before or around the establishment of the State of Israel. The municipality itself was established in 1952 and covers 22,000 Hectars. It has a rural essence although in the last decade rapid demographic growth in most of its communities has led to many changes. Today, most Yoav communities have self-governing bodies that serve their own internal affairs.

Yoav is a green, rural area with many historic sites. It is populated by dynamic, community-oriented people originating from many countries. The connection to the land is visible and palpable. Agriculture still dominates the views as you drive through, although most people do not work in agriculture. The quality of life in Yoav, according to socioeconomic indicators, as well as general observation, is high.



Our Vision

- > A Municipality composed of multi-generational communities that prosper and renew themselves Cultivating local leadership.
- > Developing our open spaces and countryside, nature, and the heritage that is special to the Yoav area.
- > Excellence in education, fostering culture and social welfare services for our residents.
- > The joint responsibility of our population and communities for security, ecology, and quality of life.
- > Fulfillment of our economic potential, and providing quality employment through the development of agriculture, infrastructure, and country tourism, in cooperation with our neighboring municipalities.



Yoav Communities

The communities in the Yoav Regional Council include:

- 8 kibbutzim: Beit Guvrin, Beit Nir, Gal'on, Gat, Kfar Menachem, Negba, Revadim, & Sede Yoav
- 3 moshavim: Kfar Harif, Nahala, & Segula
- 1 communal village : Vardon
- 1 youth village: Kedma
- 1 Arab community: El Azi



Most of Yoav's communities were established as Kibbutzim of the Shomer Ha'tzair (= Young Guard), a Socialist idealistic movement of Zionists who immigrated to Palestine to build an ideal community and a State for the Jewish people. Therefore, from its inception, social responsibility, a strong sense of community and a strong connection to the land have been the guiding values of the area.

In the decades that have passed the State of Israel has changed and so have the communities of Yoav. Today most communities are not ideologically based; most are not classic Kibbutzim or Moshavim, but these three elements are still the leading characteristics of Yoav: Community, Education and Environment.

These are also the main strengths of Yoav together with its growing diversity. Today the population of Yoav is more diverse and dynamic than ever, encouraging pluralism in and outside its communities. Growing and changing communities bring a new spirit and new trends. These trends include exploration of long lasting Jewish traditions, as well as the establishment of new Jewish-Israeli traditions, that are sensitive to both secular and Masorti (traditional) perspectives.

Population and Employment

There are approximately 8,500 residents in Yoav, and over 2,500 are under the age of 18. There has been a 40% growth in the population of Yoav over the last ten years as approximately 3,000 people have moved into the various communities. The growth still continues.

All of Yoav's communities were originally agricultural and include industries (either separately or joint ventures). A majority of Yoav's residents work outside the region in a variety of trades including lawyers, businessmen/women, doctors and other medical professionals, high-tech workers and other self-employed professionals.

The Yoav economy is comprised of agriculture (25%), industry (24%), tourism (8%) and education, services and small business (43%)

A large percentage of the adult population living in Yoav has Graduate or Post Graduate education.



Education

Education has always been a central element of life in Yoav, and its excellence in education has been one of the central reasons for the new influx of residents.

There are two elementary schools, one in Kibbutz Gat in the South of the region and one in Kibbutz Kfar Menachem in the Northern part of the region.

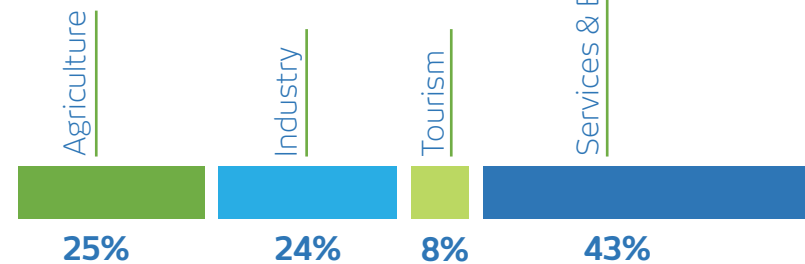
Zafit, the regional middle school and high school, located in Kfar Menachem, has been identified in recent years as one of the 10 best high schools in Israel. Due to its notoriety families living in neighboring municipalities are now sending their children to school there.

Each of the Yoav communities has its own preschool and daycare system. The municipality is involved in the educational system from preschool – kindergarten. Although governed by and adhering to State guidelines, the education in Yoav has an independent and local component that is based in its Kibbutz past: emphasizing liberalism, equality and responsibility and the connection between man and the environment he lives in.

There are two dominant Youth Movements in Yoav, and many of Yoav's teens participate in leadership's programs. A large percentage of Yoav youth undertake a Year of Service (Shnat Sherut) and volunteer in the community in various organizations before their military service.



Our Economy



Agriculture & related industry & resources

One of the major occupations in Yoav is agriculture: field crops, orchards, meat and dairy cattle, poultry, greenhouses for growing flowers and winter vegetables.

The region supports these efforts with various industries involved in agricultural research, processing, packing and distribution of the produce, such as:

Mishkei Hadarom – Mishkei Hadarom Credit & Acquisition Joint Agricultural Corporation Ltd.

Mishkei Hadarom Holdings Joint Agricultural Corporation.

Olive Oil production of high quality Virgin and Extra Virgin Olive Oil, from growing and pressing the olives to bottling and marketing.

Ganir – a manufacturer and exporter of citrus and other fruit products, for production of juices, nectars and soft drinks.

