

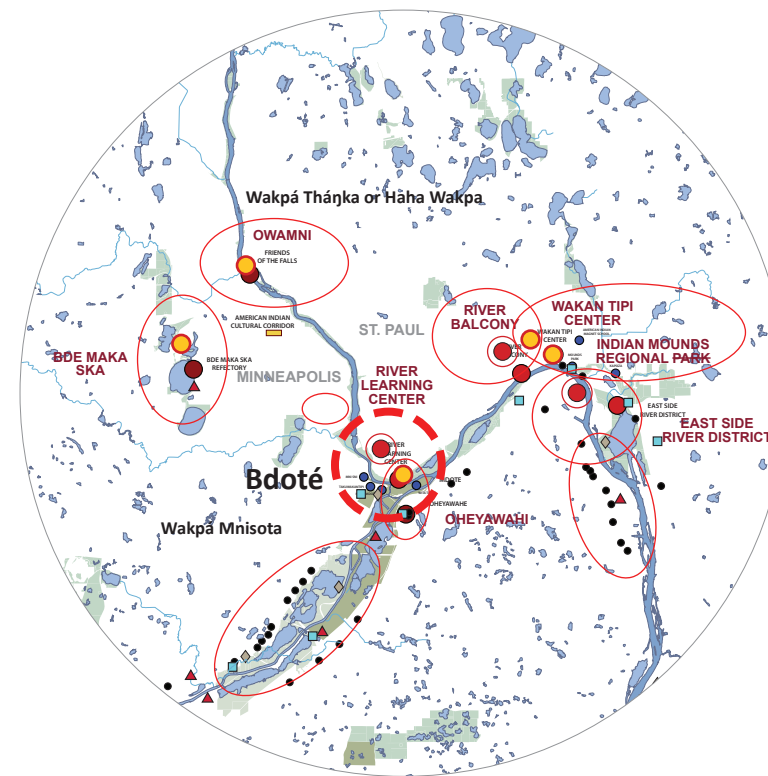
River Learning Center:

Dakota and Indigenous Site Strategy Considerations and responses to design options presented

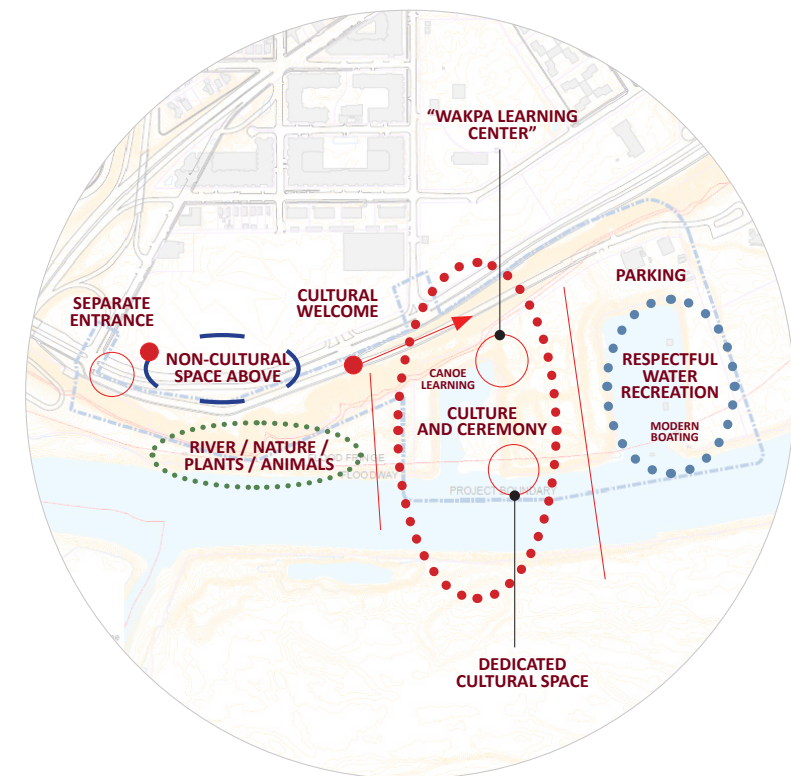
Where rivers come together is a place of power for Dakota people and this remains a sacred site to the Indigenous community today. Dakota people lived and traveled in interconnected waterways and Bdoté is an importance gathering and ceremonial place. These are still Dakota homelands and that is important to frame any discussion about building on this site with that recognition.



