



Materials for the Parliamentary Lobby on Neighborhood Council Legislation in Israeli Cities

**Parliamentary lobby registered by Knesset Member Amit HaLevi (Likud), initiated by
the Dor Moriah Research Center**

July 21, 2025

The Dor Moriah Research Center prepared this document to support the Knesset lobby's efforts to establish neighborhood councils in Israeli cities. It makes the case for why neighborhood councils are essential tools for addressing critical challenges in Israeli society.

This document includes findings from our July 2025 survey, "How Israelis View the Arab-Israeli Conflict," conducted with Geocartography. The results underscore how vital it will be, in the war's aftermath, to create mechanisms that rebuild trust between different communities through collaborative problem-solving at the local level.

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NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL LEGISLATION

Section 1. PURPOSE

This legislation aims to strengthen civic engagement, build trust in local government, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and improve decision-making at both neighborhood and citywide levels.

Section 2. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Act:

- **"Neighborhood Council"** means an elected body representing residents in neighborhoods within cities of 50,000+ population, exercising authority under Article 249(1-4) of the Municipalities Ordinance [New Version];
- **"Municipality"** means the relevant city government;
- **"Minister"** means the Minister of the Interior;
- **"Regulations"** means rules adopted with approval from the Knesset Environment Committee.

Section 3. ESTABLISHMENT REQUIREMENTS

- (a) Municipalities must facilitate neighborhood council formation in all neighborhoods within cities exceeding 50,000 residents. Implementation deadline: 18 months from enactment.
- (b) Neighborhood council elections shall coincide with municipal elections. All neighborhood residents eligible to vote in municipal elections may participate.

Section 4. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Neighborhood councils are empowered to:

1. Represent residents before city councils and government agencies;
2. Participate in neighborhood planning, development, and improvement decisions;
3. Initiate and manage local projects within approved budgets;
4. Raise funds and seek grants under municipal oversight and applicable law.

Section 5. ELECTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

- (a) Council members shall be elected through direct, individual elections using a majority vote system.
- (b) The Minister shall establish regulations determining council size and voter eligibility procedures.

Section 6. FUNDING

- (a) Municipalities shall allocate 0.5-1% of their annual budget to neighborhood councils, per regulatory guidelines.
- (b) The national government shall contribute through municipal grants, with amounts determined by the Minister after consulting with the Finance Minister.
- (c) Councils may pursue additional funding sources as permitted by law.

Section 7. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- (a) Neighborhood councils must publicly disclose meeting minutes, financial statements, and annual reports.
- (b) Municipalities shall monitor council operations. The Minister may suspend or limit council authority based on internal audit recommendations when violations occur.

Section 8. IMPLEMENTATION AND RULEMAKING

- (a) This Act takes effect 12 months after publication. (b) The Minister is authorized to issue implementing regulations addressing:
 1. Neighborhood boundary determination
 2. Election procedures and oversight
 3. Budget allocation formulas
 4. Transparency and accountability standards

POLICY RATIONALE

Overview and Need for Reform

Israel's local government system was designed in the state's early years for a population under one million. Today, with over 9 million residents—most living in major cities—this outdated structure no longer meets urban communities' needs. Currently, residents cannot elect representatives from their own neighborhoods; they can only vote for citywide party slates.

This system means citizens vote for municipal lists without knowing who will advocate for their neighborhood's interests, and without any say in candidate selection. The result? Declining trust in local government and growing disconnect between residents and their representatives.

As social divisions deepen and political polarization intensifies, we need new ways to give citizens real influence over their communities.

The Current Social and Political Landscape

Israeli society is increasingly fragmented. Different groups live in separate worlds, struggling to find common ground or develop shared solutions. Trust in public institutions continues to erode.

Neighborhood councils can bridge these divides. When people work together on concrete local issues—fixing playgrounds, managing parking, improving street lighting—they discover shared interests and learn to collaborate. Major ideological debates fade into the background as neighbors focus on practical problems that affect everyone's daily life.

This creates real opportunities for citizens to shape their communities, not just watch from the sidelines.

Learning from Global Best Practices

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. Successful models exist worldwide.

New York operates 59 community boards that handle neighborhood affairs. Los Angeles has 99. French law requires all cities over 80,000 to establish neighborhood councils. What's remarkable? These systems work effectively even with modest budgets—just \$1-5 per resident annually—yet citizens report higher satisfaction with services and greater civic engagement.

Israel already has promising examples: Jerusalem's community administrations and Ramat Gan's neighborhood services. The problem? Without a consistent legal framework, these remain piecemeal efforts—uneven, incomplete, and unavailable to most Israelis.

It's time to establish clear legislation that guarantees every Israeli meaningful representation in their neighborhood.

Why the Current System Falls Short

The Party-List Problem Municipal elections use party or local slates, preventing residents from choosing neighborhood representatives. This weakens accountability, creates confusion about who represents whom, and widens the gap between voters and elected officials.

Missing Neighborhood Voice Current law doesn't require local representation. Where neighborhood committees exist, they operate informally without legal standing. Residents lack effective channels to advocate for their communities or influence decisions about development, infrastructure, and services.

Growing Social Tensions Israeli cities increasingly reflect disparities in income, ethnicity, religion, and infrastructure quality. Without meaningful local representation, alienation grows and trust erodes—both between communities and toward government. Rising polarization demands institutional responses at the grassroots level.

Neighborhood councils can transform communities into spaces for constructive cooperation—especially crucial when faith in central institutions wavers and citizens need avenues for self-governance.