Zeraim Gedera – breeds, produces, and markets hybrid vegetable seeds.

Lachish Extension Service of the Ministry of Agriculture – Research and studies of orchards, crop yields, irrigation techniques and purification of waste.

Tourism



The Yoav Region is full of history, nature, hiking and biking trails and touristic attractions. Recently the Regional Council joined forces with two other neighboring regional councils to form “Shfelat Yehuda Tourism” – you can visit the website at www.touryoav.org.il to view the variety of opportunities in the area.

Hot Springs – Hamei-Yoav Hot Springs is a natural thermo mineral spa.

Bet Guvrin – a large national park, which encompasses the sites of an ancient agricultural settlement of Maresha, and the ancient town of Bet Guvrin, includes many historical caves. Caves of Maresha and Bet Guvrin recently have been inscribed on the World Heritage list by UNESCO.

Iron Age sites – One of the largest Iron Age sites in Israel is located in Kibbutz Revadim. More than 100 ancient oil presses were discovered there, as well as an inscription that clearly identifies the site as Philistine Ekron.

Tel Zafit – located inside Tel Zafit National Park. Recent ongoing excavations at this Biblical site have produced substantial evidence of siege and subsequent destruction of the site in the late 9th century BC.

Sightseeing – Yoav’s magnificent landscapes provide the perfect setting for a wide range of leisure activities, such as cycling, hiking, climbing, wine tasting, gourmet and popular dining, and various festivals such as the renowned Biblical festival.



Industry

Over the past twenty years, our communities, with the help and support of the Regional Council, have developed side by side with agriculture growing and expanding plants and factories such as: metal works, laminating processes and others.

Yoav contains two power stations that help to provide more than 10% of the national consumption, and quarries providing basic building materials countrywide.



The Yoav Community Center

Established in 1997 to develop and advance cultural and social life in Yoav. The Community Center is a non-profit organization that works for the benefit of all of Yoav's residents. The center offers activities to all age groups ranging from pre-school to seniors in various fields:

Sports- 900 participants per year enjoy a large variety of sporting activities: Soccer, basketball, martial arts, volleyball, rhythmic gymnastics, movement and more.

Dance School- offers a variety of courses: Jazz, Modern, Musical, Classic, Hip-Hop and street dancing. Currently 430 participants from first grade to adults take part in its activity.

Music Center- offers music lessons, voice resonance and pedagogy, development of musical ensembles for youth and adults encouraging them to write and produce original music. These ensembles often perform at regional events.

Activities for Senior Citizens- the center offers a senior citizen club for meetings and activities. It also offers a variety of lectures and day trips. The Yoav Community Center also offers a large variety of leisure activities and enrichment programs for children and teens.

The Children and Youth Division- initiates and promotes programs and activities for children 6 to 12 years during school holidays and summer vacations. It runs regional programs including Bnei Mitzva programs and summer camps and offers professional mentoring for educators and preventive programs for teens and parents.

After school programs- Our After school activities range from dance and sports to electronics and chess. The local Music Center grows from year to year giving the young people of Yoav as well as any interested adult the opportunity at a musical education and even forming a band.

The Cultural Department- Organizes and produces a rich variety of cultural events in the communities and at the Regional Theater.

All of the Community Center's events and activities are organized with the help and involvement of lay leaders and volunteers from the community.

Challenges

The Yoav region faces challenges in the future that have to do with its rapid demographic growth:

- > The need of the municipality and the communities to embrace and integrate the many new residents.
- > Developing renewed communities that integrate new and old to create new traditions and a cohesive and shared lifestyle.
- > To develop sources of income for the regional council in order to invest in infrastructure for the growing population.
- > Taking responsibility for the security and safety of the population (Shelter renovation received a lot of attention last year in the wake of operation Protective Edge, given that Yoav is within 40km from Gaza).
- > Balancing developmental interests and pressures while preserving the rich ecological and environmental treasures of the region.

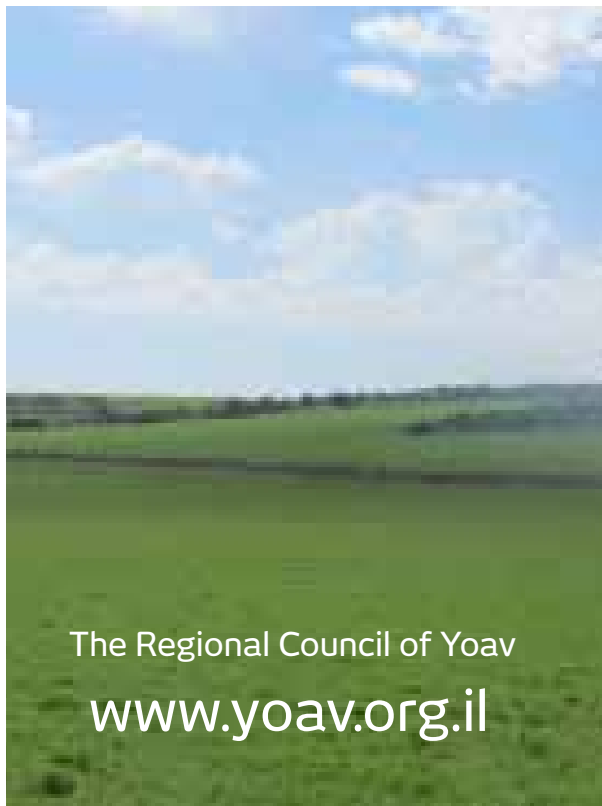
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