DAKOTA CULTURAL DESIGN
GUIDING PRINCIPLES



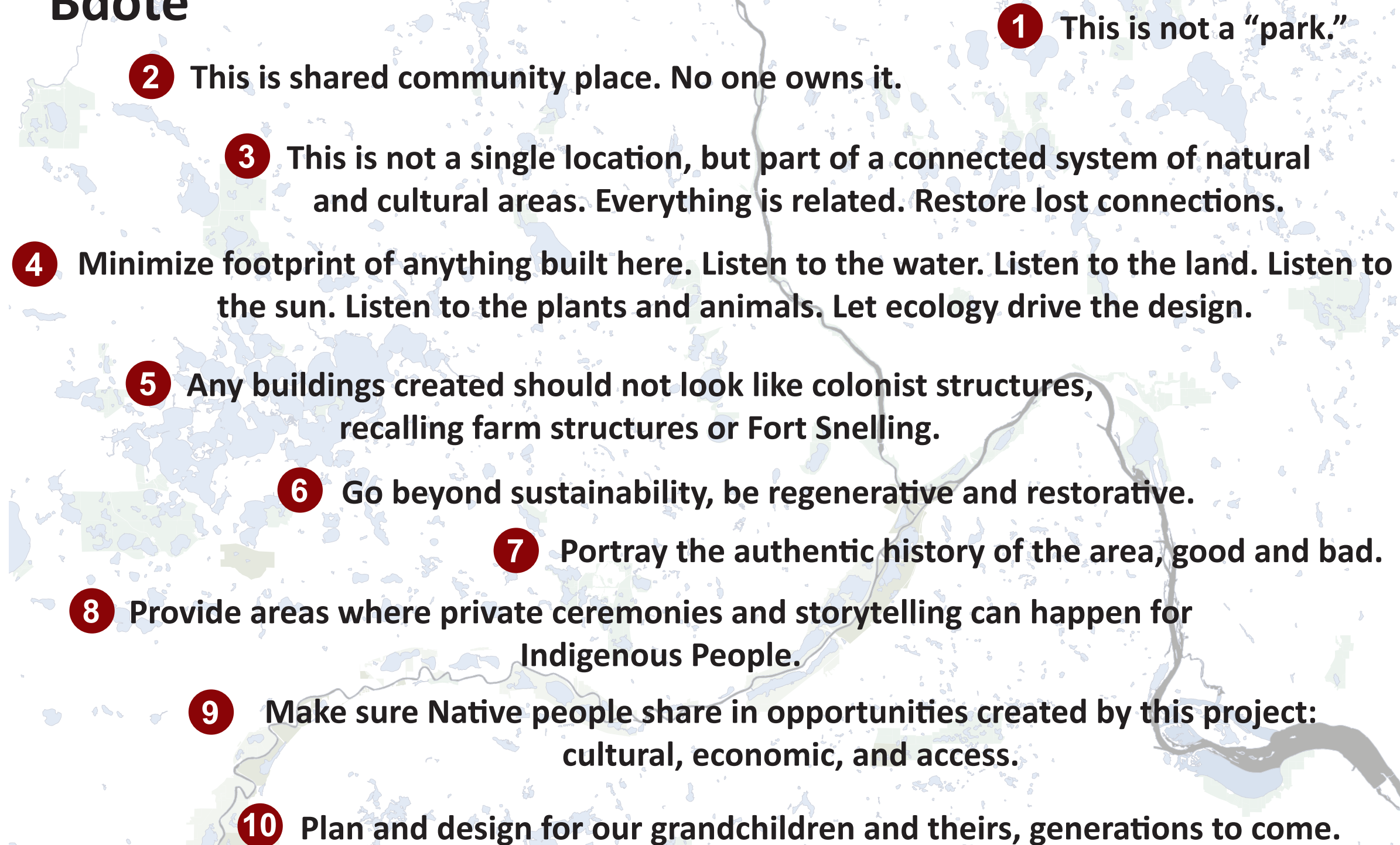
CULTURALLY-INFORMED
DESIGN OBJECTIVES



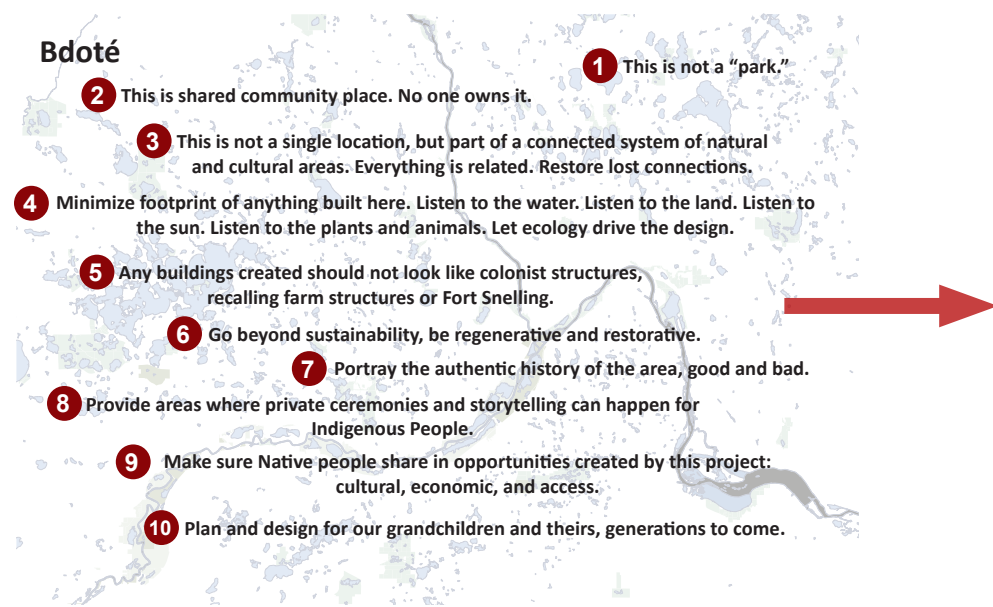
CULTURALLY-INFORMED
PLACE-MAKING STRATEGIES

This document summarizes continued conversations with Dakota and Indigenous community member regarding the proposed River Learning Center project is framed around Cultural Guiding Principles, Design Objectives, and Place-Making Strategies.

Bdoté

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- 1** This is not a “park.”
 - 2** This is shared community place. No one owns it.
 - 3** This is not a single location, but part of a connected system of natural and cultural areas. Everything is related. Restore lost connections.
 - 4** Minimize footprint of anything built here. Listen to the water. Listen to the land. Listen to the sun. Listen to the plants and animals. Let ecology drive the design.
 - 5** Any buildings created should not look like colonist structures, recalling farm structures or Fort Snelling.
 - 6** Go beyond sustainability, be regenerative and restorative.
 - 7** Portray the authentic history of the area, good and bad.
 - 8** Provide areas where private ceremonies and storytelling can happen for Indigenous People.
 - 9** Make sure Native people share in opportunities created by this project: cultural, economic, and access.
 - 10** Plan and design for our grandchildren and theirs, generations to come.

