

## An exceptional cultural project Double-Door



## Project dossier (short)

Preliminary project, summer 2020



Images used on the front page:

- Top left and right: Visualisation © Beat Stalder, Exhibition Team
- Lower left: World map © pascal:meier photography
- Bottom right: School module Jewish Culture Trail © IRAS COTIS, Karim Fawaz



## I. Summary

The Double-Door Meeting Centre aims to make the thrilling and hitherto little-known Jewish/Christian history of coexistence in Surbtal, Aargau, accessible to the general public and to stimulate them in an exemplary manner to focus on contemporary social issues. The target is to have 30,000 visitors a year. This unique and challenging project is scheduled to be realised by 2023.

The Verein Doppeltür association, established in 2016, bought an old house of historical value with double doors directly on Lengnau village square in 2018. This is to become a meeting centre. A modern presentation is to show the unique history of Jewish/Christian coexistence in Surbtal (mainly in the communities of Lengnau and Endingen, where it can be proved that Jews have settled since 1622 and 1678 respectively). Furthermore, visitors should also be sensitised to overriding issues such as tolerance, migration and multiculturalism. The Double-Door Meeting Centre is to serve as a starting point for the Jewish Cultural Trail, which has been in existence since 2009, and numerous other routes within Surbtal. As a place of mediation and dialogue, it will offer a platform for events and workshops.

To date, there is no comparable institution anywhere in Europe which deals with the Jewish-Christian dialogue. The project is supported by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture. The Jewish Cultural Trail has recently been included in Switzerland's intangible cultural heritage and is on the UNESCO list of "Living Traditions". In addition, the Double-Door project has been one of the cultural objectives of the Canton of Aargau for three years now (Cultural Concept of the Canton of Aargau, Cultural Policy Objectives 2017 – 2022). The project was also introduced into the debate on the "Federal Council Message on the Promotion of Culture in the Years 2021-2024" by the Canton of Aargau.

## II. Starting situation / objectives

The two villages of Endingen and Lengnau in Surbtal, Aargau, look back on a history that is unique in Switzerland: for around a hundred years – between 1776 and the introduction of political equality and freedom of establishment in 1866 – the Jews of the then Confederation were allowed almost exclusively to settle permanently in these two villages. As a result, a coexistence of Jews and Christians developed in what were, at the time, the only "Jewish villages" in Switzerland. The everyday life, culture and religion of both groups of the population had to be accommodated in a very confined space. And that is how a collection of buildings and institutions of Jewish life was created in these two villages. These are virtually intact to this day.

Every year, 30,000 visitors are expected to visit the centre. The maximum capacity of the exhibition section "Submersion" is 60 persons per hour. The exhibition will be available in English, French and German.

The Double-Door Centre is aimed at four main target groups: individuals, families, groups and school classes interested in culture. The following objectives are pursued:

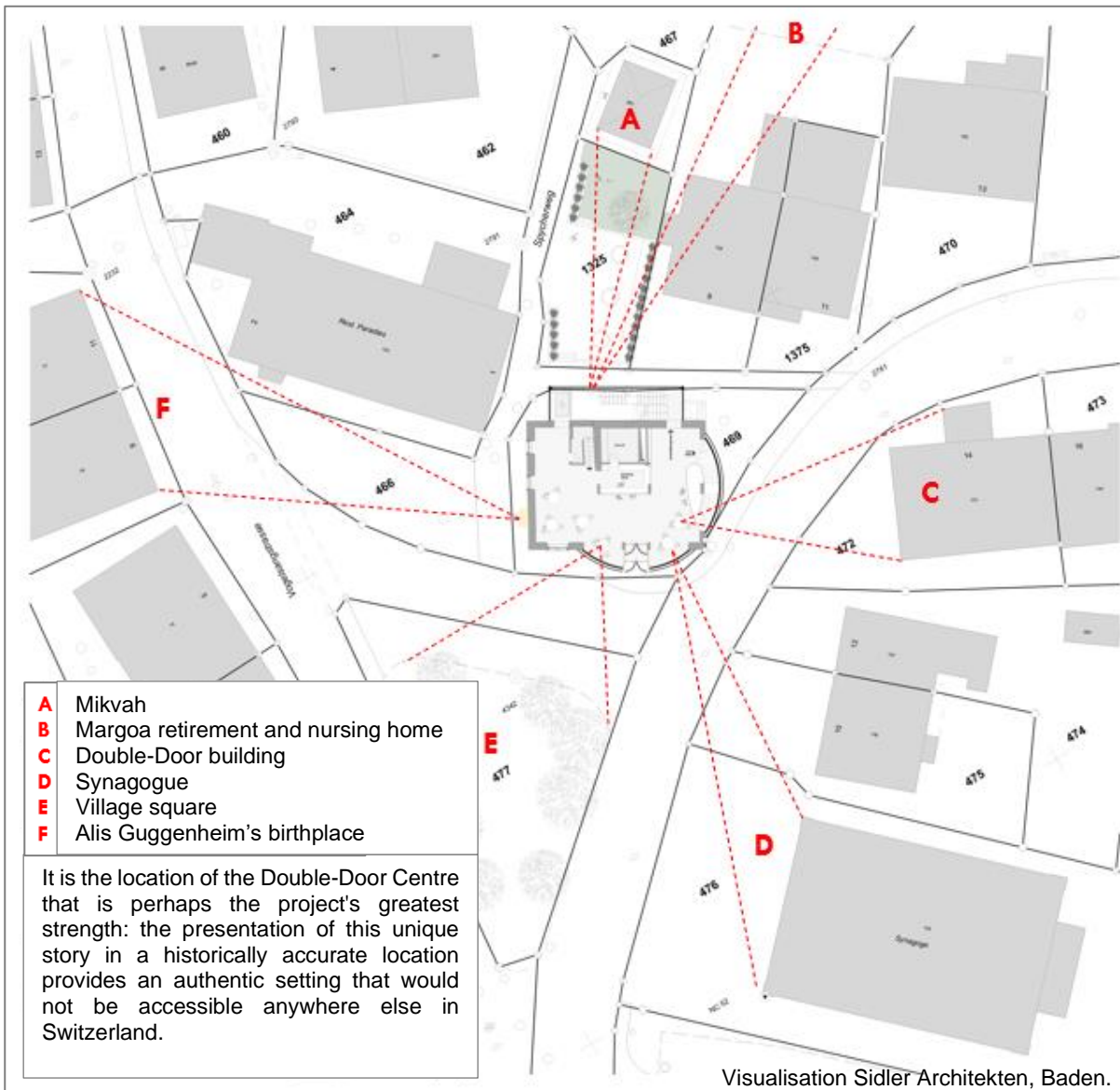
- Presentation of the unique history of Jewish/Christian coexistence in Surbtal (USP).
- Jewish/Christian dialogue.
- Raising awareness of overriding themes such as tolerance, migration and multiculturalism.
- The centre is to serve as a meeting point and starting point for various cultural journeys.
- The centre is a place of mediation and dialogue in the form of events and workshops.

The concept summarised here is based on many years of preparatory work by the Verein Doppeltür association and its project development group, in particular on the project study "Double-Door: meeting, discovering, broadcasting" (August 2019) and on the results of the workshop in the Mobilier Forum Thun (November 2019).



