



THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - HAIFA · OUR STRATEGY
2026-2029

(Re)Imagining Haifa: From Resilience to Transformation

The public edition of SDC's strategic plan · July 2026

“What if the community organized itself, and we just provided the infrastructure?”

01 Strategic context

This strategy was developed in a period shaped by the implications of war, prolonged instability, shrinking civic space, and deepening structural discrimination against Arab communities in mixed cities, and more broadly Arab society in Israel. Despite these challenging circumstances, SDC has remained a central address for Arab residents in Haifa seeking civic support, coordination, and community-based action. At the same time, these past years have clarified where SDC's comparative advantage lies and where its heart is: building community-owned civic power, strengthening community mobilization, and translating community priorities into practical influence in institutions that shape everyday life — especially the municipality and the education system.

Our core strategic stance

- Lead communal mobilization and organizing based on SDC's core values: equality, equity, social solidarity, and shared living.
- Shift from ad-hoc response to structured community power: an Arab Civic Council with influential capacity and legitimacy.
- Integrate women and youth as leaders and decision-makers, not parallel tracks.
- Use evidence, learning, and documentation to guide action and build replicable models for other mixed cities.

"What if the community organized itself, and we just provided the infrastructure?"

This question anchors the overall approach: SDC focuses on building the conditions, tools, and platforms for community-led organizing and decision-making.

02 Vision and guiding principles

Vision

An Arab community in Haifa capable of shaping its present and future, with organized civic leadership, equal access to services and resources, and strong community-based institutions that withstand political pressure and social fragmentation.

Guiding principles

- **Community ownership and representation:** legitimacy comes from neighborhoods, lived experience, and transparent processes.
- **Women's leadership as governance:** women lead across issues, not only on "women's issues."
- **Youth civic agency:** critical thinking is linked to real participation, initiative, and responsibility.
- **Evidence and learning:** decisions are informed by research, monitoring, reflection, and adaptation.
- **Pragmatic influence:** combine pressure and collaboration with public representatives and decision-makers.
- **Partnership without dilution:** work with allies while keeping SDC's role distinct as a community-rooted civic mechanism-builder.

03 Goals and objectives

Main aim

Strengthen social solidarity and civic power within the Arab community in Haifa by building legitimate mechanisms for representation, collective action, and sustained influence on the institutions shaping everyday life.

Goals

- Build influential community leadership and capacity across age and gender to identify priorities, lead time-bound civic "cases," and sustain follow-up with decision-makers.

- Build and activate a connected civic ecosystem across neighborhoods, existing committees, community groups, and NGOs, linked through a shared coordination and governance mechanism rather than parallel tracks.
- Develop and document a practical community mobilization model (tools, routines, learning) that can be adapted by other mixed-city actors.

Objectives

- Establish and run a representative community mechanism — the Arab Civic Council — with clear norms for legitimacy, documentation, and conflict-of-interest.
- Integrate women's leadership as governance by embedding leadership roles and case leadership across issues, not only women-specific priorities.
- Strengthen education justice and youth civic agency through research, advocacy products, educator and community engagement, and youth pathways connected to community priorities.
- Treat organizational learning and MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, learning) as an operational backbone: routine documentation, reflection cycles, and usable knowledge products.

04 Strategy architecture

This strategy is built around one central mechanism: a functioning **Arab Civic Council** that is legitimate, community-rooted, and capable of converting priorities into action and influence. The Council is not an additional project; it is the connecting infrastructure that links SDC's women's leadership work, youth civic agency, education justice, and organizational learning into one system.

Key terms

The Arab Civic Council

A community-rooted organizational body that converts Arab residents' priorities into coordinated and influential civic action, with follow-up mechanisms — not limited to symbolic representation.

Issue mapping

A continuous process for identifying and tracking community priorities using assemblies plus lightweight tools (polls, structured online feedback, targeted consultations, and surveys).

Case

A time-bound priority the Council commits to pursue through a clear plan: owners, steps, timeline, follow-up tracker, and outcomes.

Municipal influence pathway

The routine from preparation → participation → documentation → follow-up → accountability, so engagement produces outcomes, not just attendance.

05 Strategic outcomes for 2026–2029

The 2026–2029 period translates SDC's broader strategy into an integrated, Haifa-focused approach. The Council is the main mechanism through which the strategy's components connect.

OUTCOME 1

A functioning Arab Civic Council as the mechanism for community-led priorities and influence

What success looks like:

- The Council is formed through a credible community process and maintains a stable cadence of meetings and decisions.
- The Council continuously maps community priorities and converts them into agendas, advocacy steps, and practical actions.
- Trained public and community representatives participate in municipal arenas and sustain follow-up.
- The Council can both collaborate with and apply pressure on decision-makers when needed.