River Learning Center: Dakota Cultural Design Objectives



- 1 Design to provoke a sense respect and responsibility for visitors to understand the importance and sacredness of this place. This is a place to care for and protect.
- 2 Design to provide adequate site amenities and to convey a welcoming and inclusive environment that honors the personal experience and physical abilities of all visitors.
- 3 Design and program this site to acknowledge its place in the larger regional Dakota cultural landscape. Capitalize on what is unique to this place and consider other local and regional cultural facilities.
- 4 Build only what is needed to experience the river landscape and to learn about the culture, ecology, geology and history of Bdote. Honor the river as a living being and build lightly to respect the landscape. This landscape needs both physical and spiritual healing.
- 5 Building form, shape, materials and aesthetics should take inspiration from the landscape and ecology of this place. Places and design elements that convey the history and cultural of the Dakota should take inspiration from Dakota culture and include continued Dakota voices throughout the design process.
- 6 This is a damaged landscape and needs healing. This project should listen to the land and let ecology drive the design to honor and not fight the natural forces of this landscape.
- 7 All features of this project should convey and tell the authentic history of this place, and any portrayal about the Dakota and Indigenous culture and history must be authored, designed, and maintained by the Indigenous community.
- 8 This is a sacred place that has been continuously used for Dakota and Indigenous cultural ceremony and practices. This is a place of erased and misunderstood history and has the opportunity to be part of an effort to reconnect Indigenous people to the sacredness of this place. Dedicated space for Indigenous ceremony would honor this history and goals for community cultural revitalization.
- 9 These are Dakota homelands, forcibly taken and damaged for commercial and recreational purposes. This project has the opportunity to create cultural and economic opportunity and it is important to consider who benefits from development. Spaces and opportunities for the Indigenous community to meet, work, hold ceremony and share in the economic benefit of this place must be considered.
- 10 Design, budget, material, maintenance, cultural, and programmatic use of this place should carefully consider the long-term ecological and social impact of the decisions we make today. We must consider and prioritize the impact of future generations to come.

