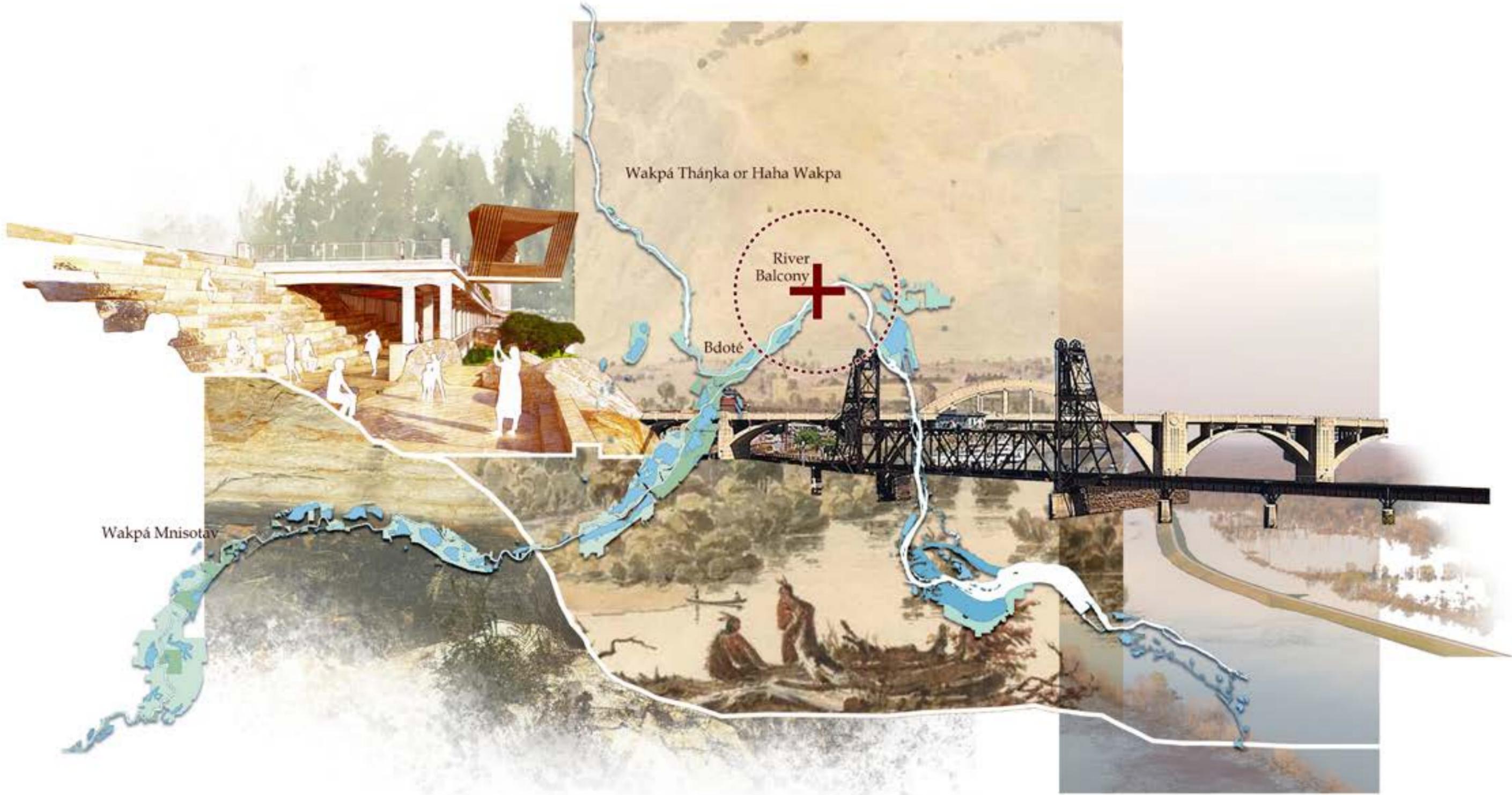


A LAYERED SITE

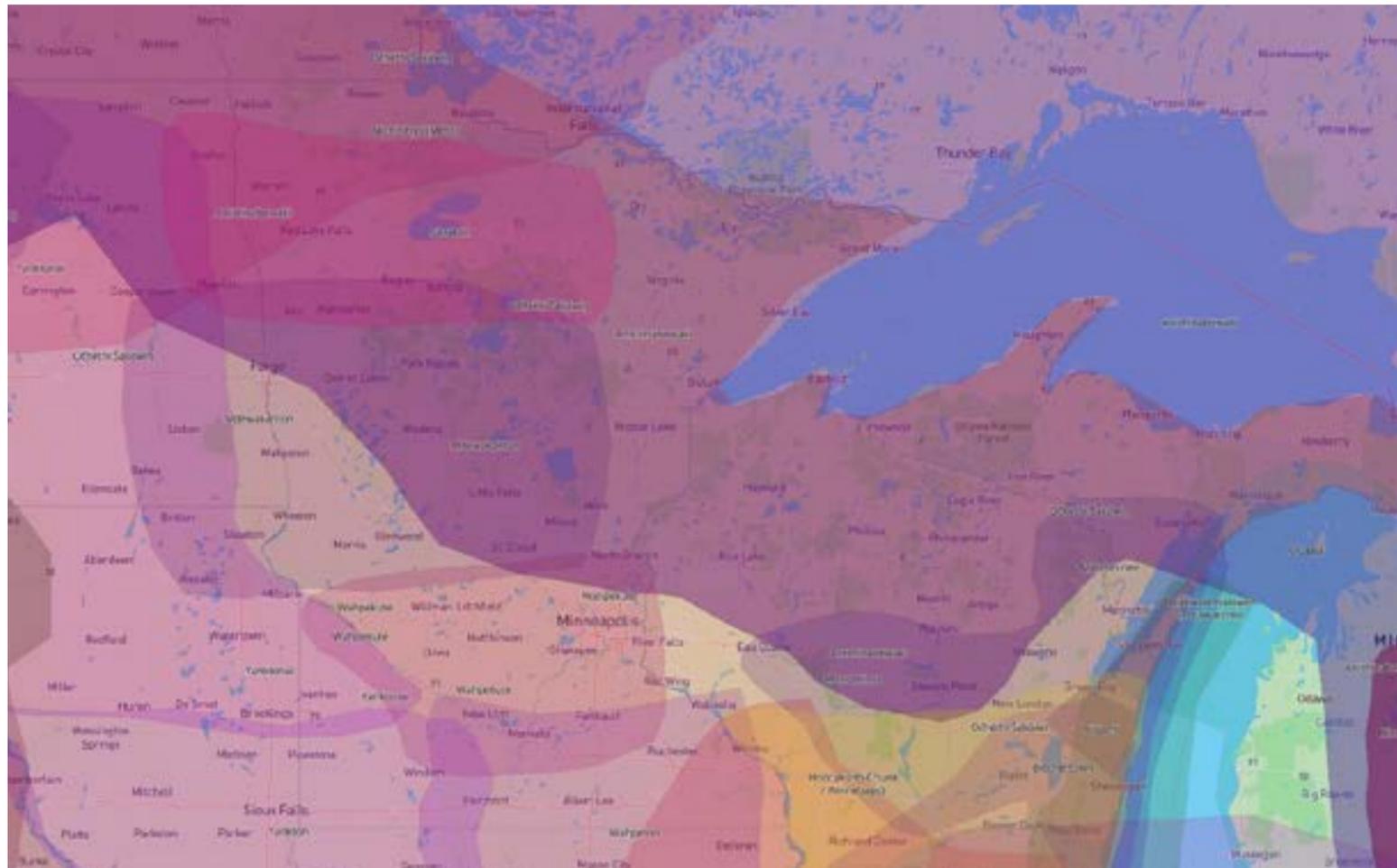


DAKOTA LAND

The Minneapolis-St Paul metropolitan area is home to one of the largest and most tribally diverse urban American Indian populations. Numbering well over 35,000, the size of the Twin Cities' indigenous population boomed as a result of the 1956 Indian relocation act which defunded many reservation services and paid for relocation expenses to the cities in an attempt to assimilate the country's indigenous peoples. Across the country, roughly 7 out of 10 American Indians now live in cities.

The design process for the River Balcony Project must acknowledge and act on the fact that the land (and the River) are historically of the Dakota people. In the spirit of their ancient association with the place, the River Balcony too must aspire to be a place 'from the land' and 'of the River', recognizing and leveraging its rich natural and cultural heritage and informed by the spiritual worldview of Indigenous people.

See [link](#) for engagement work done so far by Great River Passage's tribal engagement consultant.



FOCUSED ENGAGEMENT

INDIGENOUS OUTREACH

Bringing Indigenous, especially Dakota, voices to the planning process was central to the community engagement approach. The consultant team sought to engage Indigenous elders, educators, and leaders, including the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from the four Minnesota Dakota tribes. Throughout the project process, outreach engagements included Indigenous voices to gain the perspective and insight of many Dakota people living in the Twin Cities, in greater Minnesota, and outside of Minnesota. These conversations also included other Indigenous people connected to the site.

Indigenous engagement activities included on-site discussions, online meetings, and other direct one-on-one conversations. Engagement conversations began with high-level discussions about the meaning of Bdote and the river landscape to Indigenous communities, both historically and today. Conversations often considered multiple Dakota cultural sites along the Mississippi River. Additional conversations included observations and evaluations of the existing conditions of the site, cultural elements, site amenities, landscape, vegetation, and existing built structures. Based on these conversations, the consultant team noted site design considerations that would align with respectful use, preservation, and enhancement of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitor experience of the site.

Key takeaways: Go beyond sustainability, be regenerative and restorative. Portray the authentic history of the area, good and bad. This is not a single location, but part of a connected system of natural and cultural areas. Everything is related, Restore lost connections. Make sure Native people share the opportunities created by this project: cultural, economic, and accessible.