

CATSKILLS
**Borscht Belt
Museum**



The Borscht Belt Museum

The Borscht Belt is Back! Interest in both the region and its history have seen a resurgence through pop cultural hits like “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” and “Dirty Dancing” (with a Jennifer Grey-led sequel expected in 2024). The Borscht Belt, a colloquial term for the Catskill resorts located in Sullivan, Orange, and Ulster counties, was a popular vacation spot for New York City Jews.

With a surging fascination in mid-century modern design, increased interest in the history of marginalized groups, and new cultural institutions that celebrate diversity, there has never been a better time to establish a new cultural institution that will preserve the legacy of the Borscht Belt for current and future generations and encourage community and tolerance.

Its mission will be to celebrate and illuminate the rich cultural legacy of the Borscht Belt, as a vacation destination and a refuge from bigotry for millions of urban dwellers whose presence in the Catskill mountains left deep imprints on mainstream American culture.



Potential Audiences

With more than 25 million people living within 90-minutes of Ellenville, and the region drawing over a million visitors a year, there is a potentially significant audience. Currently, there are no existing cultural institutions dedicated to the Borscht Belt, and very little cultural resources to meet the growing needs of the new influx of residents and visitors in upstate and support the continued growth in tourism that is reinvigorating small towns across the region.

The Museum will appeal to a wide range of visitors. These include those with fond memories of vacationing and/or working at the resorts; those who admire it from afar through an interest in mid-century modern, its role in television and movies, and more; those seeking new experiences for themselves and their friends; visitors looking to learn something new; and families seeking a leisure time activity.

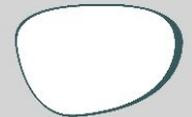
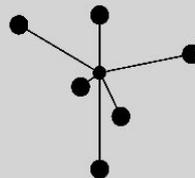
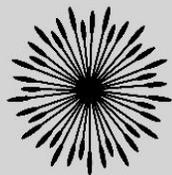
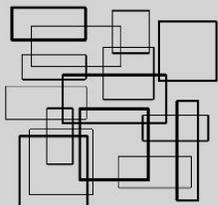
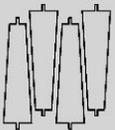