River Learning Center: Dakota Culturally-Informed Place-Making Strategies

A - REGIONAL PLACE-MAKING AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

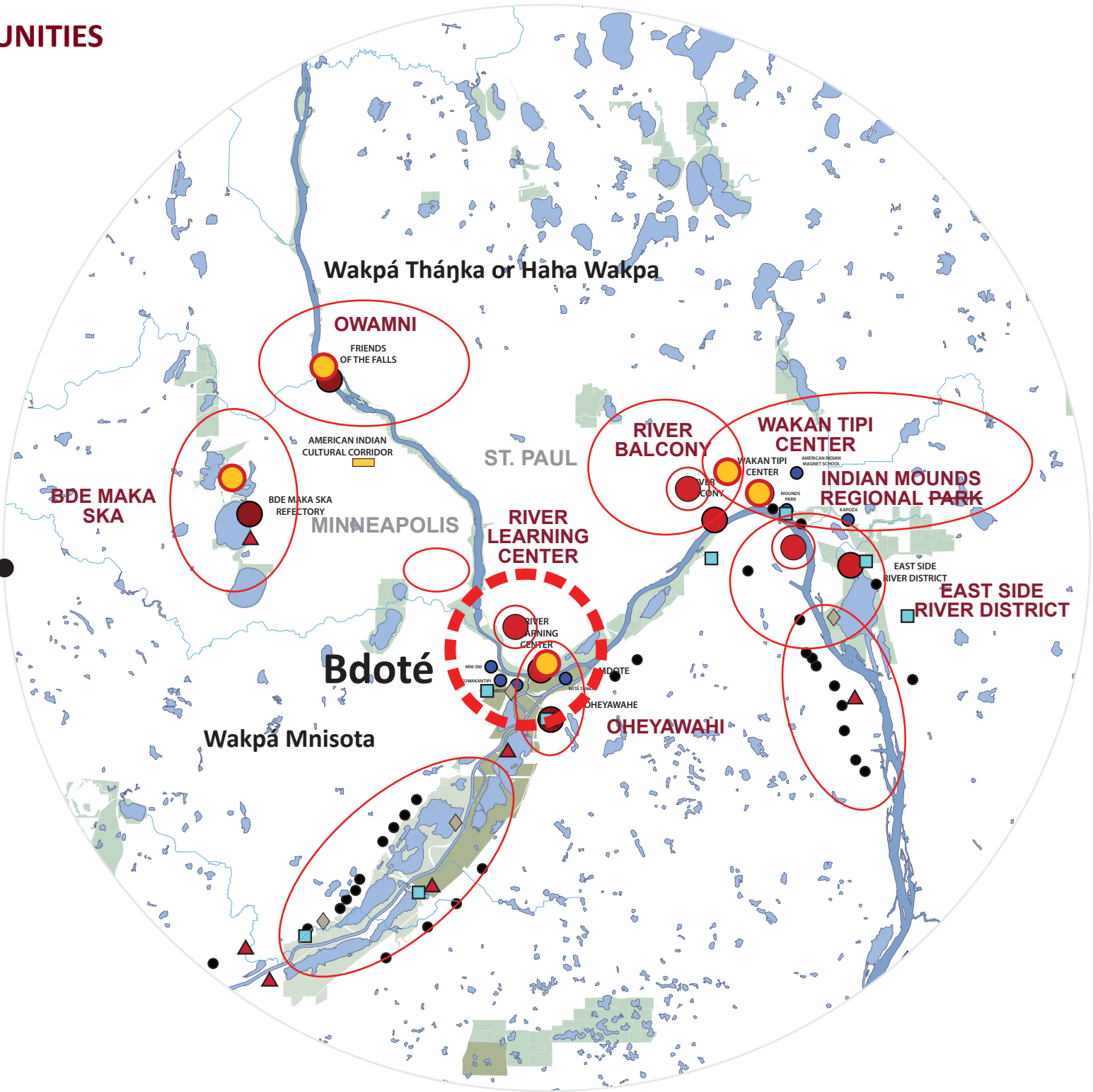
B - SENSE OF ARRIVAL

C - RESPECTING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

D - SITE ZONING AND BUILT FORM

The River Learning Center is in a rich region of highly important cultural sites. This projects has the opportunity to enhance the overall cultural identity of the region and to add to important and coordinated cultural revival efforts. Coordinate programing and space with other cultural institutions.

- Convey the unique qualities of this site
- Compliment, not compete with the programming and identity of other Dakota / Indigenous institutions
- Share programming and space with other institutions
