



GLOBAL  
ACTIVE  
RECOVERY

AS THE WORLD COMES OUT OF LOCKDOWN, HOW WILL THE SEVEN GLOBAL ACTIVE CITIES HELP RESIDENTS TO RECOVER THEIR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT?

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**Above**  
Outdoor activities such as yoga will take place during Hamburg Active City Summer

**F**or anyone who doubted the importance of the city state in recent times, COVID-19 has settled the argument. What were ordinary administrative issues – such as the organisation of schools, elderly residential care, tourism, parks and public spaces – have overnight become life-or-death decisions.

City governments have found themselves responsible for protecting the health of their citizens to a formidable extent. Authorities have had to implement safety measures in every walk of life – from nursery care, to education, businesses, and residential homes – to control the spread of coronavirus, but also ensure the dissemination of vital public health messages and that people are doing enough physical activity to benefit their health, even if under total lockdown in their homes.

“We are very conscious of our responsibility,” explained Gustavo Gesualdo, Secretary of Citizen Development for the City of Buenos Aires. “It is a huge difference from the normal situation. This is changing the way we work.”

Since 2014, for the first time, the majority of humans live in cities. City residents are more closely packed, more vulnerable to infection, and more heavily policed than their countryside counterparts. And they have fewer opportunities to be active or play sports while keeping a safe social distance, which is why good physical activity management has been essential, even at the height of the public health crisis.

**‘SOME PEOPLE HAD THEIR FIRST POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. WE WANT TO INTEGRATE THEM INTO SPORTS’**  
**ANDY GROTE, HAMBURG SENATOR**

With travel heavily curtailed, the quality of the environment in which we live is fundamental, and will remain so for many months or years to come. Green spaces, parks, beaches, cycle and walking paths will be lifelines for many for the foreseeable future, and all come under the management of local governments.

Physical activity has been proven to alleviate the coronavirus by lessening risk factors such as obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, and has been recommended by doctors treating COVID-19 patients as intrinsic to their recovery.

The Global Active Cities have been recognised for their effective and evidence-based strategies to increase physical activity among their populations, in a programme developed with the support of the IOC. *Olympic Review* talked to each of them to find out their post-lockdown sports plans. ➤



## BUENOS AIRES

Argentina's first recorded case was on 3 March and the nation was put into total confinement 17 days later, with people only able to leave their homes for essential operations or key working. Part of the population in the Argentinian capital, host of the 2018 Youth Olympic Games, lives in high-density neighbourhoods where social distancing is more difficult. The city is poised for a huge appetite for sports when its citizens are allowed out again. "People are going to be very active the first day they are allowed to do sports," said Gesualdo. "We have the opportunity to take advantage of that."

In the meantime, extra funding has been provided for over 300 community-led sports clubs. Authorities recognise these grassroots groups as essential to help people regain their health once the lockdown has been lifted.

And nearly 2,000 homeless people have been housed temporarily in public sports facilities and the Olympic Park, to protect them and enable them to comply with the quarantine. The city is providing them with opportunities to do socially-distanced sports.

## HAMBURG

In the German city, whose bid for the 2024 Olympic Games was used as a springboard for the Hamburg Active City Masterplan, some outdoor sports did not stop during lockdown. Walking, jogging, cycling, canoeing and paddle boarding could continue, as long as only two people were together. Parks stayed open and people were asked to keep apart from each other. As well as providing online training, sports coaches volunteered to stand in the streets outside homes, to lead workouts for residents on their balconies. The lockdown is being lifted carefully and progressively, prioritising community clubs and individual sports. Senator Andy Grote said: "Some people had their first positive experience with sports and physical activity during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to integrate them into sports."

To support this effort, sports clubs, associations and companies will benefit



from a EUR 5 million aid package to prevent long-term negative effects of the virus. This budget will be reviewed and increased if needed. Hamburg has more than 800 sports clubs and over 50 associations.

In addition, the Hamburg Active City Summer programme will offer a wide variety of free outdoor sports. Residents will also be encouraged to make use of new and modernised cycle lanes and paths, and illuminated jogging trails.

## LAUSANNE

The Olympic Capital, which could make history as the only city to host a mainstream global multi-sports event with spectators in 2020, endured only a semi-confinement. People were advised to stay at home but allowed to exercise, in groups of five or fewer, two metres from each other. "Compared to other countries, we have continued to do sport – to go out, to walk, to run and to cycle," said Patrice Iseli, Head of Lausanne's Sports Department. "However, the impact on sport has been very serious – for the clubs, for people who go to the gym and for the sports service." The city's 300 sports clubs were encouraged to keep in touch with the community by posting workouts through the sports service social media accounts.