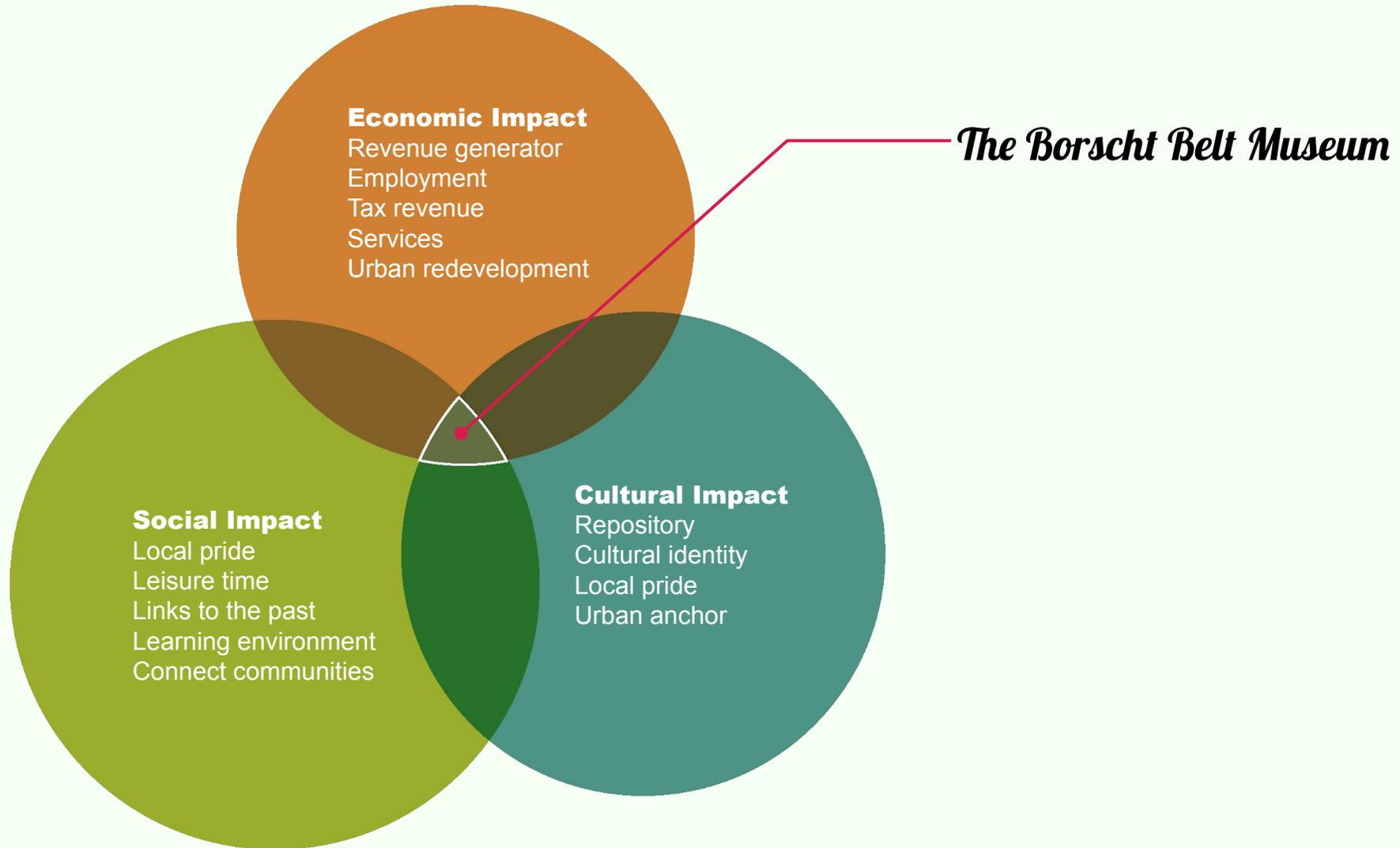
Design Values

The design of the museum will be guided by values that foster a welcoming place by providing a social experience for all visitors. The design will offer opportunities for interactivity and creativity, generate feelings of nostalgia informed by a contemporary lens, and leave visitors inspired by the Borscht Belt, and most importantly, provide a fun experience for all.

The hotels' architecture, furniture, shapes, patterns and graphic design were done in a mid-century modern style, a classic aesthetic that is still very popular today. The characteristics of mid-century modern design are clean lines, muted tones, natural and manmade materials, 1950's graphic shapes, vibrant colors, and integrating interior and exterior motifs. For the physical and digital designs of the museum, the intention is to use the mid-century modern style of the period, as a guide and reference.



The Museum as a Cultural Anchor



Economic, Social, and Cultural Impact

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Museums are magnets for economic development as they have a direct impact on their landholdings, their capacity as employers, revenue generators, and as providers of goods and services. They also contribute to urban redevelopment and local pride by enhancing the city's image and attracting coveted knowledge workers, visitors, and consumers. They provide economic benefits through areas such as jobs, tourism, investments, and urban regeneration.

SOCIAL IMPACT

While there are some museums and performance centers, they are few and far between. This museum will supply a local place to visit. It will be a place where communities can come together, interact, understand, and appreciate cultural diversity. This new experience will be a much-needed regional leisure time activity and generate economic opportunities for its home community (currently slated for Ellenville, NY). Additionally, partnerships and co-branding opportunities will expand the potential for audience reach and opportunities to expand return on investment.

CULTURAL IMPACT

Museums are a repository of our collective memory, that which we are proud of, need to account for, and of which we derive our identity from. As a meeting place, museums' connecting value is expressed in the links established between the past, present, and future. An environment for learning for everyone. As a social benefit, museums can increase our sense of well-being, help us feel proud of where we have come from, and inspire, challenge, and stimulate us.

Development phases and roll-out strategy

Our plan which includes co-branding opportunities and joint programs with local partnerships can support multiple revenue streams and opportunities. Partnerships and co-branding opportunities, with both local organizations and with national organizations, such as YIVO, will help increase audience reach.