- Clearly define what this place is, a “Learning Center?” What should go here vs. other cultural sites? Coordinate with other efforts.



PARTIAL LIST OF CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PLACES

River Learning Center: Dakota Culturally-Informed Place-Making Strategies

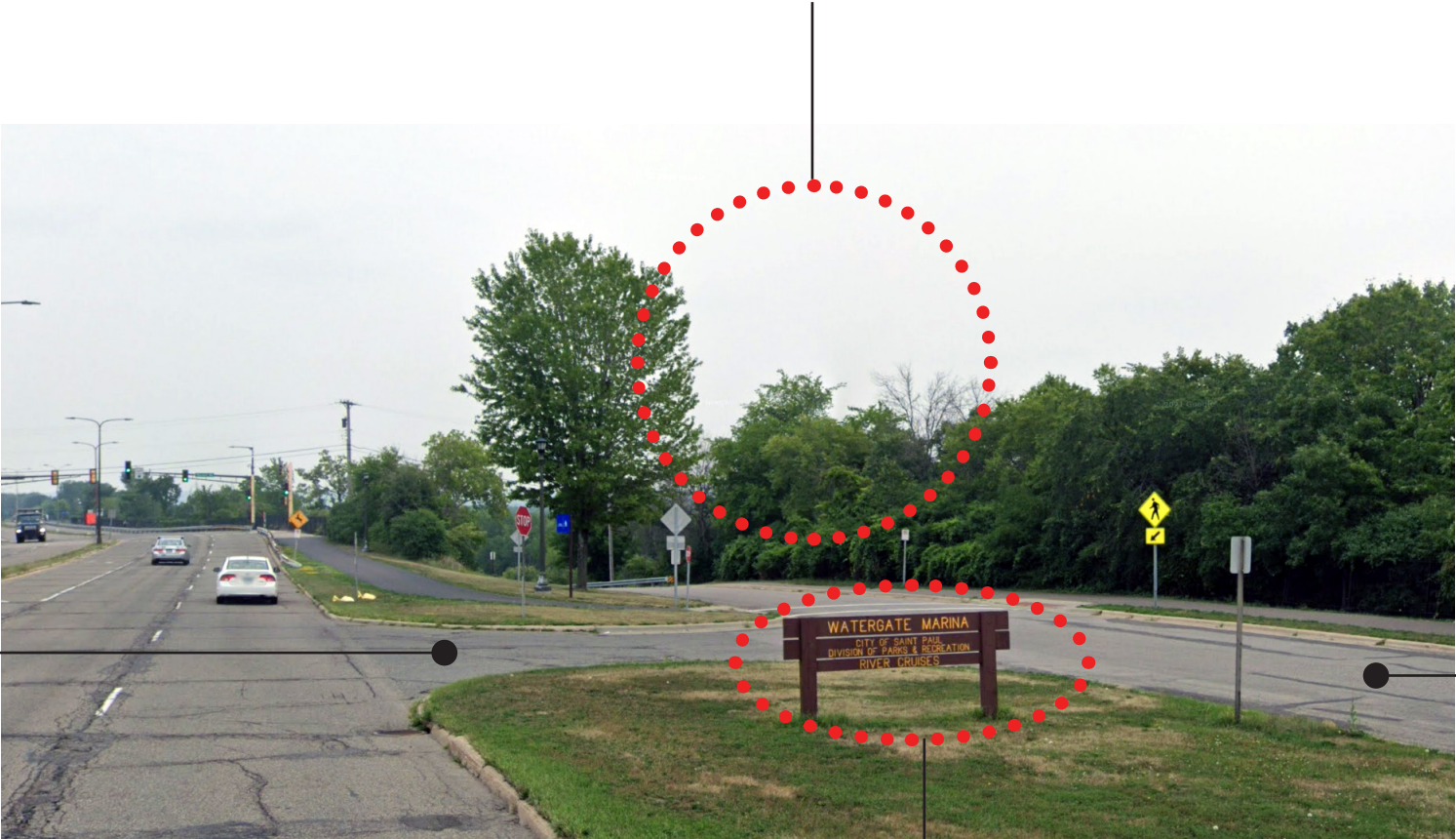
A - REGIONAL PLACE-MAKING AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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Carefully consider the arrival experience. Celebrate that there is something special about this place and convey clearly that this is a sacred Dakota cultural landscape to protect. This can be a beautiful but subtle expression of the relationship between Dakota culture and the landscape providing a reflection of the unique identity of this place.