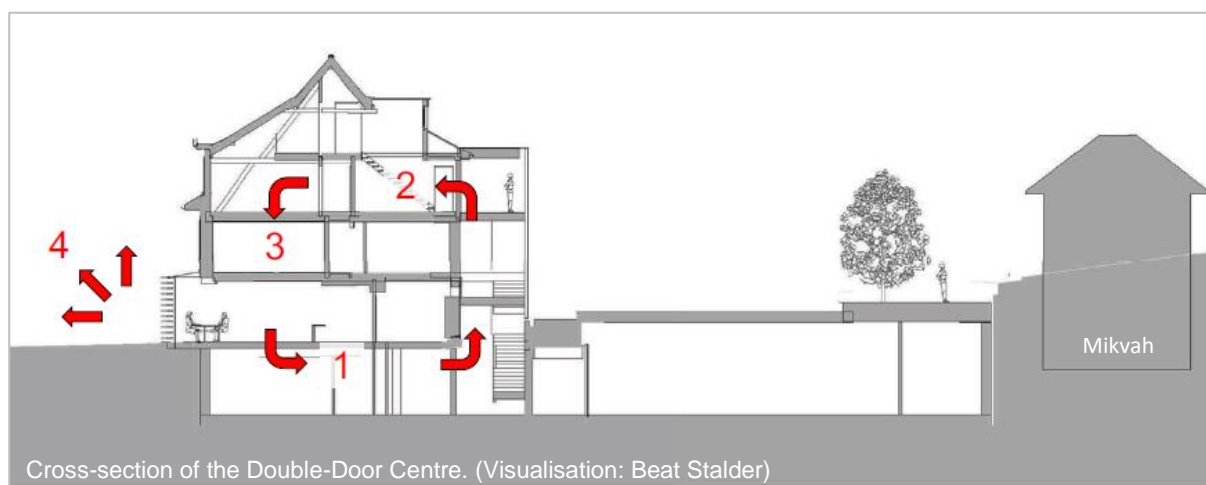
### III. Double-Door exhibition concept

The exhibition concept was developed for the premises of the old building with double doors in the centre of Lengnau, purchased by the Verein Doppeltür association in 2018, and the surrounding area of Surbtal. And it is precisely this location that is perhaps the project's greatest strength: the presentation of this unique story in a historically accurate location provides an authentic setting that would not be accessible anywhere else in Switzerland. It is only here in these two "Jewish villages" Endingen and Lengnau that the unique buildings that bear witness to the Jewish/Christian coexistence can be viewed, experienced and communicated in their original form.



And this is precisely the starting point of the Double-Door exhibition concept. The exhibition is to have four parts to it, each of which will play its part in introducing the visitor to the Jewish/Christian coexistence in an enthralling, informative and interactive way. In the first part of the exhibition, the visitors will be familiarised with the historical situation of Surbtal, with the second part bringing them back to the current world. The third part will focus on self-awareness, where visitors can for themselves look into the personal issues of coexistence and mutual respect in several themed areas. The fourth part of this mediation concept is the Jewish Cultural Trail and the area surrounding the two villages of Lengnau and Endingen.

Based on the specific spatial situation in the Double-Door Centre in Lengnau, the four parts to the exhibition result in the following order and culmination of the dramaturgical approach, which also serves as the leitmotif: 1. Submersion / 2. Emergence / 3. Immersion / 4. Wingspreading.



Cross-section of the Double-Door Centre. (Visualisation: Beat Stalder)

In the house with double doors in Lengnau, the topics will be brought closer to the visitors in spectacular multimedia showcasing. The modern exhibition technology used will serve both to convey knowledge and emotions.

The entire exhibition will attempt to create a proximity to the people involved, thus enabling empathy. Furthermore, recordings will be made with contemporary Jewish and Christian witnesses (oral history) and the great diversity of historical source material already available used. The memories and stories collected, along with the historically based material, will be able to be used within the Double-Door Centre as an additional real level that increases credibility.

In a stimulating form of exhibition, the visitors themselves will be addressed as experts. Particularly in the third part of the exhibition, Immersion, they will be invited to allow their own values to become part of the proceedings.

The environment of Surbtal with its two villages Endingen and Lengnau will always be stressed in the presentation in the Double-Door building. Hotspots, such as the old double-door houses, the two synagogues, the two mikvahs, the Jewish cemetery on the border of the two communities as well as lots of other centres of Jewish life in Endingen and Lengnau, will be prominently staged.