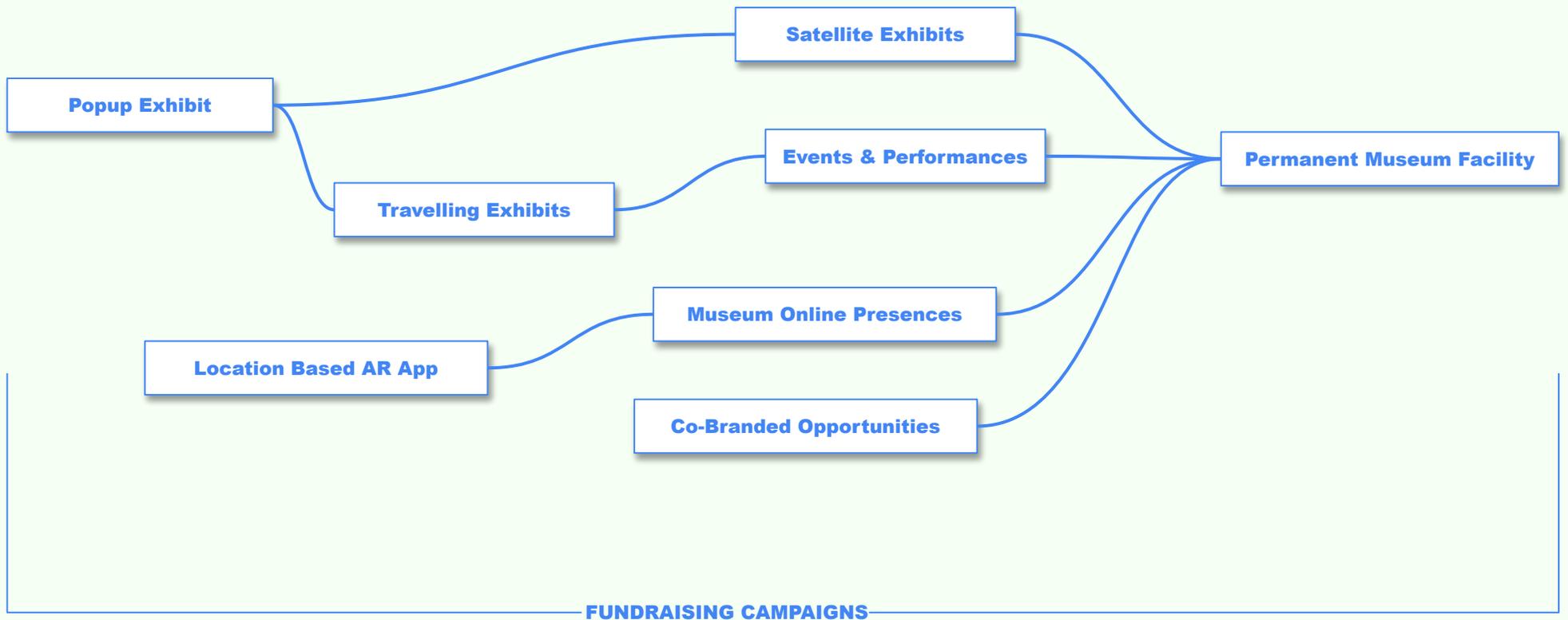




Exhibit & Activities

THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

The experience will include physical artifacts, digital experiences (for both individuals and groups), along with a mix of social activities, engaging both new and returning visitors. The location will feature core exhibits but also support rotating and temporary shows.

EXHIBITS AND ACTIVITIES EXAMPLES

The Jewish Vacation Guide, published by the Federation of Jewish Farmers of America, reflects the origin story of the Jewish history of leisure in the Catskills, addressing such topics as Jewish farming, Jewish immigration, anti semitism, the Green Book, Yiddishkeit, and the recent Klezmer revival.

An oral history recording booth, developed with StoryCorps, which will allow visitors to record personal memories from their time in the Catskills.

The museum will provide engaging and interactive, guided activities, such as mambo lessons, highlighting both the role of Latin music in the Borscht Belt and the thrill of tummler-led activities by the pool.

Guests may step into the virtual reality nightclub, circa 1959, to catch a performance by Liz Taylor or Milton Berle at the Jerry Lewis club, once the largest in the country.

Follow the holographic tummler who guides you through the museum, who greets you at the door with a joke, leads you in a game of Simon Sez, and occasionally pops up with irreverent commentary as you move through the museum.

Contact

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