

# **MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTION PLAN OF THE ETERNALIZATION OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF VILNIUS AND PROPER ARRANGEMENT OF ITS SURROUNDINGS**

May 25, 2022  
Vilnius

**Vilnius City Municipality**, code 188710061, with registered headquarters at Konstitucijos 3, Vilnius, represented by the Mayor of the Vilnius City Municipality Remigijus Šimašius (hereinafter: VCM),

**Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community**, code 190722117, with registered headquarters at Pylimo 4, Vilnius, represented by the Chairperson Faina Kukliansky, acting under the statute of the Community (hereinafter: LJC),

**Public Institution "Geros valios kompensacijos už žydų religinių bendruomenių nekilnojamąjį turtą disponavimo fondas" (Good Will Foundation for Distributing Compensation for Real Estate of Jewish Religious Communities)**, code 302702699, with registered headquarters at Pylimo 4, Vilnius, represented by the Temporary Acting Director Indrė Rutkauskaitė, acting under the statute of the Institution (hereinafter: GWF) and endorsed by the founder of the GWF Andrew Baker, American Jewish Community Director for International Jewish Affairs,

**implementing** the Resolution No. XIII-1142 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of May 10, 2018, "On Designating the Year 2020 as the Year of the Vilna Gaon and the History of the Jews of Lithuania",

**carrying out** the Resolution No. 86 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of July 24, 2019, "On the Approval of the Plan for the Commemoration of the Year of the Vilna Gaon and the History of the Jews of Lithuania in 2020",

## **understanding that:**

- the Great Synagogue of Vilnius and its complex are a unique Jewish (Litvak) sacred site, where the Vilna Gaon (Elijah ben Solomon Zalman), whose 300th anniversary we celebrated in 2020, had worked and created;
- the Soviet authorities nationalized the Great Synagogue of Vilnius and its complex in 1940;
- the Great Synagogue of Vilnius and its complex were not destroyed during World War II, only severely damaged, and their condition allowed for preservation and restoration of both the sanctuary and the other buildings. However, the Soviet authorities demolished the Synagogue and the buildings of its complex in 1955–1957 and built a nursery in its place, in which, after the restoration of [Lithuanian] Independence, the Vytė Nemunėlis Primary School was established (by now, the school, thanks to the Vilnius City Municipality, has been moved out);
- in 2011, by efforts of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, archeological research of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius was initiated, during which, greater knowledge of the sacral parts of the Synagogue and its complex has been obtained. As of today, the research continues and is funded by the GWF;
- several of these discovered archaeological objects (the Great Synagogue of Vilnius, the Mikveh building) are now owned by the GWF;

- after World War II, the Jewish community in Vilnius and Lithuania shrunk significantly and, by now, is becoming extinct<sup>1</sup>. There are not many practicing Jews, therefore, there is no need to have another synagogue in Vilnius;
- using the remnants of the immensely important complex of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius for commercial purposes and developing real estate in or adjacent to its territory would be incompatible with the sacred nature of the site;
- it is obligatory to observe the guidelines for the memorialization of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius, prepared by the International Heritage Advisory Working Group, formed at the initiative of the Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community; the guidelines suggest neither a rebuilding of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius, nor a construction of a commercial building, as that would send a misleading message to the society;
- a proper aim would be to form a memorial square in the territory of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius and its complex, which would include a Jewish Community Center and would meet the needs of the Vilnius Jews as well as serve an educational function of telling about the Great Synagogue and its history to the broader society;
- given the current climate change, the contemporary city ought to preserve as much greenery as possible, while meeting the needs of the Jewish Community Center and eternalizing the memory of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius in a meaningful way.

No.	Name of activity	Executor/branch/organizer in charge	Financed by	Completion deadline
1.	Preparing a project for the formation and redevelopment of the area covering a territory of 6226 (six thousand two hundred and twenty-six) sq. meters in Žydų street, the goal of which is to form two state land plots of 4898 sq. meters and 1328 sq. meters of conservational purpose, for the use of objects of cultural heritage, dedicated to preserving the foundation of the Great Synagogue, establishing a memorial square, and preserving transport infrastructure.	VCM	VCM	2021
2.	The kindergarten-primary school building of the total area of 947.19 sq. meters, located at Vokiečių street 13A, which is currently owned by the VCM as property, shall be transferred to the Good Will Foundation by way of usufruct or another management right in accordance	VCM  GWF is responsible for choosing one of the two options	GWF finances the process of choosing the activity  VCM finances the implementation	Q3, 2022  GWF informs the VCM about the chosen activity in 3 months after the

<sup>1</sup> **Translator's note:** the Lithuanian term used here in the original is *nyksta*, which can mean "disappearing, going extinct, withering, vanishing, dwindling". The choice of the word here is somewhat strange, as *nyksta* would rather be said about animals or plants, not about a community of people. Plus, it has a connotation of irreversible processes that one has no power over.

	<p>with the legal acts. The parties understand that this clause can be implemented after the Vilnius City Council approves such decision by a separate resolution.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>The VCM demolishes the kindergarten-primary school building of the total area of 947.19 sq. meters, located at Vokiečių Street 13A, which is currently owned by the VCM as property.</p>	VCM is responsible for implementation		<p>signature date</p> <p>Q4, 2022</p>
3.	Preparing the tender conditions for the design of the Jewish Centre and the Great Synagogue Square, publicizing them, including a survey by the Goodwill Foundation, in consultation with the Lithuanian Jewish Community and other interested entities, to identify the social, cultural, welfare, educational, and other needs of the new object, which must be taken into consideration when choosing design and construction tenders.	GWF, VCM	GWF	Q2, 2022
4.	Publication of the tender of the design of the Jewish Centre and the Great Synagogue Square, selection of its winner.	GWF, VCM	GWF	Q2, 2023
5.	Preparing the technical and arrangement design of the Jewish Centre and the Great Synagogue Square.	GWF, VCM	GWF	Q3, 2024
6.	Installing the Jewish Centre and the Great Synagogue Square: procurement and implementation of contract works. The GWF and the LJC shall coordinate the installation works of the Jewish Centre and the Great Synagogue Square with the VCM.	GWF, LJC	GWF, with additional public and private financial support	Q2, 2026

**Vilnius City Municipality**

Konstitucijos 3, Vilnius

Code 188710061

**Mayor Remigijus Šimašius**

[signature]

**Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community**

Pylimo 4, Vilnius

Code 190722117

**Chairperson Faina Kukliansky**

[signature]

**Good Will Foundation**

Pylimo 4, Vilnius

Code 302702699

**T. A. D. Indrė Rutkauskaitė**

[signature]

Founder of the GWF, American Jewish  
Community Director for International  
Jewish Affairs

**Andrew Baker**

[signature]