Consider safety, vehicular turning, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

If there are structures built at the top of this site, provide a clearly identified entry sequence

Be mindful about the “messaging” that any entry signage has. It should not convey “Government” or anything that might be considered exclusive or elitist.



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A - REGIONAL PLACE-MAKING AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

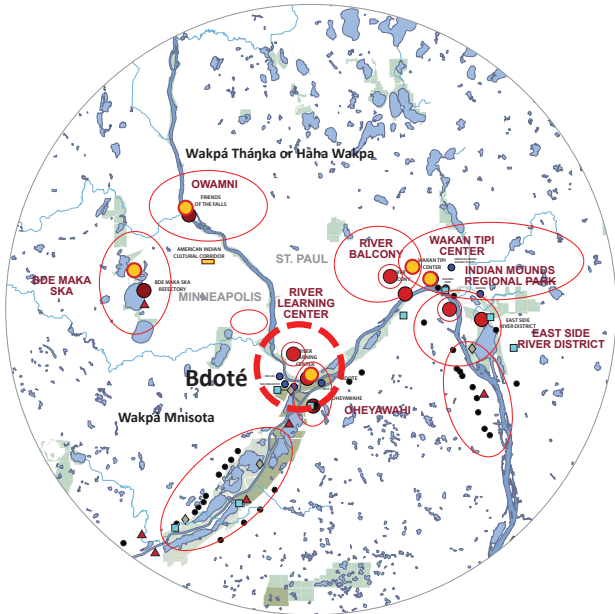
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Restore and heal the forest. Walkways through the landscape should allow and encourage people to touch the earth.