OUTCOME 2

Women's leadership is visible, influential, and integrated into Council governance

What success looks like:

- Women hold meaningful leadership roles within the Council's governance and decision-making.
- Women lead cases and initiatives across community issues — housing and planning, education, services, safety, and more.
- Women-led work also addresses women-specific priorities where relevant, without reducing women's role to a niche.

OUTCOME 3

Education justice and youth civic agency strengthened through research, advocacy, and practice

What success looks like:

- Evidence-based education priorities are defined and used for advocacy and community engagement.
- Educators and school leaders adopt more student-centered and rights-aware practices where feasible.
- Student councils and youth frameworks gain skills and space to lead civic initiatives linked to community priorities.
- Youth critical thinking is tied to real-world action and community influence, not only awareness.

Youth work follows the "**Creative Chaos**" model — SDC provides the framework and structure, mentorship and connections, platform and visibility; young people provide initiative design, implementation leadership, peer recruitment, and community connection.

The Arab Haifa Map

The Arab Haifa Map is a community documentation and mapping initiative that records and amplifies Arab Haifa — its stories, places, memories, everyday realities, and the social and political conditions shaping them. It is designed as both a youth-driven learning and identity tool and a practical input into community-led future planning. Within the 2026–2029 system it strengthens youth civic agency through documentation, storytelling, and interpretation of place; creates community-owned narrative and evidence that can support Council priorities when relevant; and contributes to the long-term Haifa vision by linking documentation to planning questions and community priorities. The Map runs as a standalone initiative on its own dedicated track.

o6 What makes the system work

- **Organizational learning and MEAL as backbone:** a clear theory of change, routine documentation, quarterly learning reviews, and knowledge products that strengthen accountability and enable replication.

- **Legitimacy and participation routines:** outreach, assemblies, issue mapping, and feedback loops that generate a credible mandate and keep priorities grounded.
- **Protection and collective visibility norms:** conflict-of-interest clarity, transparent decision documentation, and a collective visibility approach that reduces individual risk while keeping accountability public.
- **Capacity-building and technical grounding:** needs-based trainings for Council members and designated representatives, with access to legal, advocacy, education, and urban-planning expertise when needed.
- **Partnership without dilution:** work with allies while keeping SDC's role distinct as a community-rooted civic mechanism-builder.

07 Implementation: August 2026 – July 2029

Phase	Timeframe	Focus
1 • Foundation	Months 1–9	Formation of the Council; launch of the women's network; education research priorities established; MEAL routines set.
2 • Consolidation	Months 10–24	Council working groups and municipal engagement mature; women-led cases implemented; education actions and youth civic practice expand.
3 • Impact & replication	Months 25–36	Concrete influence and outcomes demonstrated; sustainability mechanisms strengthened; replication manual and best-practices toolkit produced.

08 Governance, legitimacy, and accountability

Stakeholder engagement

The Council is community-rooted and independent in its legitimacy, while maintaining a strategic engagement approach with public institutions:

- **Community base:** neighborhoods, parents' committees, student clubs, community groups, and other local structures.
- **Public representatives:** building capacity and accountability; balancing pressure and collaboration.
- **Municipality:** systematic work with relevant committees and Arab municipal members to influence policy and service decisions.
- **Allies and experts:** legal and advocacy partners, education bodies, and urban-planning expertise that strengthen the Council's influence and technical grounding.

Decision-making and legitimacy norms

- Community priorities are identified through issue mapping, then shortlisted into a limited number of time-bound cases.
- Decisions are documented through meeting minutes and follow-up trackers — responsibilities, deadlines, status.
- Working groups propose actions; the Council approves or revises.
- Council members may come from organizations or political backgrounds, but Council decisions must prioritize community legitimacy and shared priorities, under a clear conflict-of-interest norm.

SDC's role

SDC's role is to enable: convening, facilitation, infrastructure, learning, and capacity-building. SDC is not "the Council," and avoids replacing community decision-making with staff decision-making.

Public visibility and protection

A collective visibility approach is used to recognize leadership without placing excessive exposure, risk, or targeting on individuals. Public-facing representation decisions are made intentionally, not by default.

09 Built to be shared

Replication is framed as a documented model rather than full implementation outside Haifa during this period. The aim is to produce a practical manual other mixed-city actors can adapt: the Council formation process, governance options, and community legitimacy practices; tools for issue mapping, case selection, and municipal engagement routines; women's leadership integration mechanisms; and education justice tools.

OUR VALUES Equality · Equity · Social solidarity · Shared living

The Social Development Committee - Haifa is a Palestinian Arab, non-partisan community-organizing association, founded in Haifa in 1987 — a registered association (580096311) holding a valid Certificate of Proper Management, independently audited every year.

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