As visitors take the tour on one of the various routes, they will be able to see for real the places they have already got to know (virtually) in the Double-Door Meeting Centre. The panels on the Cultural Trail, a group tour with a personal guide or an individual tour with an audio or media guide will provide visitors with additional information or additional tasks, depending on the route taken. This will make it possible to address the needs of different target groups.



#### IV. The leitmotif

It will be advisable for visitors to visit the three thematic areas in the Double-Door building in the order recommended. Alternatively, it will also be possible to start the visit with the third part "Immersion". The fourth part "Wingspreading" will re-introduce some of the characters visitors got to know in the production in the Double-Door building. But the individual routes will also be able to be covered without any prior knowledge.

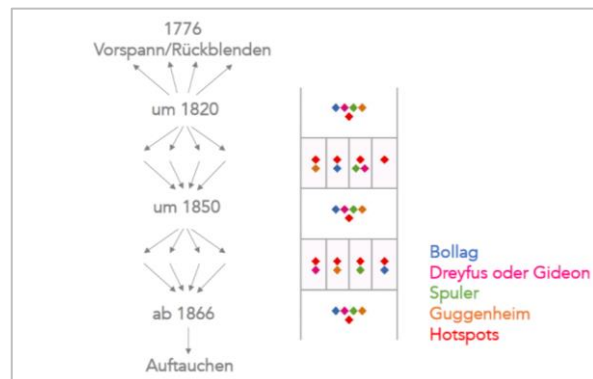
The lobby of the Double-Door Meeting Centre will serve a number of functions. It will be the hub of the entire centre. Besides practical functions such as ticketing, the shop and cloakrooms, there are several things worth mentioning.

- A spherical "media wall" will set the mood for the first part of the exhibition "Submersion"; it will arouse visitors' curiosity and create a connection between the past and the present.
- A mini version of a special exhibition (for example on Alis Guggenheim or William Wyler) might serve as a teaser for the cooperation with other institutions.
- A video area for around 10 people will offer an introduction to the available routes of the Cultural Trails which will be extended and embellished over a period of several years.
- A café will provide a number of seats as the perfect place to buy drinks and snacks.

##### 1. Submersion: the historic Surbtal 1820-1866

In an exciting and interactive film, visitors will experience in five sections the decisive twists and turns of Jewish/Christian coexistence in the nineteenth century. They will follow people from both Jewish and Christian families such as Bollag, Dreyfus, Guggenheim, Spuler and Müller, in a range of situations and will be able to decide for themselves which particular strand of the story they want to follow. In what in fact will be a mixture of a chronological and a biographical approach, partly with fictional elements, important aspects of the coexistence at that time in Surbtal will be conveyed.

To make the stories biographically credible, the period covered will be limited to the years between 1820 and 1866. However, narrative flashbacks will be used to refer to earlier important events and dates, to the Middle Ages and early modern times, up to the restriction of the freedom of settlement for Jews to the two villages of Endingen and Lengnau in 1776 and the pogrom that took place in 1802, the "Plum War". Virtually, visitors will be taken to the original locations, which will be the historical hotspots of the Cultural Trail. Some of these were where common life took place (Zurzach fair fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, where Jews were allowed to be tradespeople, vegetable market, cattle market, economy, later even school).



Links: Possible scenography of the basement.