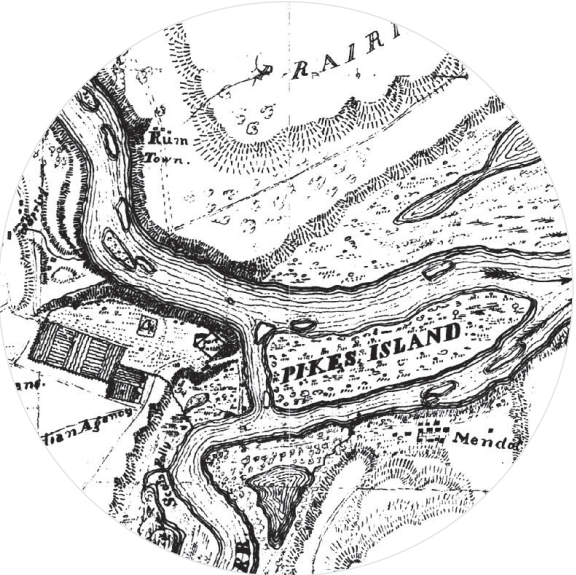
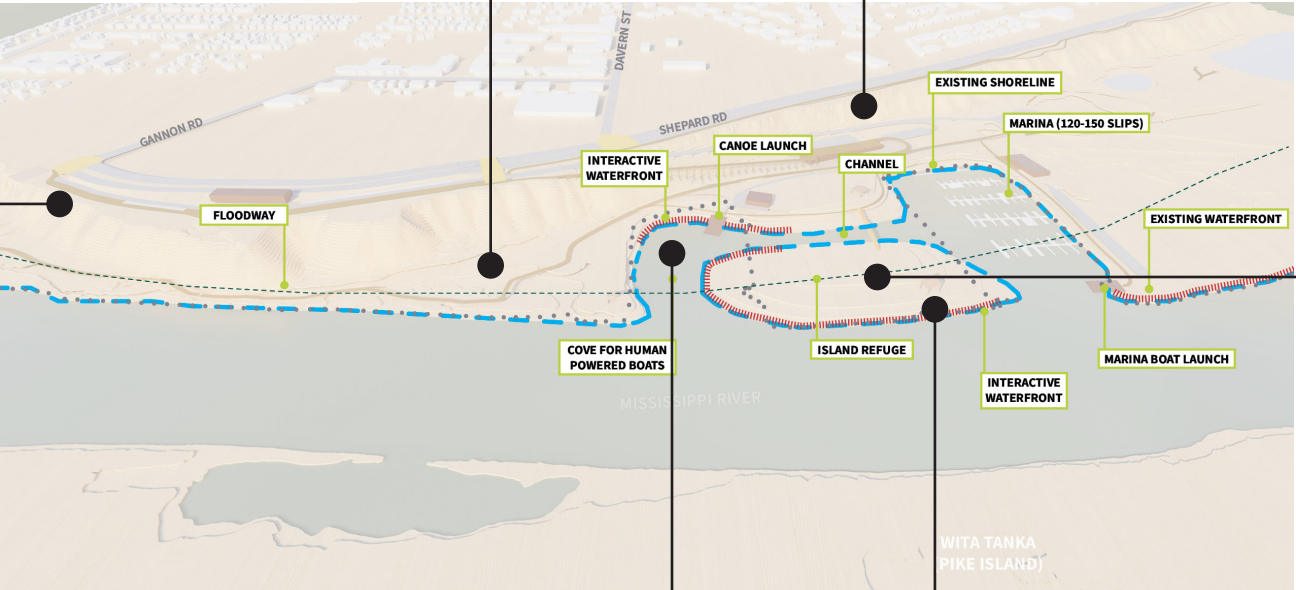
Engage the bluffs and cave as a primary part of the visitor experience



The overlook can tell the story of the interconnected cultural sites and punctuate the historical presence of the Dakota throughout the region. This is also an opportunity to tell the story of the forest canopy.

Providing the space and programming to reconnect with the cultural practice of traveling through the waterways is welcomed. This should allow for equitable used by the Dakota and Indigenous community.

Alt #2: The Path – Bluff to Floodplain



Creating a channel and island align with the natural history of islands in the river landscape and that the river is alive. The creates an opportunity to have the river edge feel less engineered and to restore small islands to the river landscape. River edge plantings should be what is there naturally and should not appear human-made.

Islands were often a place of ceremony. Provide dedicated space for private ceremony here.

River Learning Center: Dakota Culturally-Informed Place-Making Strategies

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- Build as little as possible below. Use upper area for any structures where it is not imperative to be at the river.
- Separate recreation and culture and nature with buffer zones



The Dakota lived and traveled along the interconnected waterways at Bdote and beyond. It is ok to build along the river and to engage the waters edge, IF it is done minimally and programmed activities are conducted respectfully.