What Neighborhood Councils Will Accomplish

Reconnecting Citizens and Government Councils will create reliable channels between residents and city hall. Citizens can directly approach their elected representatives, who in turn can effectively champion neighborhood priorities at the municipal level.

Strengthening Grassroots Democracy Direct elections mean clear democratic legitimacy. Residents will choose actual people, not abstract party lists, enhancing accountability and encouraging active participation in decisions affecting daily life.

Smarter Local Decision-Making Councils will accurately identify neighborhood needs, set informed priorities, and develop solutions tailored to local conditions. Close community ties and continuous feedback enable quick responses to problems and well-grounded proposals for city government.

Building Tomorrow's Leaders Council service provides hands-on management and organizational experience, creating pathways for emerging civic leaders who may later serve

in city councils, executive positions, and other public roles. Neighborhood councils become launching pads for engaged citizens.

Legal Structure

Councils as Municipal Affiliates We propose establishing neighborhood councils as municipal affiliates accountable to city government. This status grants legal standing to manage funds, enter contracts, accept donations, and implement projects while maintaining appropriate city oversight.

Each council will operate under standardized bylaws requiring both resident and municipal representation in governance. This ensures appropriate autonomy balanced with public accountability.

Status and Formation Process The law requires cities to initiate council formation in all municipalities over 50,000. Founding members include elected neighborhood representatives and city appointees. Councils receive authority to represent residents, launch local initiatives, and participate in budget planning.

Cities must include neighborhood councils when discussing area development plans, infrastructure changes, and local social programs. Council representatives gain seats on relevant municipal committees addressing their neighborhoods.

Survey Findings: "How Israelis View the Arab-Israeli Conflict"

Nearly two years after October 7th, 2023, Israelis remain deeply divided about the nature of this conflict. Our June 2025 survey of over 1,000 respondents reveals a society torn between faith and pragmatism, between hopes for peace and openness to radical alternatives.

Religious War or Territorial Dispute?

The most fundamental question—what are we actually fighting about? — yields strikingly different answers. One-third of Israelis (31.7%) see an **existential religious struggle between Judaism and Islam**. Nearly as many (28.7%) view it simply as a **fight over land**.

This divide tracks closely with religious observance. Religious Israelis often frame the conflict in sacred terms—nearly a quarter of ultra-Orthodox respondents (23.1%) trace it back to "Abraham and his sons." Secular Israelis think more practically: it's about territory, resources, and power.

The Jewish-Arab gap is even starker. Among Jewish Israelis, over a third (35.7%) describe a religious existential conflict. Among Arab citizens, only 10.6% agree. Arabs are three times more likely to see political and economic roots—understandable given their unique position in Israeli society.

Consensus on Iran

If there's one thing most Israelis agree on, it's who's fueling the fire. Over half (54.5%) point to **Iran** as the primary destabilizer. Among Jewish Israelis, this rises to 60.3%; among Arab citizens, it drops to 23.7%.

Arab Israelis are more likely to blame America (19.4% vs. near zero among Jews), revealing fundamentally different narratives about regional dynamics within the same country.

Annexation Goes Mainstream

For peace advocates, the most alarming finding: nearly a third of Israelis (30.8%) now support **full annexation of the West Bank and Gaza**—making it the single most popular option. Only 9.5% back a Palestinian state.

Religious affiliation strongly predicts views. Among secular Israelis, 23.3% support annexation; among the ultra-Orthodox, 56.9% do. This highlights religious Zionism's growing political influence.

The Jewish-Arab divide is massive. Jewish Israelis support annexation at triple the rate of Arab citizens (34.8% vs. 10%). Meanwhile, Arab citizens support a Palestinian state at ten times the Jewish rate (39.4% vs. 3.9%).

Even Annexation Won't Bring Peace

Here's the paradox: even those backing annexation doubt it will work. Over half of Israelis (52%) believe full annexation **won't resolve the territorial dispute**. Only 24% think it's a path to resolution.

Most tellingly, Israelis have lost faith in peaceful coexistence generally. Whether with annexation (62% say coexistence is impossible) or without it (55.6% say the same), pessimism dominates.

People support extreme measures not because they believe in them, but because they see no alternative.

A Society in Contradiction

The public holds conflicting views. While 40.7% expect annexation would **harm Israeli society**, support remains substantial.

Secular Israelis worry more about negative consequences (49% vs. 20.6% among ultra-Orthodox), yet a quarter would still vote for it.

Political Implications

Israelis don't expect major shifts even if the opposition wins. Only 31% think new leadership would maintain Netanyahu's approach to preventing Palestinian statehood; 44% anticipate change.

Nearly half (42.8%) expect **annexation to dominate the next election**—suggesting political discourse may grow even more polarized.

Conclusion: A Crossroads Moment

Our research captures Israeli society at a historical inflection point. October 7th appears to have shattered traditional two-state solution thinking. Most Israelis no longer believe in it and are considering radical alternatives.

Yet society remains fractured along religious and ethnic lines. Religious citizens see divine purpose; secular ones see political reality. Arab citizens inhabit a parallel universe of different hopes and fears than the Jewish majority.

This creates dangerous momentum: politicians may feel pressure to adopt extreme positions to maintain religious support, further alienating Arab citizens and the international community.

The study documents a moment when Israeli society, exhausted by endless conflict, contemplates forceful solutions even while recognizing their potential for destruction. This makes finding peaceful resolution both more difficult and more urgent than ever.