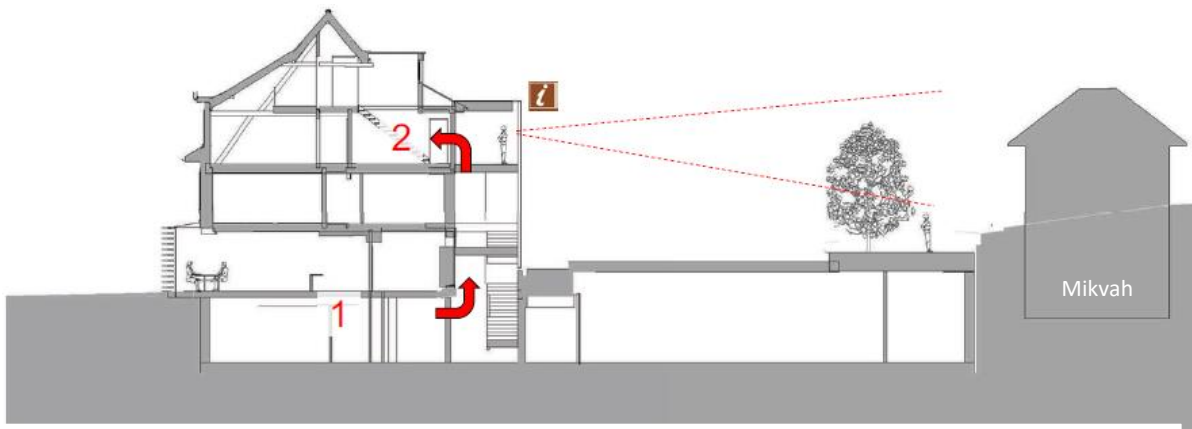
Right: Flowchart: four families, 20-minute film in five chapters where visitors will be able to choose for themselves how the film should continue.


(Both are visualisations by Beat Stalder).

## 2. Emergence: into the world of the present

The symbolic and real emergence near the (staged) mikvah (Jewish immersion bath) in Lengnau will be the transition between the past and present. This second part of the exhibition will show how the Surbtal Jews moved away from Surbtal after their national emancipation and regained freedom of settlement in 1866 and how they gradually became part of a global world within a few generations. Examples of this development can be found in the Bollag family of shopkeepers from Endingen, whose grandchildren settled in Zurich as art dealers after various trials and tribulations. The emigrant family Guggenheim from Lengnau was already one of the most successful families economically and culturally speaking in the US by around 1900; Solomon R. Guggenheim founded the museum of the same name in New York, and his daughter Peggy founded the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.

In contrast to the previous part of the exhibition, the approach here will not only be biographical, but also thematic. Individual topics raised in the film will be able to be followed up here and looked at in more depth with additional background information (such as migration and emigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, economic life, artists and scientists, music and language, but also subjects such as hostility towards Jews, expulsion in the Middle Ages and resettlement in the seventeenth century etc). Different types of presentation will enable visitors to follow the historical developments in image, sound, film and other media.



“Emergence” in the new annex,  view of the mikvah, then on to the second floor.  
(Visualisation: Beat Stalder)

## 3. Immersion: personal decisions

In this third, concluding part of the exhibition in the Double-Door building, the visitors themselves will become experts. They will focus on questions on mutual respect, coexistence and raising awareness of minorities in five or six different thematic areas. Important topics to be addressed here are public space, education, rituals and the limits of “tolerance” (respect). Along with connecting elements, all rooms will feature different designs and the didactic method will also be implemented in a fun way. In every subject area, visitors will answer five questions which will then be turned into an individual smartspider.

In this section, it will be particularly important to consider hybrid identities, i.e. cultural dynamics through cultural contacts that are typical of the present. If possible, simplifying dichotomies and attributions should be avoided. The Double-Door project is to be an intellectual hotspot, a place of critical, open, courageous dialogue. Topics such as racism and intolerance will also be discussed in the meeting centre. This project is to give rise to new, perhaps unconventional, surprising intellectual and cultural impulses which will bring the centre lasting attention.

The focus will be on a complex religious and social situation in the present. The exhibition will offer a good stimulus to approach many, sometimes socially controversial questions in an intelligent way. The Double-Door Centre will be open in a religious, cultural, ethnic, socio-political way.