To give them the best chance of future success, cancelled events – including the Lausanne 20km, the city's biggest mass participation event with 30,000 participants – will still receive

their funding. Sports clubs were given two months' free rent on their facilities.

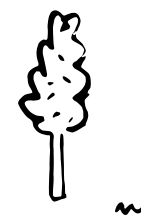
The city is also working with partners to provide a series of regular outdoor events, free for everyone to attend, to encourage multi-sports including running, walking and yoga. Two new jobs been created to manage the Global Active City and sports for all programme.

## LILLEHAMMER

Norway imposed a total lockdown, then allowed four people together at one time, followed by groups of up to 50 playing non-contact sports such as tennis. While organised sports were banned, Norwegians took advantage of the chance to practise individual sports. The number of people using the ski jump hill to walk doubled from 13 March to 13 April compared to the previous year, and there was a 50 per cent increase in cross-country skiing. In addition, residents were invited to take part in an online race during the lockdown. The 3km course was mapped out, with runners participating individually then comparing their times later.

Bengt Fjeldbraaten, Global Active City special adviser, did not think there would be a long-term impact on public health: "Lillehammer is a very sporty city. It's so easy to be active, so I'm not afraid for Lillehammer at all," he said, adding that the city would work to engage young people who found it hard to restart training.

**Above**  
In Liverpool, "Fit For Me" ambassadors like Naheed encourage people to be active in their homes



## LIVERPOOL

While people were initially permitted to leave their homes to do one hour of exercise a day in England, national studies have shown that activity levels have been lower, especially among vulnerable groups. In Liverpool, gym memberships have been frozen, a huge amount of online content has been released free of charge and the city is helping sports providers to apply for national grants. “Sport England data has revealed that two-thirds of people think physical activity is more important now than it was before the pandemic,” said Nicky Yates, Physical Activity and Sport Development Manager. “We have seen evidence of people going outdoors to walk and cycle, who wouldn’t normally be doing so.” She said from now on communications and connecting with voluntary groups would be even more important.

People with long-term health conditions will be encouraged to keep active in their homes, even after others have gone back to “normal” routines. The “We Are Undefeatable” campaign will use phone calls, text messages and social media to motivate them.

In addition, local alliances have been set up in five of the city’s 30 wards. Authorities are working with community groups, physical activity providers and health services to offer a wide variety of options for people to be active during and after the pandemic.

## LJUBLJANA

Borders around the wider Ljubljana area were closed, as well as parks, and no more than five people were allowed together in a public place. Yet, since the city is composed of 70 per cent green space, there were still plenty of places for people to walk and keep active. “The number of people who exercise outside increased because they didn’t have anything else to do,” explained Deputy Mayor Dejan Crnek. “People do cycling, hiking, yoga, and the family get together. Something good will come from this. We will do sport because it’s good for us. Many people have begun to do grassroots sports they didn’t do before.” Clubs that were financed before the

lockdown will have to show that they made efforts to engage people during the confinement, such as offering online training, to receive their grant for the rest of the year. Each year, the city spends EUR 15 million on sports; EUR 2 million, which was saved during the lockdown, will be used to help sports recover.

## RICHMOND

Richmond’s lockdown was less stringent, with people only requested to stay at home. Parks and walking trails were kept open, and golf courses were used for physical activity. Groups of more than 50 people were banned, and lifeguards deployed to remind people to keep apart. As the city reopens, residents are expected to return to sports venues such as the Olympic Oval. “We think there’s a lot of pent-up demand,” said Elizabeth Ayers, Director of Recreation and Sport Services. Numbers will be limited, floor arrows will

direct flow patterns, and there will be extra cleaning, training and equipment. “There are all sorts of considerations. A lot of events are reliant on volunteers – will volunteers still be willing to expose themselves? This is world-changing, so undoubtedly sport will change.”

Post-release, ice-skating rinks will be turned into fitness centres so gym equipment can be spread out. Fitness classes will be taught in bigger spaces with lots of air flow and summer activities such as children’s camps will be moved outside, with more staff. A post-COVID-19 recovery plan and communications campaign – “Welcome Back Richmond” – will address economic recovery and physical activity. The city already provides resources to improve physical, mental and social wellness for all age groups. ■

*For more information about the Global Active City programme, visit [activewellbeing.org](http://activewellbeing.org)*



### Below

In Richmond, outdoor sports facilities and parks have been used for socially-distanced exercise