Possible scenography of the first floor. (Visualisations: Beat Stalder)

#### 4. Wingspreading

The fourth part of the exhibition “Wingspreading” will represent the connection of the Double-Door Centre with the geographical environment of Surbtal and particularly of the two communities Lengnau and Endingen. Three options for walking along the cultural trails are envisaged:

- The existing, but updated, Cultural Trail with the info panels (free of charge).
- A group tour with a personal guide (for a charge).
- An individual tour with an audio or media guide (for a charge).

The last option will enable different forms for different target groups, from the classic guided tour to a paper chase. In addition to tours for children and teenagers, special tours for adults are also planned. In addition, individual tours will be able to be organised as part of a workshop or in cooperation with the Historisches Museum Baden.

The rendering is to be designed in modular form. This means that after a certain time new tours will be created and others removed from the programme. The idea is to start with five different tours.

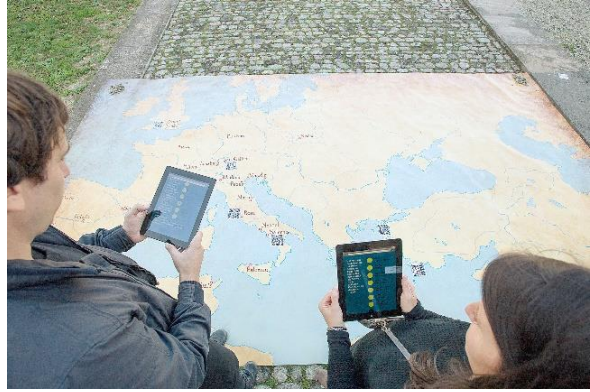
Great care will be taken to ensure that equal attention is paid to the communities of Lengnau and Endingen. People will be able to complete the tours in a number of different ways: on foot, by bike, in a minibus or as a cooperation with bus companies.

Visitors will sometimes encounter the same locations/hotspots on the different routes. But they will experience different things there and will have to solve different tasks. The individual locations will be staged differently, with slide viewers or a kind of telescope and, as in the Jewish cemetery, with pedestals to allow a better view of the scenery.

After the tour, the visitors will return to the Double-Door Centre. Once their task has been solved, they will be given a gadget.







Possibilities for audio tours. (Photos: pascal:meier fotografie)



## V. Workshops, activity programme

The Double-Door Meeting Centre is generally to be open for workshops and events. A separate room in the basement which can accommodate 80 people will be provided for this purpose. Concerts, readings and lectures should also be able to be held here. For example, debates on current issues could be held at Sunday matinees using interactive electronic media. For larger events, other rooms can be used, such as the synagogue in Lengnau.



As part of “Dialogue en route” (a project of the Inter-Faith Working Group IRAS COTIS), several students tested the Jewish Cultural Trail as a kind of paper chase.  
(Photos: Marie-Christine Andres Schürch)

A special workshop programme will be developed for school classes based on the requirements of the particular level’s curriculum. For a certain period of time (half a day, a whole day or even longer), pupils will have to occupy themselves with the contents of the meeting centre in an educational way and explore the surroundings themselves. The aim here is to achieve a lasting learning effect with an extraordinary experience.

## VI. Operational aspects

The Double-Door Meeting Centre will not only be a place for visitors but also a place of work. The back-office area with offices, WCs and other functional rooms (archive, warehouse) will be extended in the attic. This area will also include a lounge/break area for the guides.

It is expected that three employees will work there under normal circumstances: a centre manager, one person for the cash desk and cafeteria, and one cleaning and maintenance person. The exhibitions should be able to work without personnel and, as far as possible, without maintenance. The staff will also be supplemented with guides for special tours.

## VII. Partnerships

The Double-Door Meeting Centre will not pursue a classic, museum-based approach, but will focus on dialogue and the sensitisation of contemporary issues as well as on the teaching of history. In terms of content, the Centre will work in close cooperation with the Historisches Museum Baden; collaboration with the Höfli Museum in Bad Zurzach, the Jewish Museums of Basel, Hohenems (AUT) and other national and international institutions is planned. Cooperation is also being sought with Bad Zurzach, Aargau and Switzerland Tourism in order to jointly market specific offers.



At an academic level, the organisers should be aiming for a constant networking of the Double-Door project in German-speaking countries. On the one hand, the Double-Door project should provide suggestions for research projects. On the other, research findings are to be incorporated into teaching within the context of the Double-Door project. Cooperation with universities and universities of applied sciences is being examined on a long-term basis. Because the project is also of academic relevance. Double-Door promotes further academic research into the Jewish history of Switzerland (not everything in Surbtal and in Switzerland has been researched or is clear, and that is also the case for Jews who moved out into the global world). In other words, there is still research to be carried out before the project is completed and, even after that, further topics will be explored in new special exhibitions.

From the media's point of view, the subject of Jewish/Christian history and the related contemporary issues is of great interest. Educational institutions, but also mediation programmes initiated by the Canton of Aargau are to be integrated into the Double-Door project by means of didactic offers and documentation.

### VIII. Project plan

The following project plan provides an overview of the planned steps until the Double-Door mediation project can be put into operation.

<b>Phase 1 (Organisation)</b>	<b>completed</b>
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- Installation of branch office and project management / definition of organisation structure
- Further development of the Doppeltür mediation project
- Fundraising documentation / start of fundraising
- Building surveys / room concept / possible stages
- Preparation of "Exhibition" Doppeltür Centre study contract

<b>Phase 2 (Preliminary project / exhibition concept / fundraising)</b>	<b>completed</b>
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- Doppeltür exhibition and mediation concept
- Preliminary project: conversion of Doppeltür Centre (architectural concept / environment planning)
- Operator variants / operating concept / business plan
- Fundraising for financing conversion / exhibition
- Development of a style guide

<b>Phase 3 (Construction project / exhibition / fundraising)</b>	<b>2021</b>
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- Exhibition and mediation concept: Project organisation / project development
- Training module: Master plan and milestones / project organisation / project launch
- Property: Consultation with authorities / start of construction project / detailed studies / cost estimates / planning application
- Implementation of corporate design / realisation of new website
- Fundraising expansion and exhibition



<b>Phase 4 (Construction project / exhibition / company organisation)</b>	<b>2022</b>
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- Definitive exhibition programme at the Doppeltür centre: Scenography concept / planning AV media / draft versions of exhibition texts / conclusion of research / conclusion of script for multimedia show)
- Approval procedure / submission / tender plans / awarding
- Start building conversion
- Establishment of foundation and preparation of operational organisation (incl. marketing concept)

<b>Phase 5 (Realisation / preparation for operation)</b>	<b>2023</b>
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- Completion of construction and exhibition
- Recruitment of management and employees of the business organisation
- Commissioning of the Doppeltür centre: Inspections, rectification of defects
- Test operation and official opening

## IX. Sponsorship

The Verein Doppeltür association was founded as a sponsor for the project development process. Members of the association include representatives of the project team at the time, the operating committee of the Jewish Cultural Trail, the owners of the Jewish Cultural Heritage in Surbtal, and the communities of Endingen and Lengnau. The association is chaired by the former Head of Endingen Council, Lukas Keller.

The association is supported by a patronage committee of well-known Swiss personalities, such as former Federal Councillors Ruth Dreifuss and Moritz Leuenberger.

There is a plan to establish a foundation under public law by the end of 2021 at the latest for the realisation and future operation of the Double-Door project. Whenever that happens, the Verein Doppeltür association will take over the role of the operating company.

The Swiss Federal Office of Culture (FOC) is supporting the Double-Door project and has entitled it to bear the label “Living Traditions”.



April 2021

**Illustrations:** see captions in the text.

**Mediation and exhibition concept:** Verein Doppeltür association, Endingen

**Design:** Verein Doppeltür association, Endingen