

# Waqan Típi Center

## Final Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan

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**Prepared by the 106 Group:**

Anne Ketz, Principal in Charge

Regine Kennedy, Project Manager

Julie Davis, Interpretive Planner

John Reynolds, Cultural Resource Specialist

Alyssa Rupp, Graphic Designer

**Prepared for:**

**Lower Phalen Creek Project**



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# INTRODUCTION

# BACKGROUND

The Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP) and the City of Saint Paul are partnering to develop the Waḡaŋ Ṭípi Center (WTC or the Center), a Native-led cultural and environmental interpretive center. The Center will be located on the west end of the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary (the Sanctuary), a 27-acre nature preserve east of downtown Saint Paul. The Center will interpret the site's history, ecology, and cultural significance and reveal its relationship to other interconnected places in Saint Paul, all from a distinctly Daḡota perspective.

Waḡaŋ Ṭípi means, according to one translation, Dwelling Place of the Sacred in the Daḡota language. It refers to the cave that lies on the east end of the Sanctuary as well as the entire site that the Sanctuary now occupies.

For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years prior to European and American colonization, this was a place of gathering and ceremony for Daḡota people. Various bands of the Daḡota Oyate and other Indigenous Nations met here over generations to build and strengthen alliances with one another. It is also intimately connected to the maḡa paha, the burial mounds atop the bluff, where the spirits of the ancestors dwell.

Waḡaŋ Ṭípi lies at the heart of Mniṣota Maḡoḡe, the Daḡota Homeland in what is now the state of Minnesota. It is part of the Bdote area around the confluence of the Wakpa Mniṣota and Wakpa Ṭaŋka, the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. This is the place where the Daḡota people came into being. The cave, the petroglyphs that once covered its walls, the springs and wetlands, the limestone and sandstone bluffs, and the burial mounds all were, are, and always will be a sacred Daḡota place.

After the English army officer Jonathan Carver documented the site in the 1760s, the Waḡaŋ Ṭípi cave became known as Carver's Cave. Beginning in the 1850s, decades of European American industrialization, urbanization, and post-industrial neglect damaged and desecrated the entire site.

In the late 1990s, a group of East Side and Lowertown Saint Paul residents organized as the Lower Phalen Creek Project partnered with the City of Saint Paul to purchase and clean up the site. In the early 2000s, they began restoring the landscape and created the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. As the LPCP transitioned to a Native-led organization, its leadership committed to restoring Daḡota and other Indigenous people's connection to Waḡaŋ Ṭípi so that they can practice their ceremonies, share their teachings, and care for this holy place.



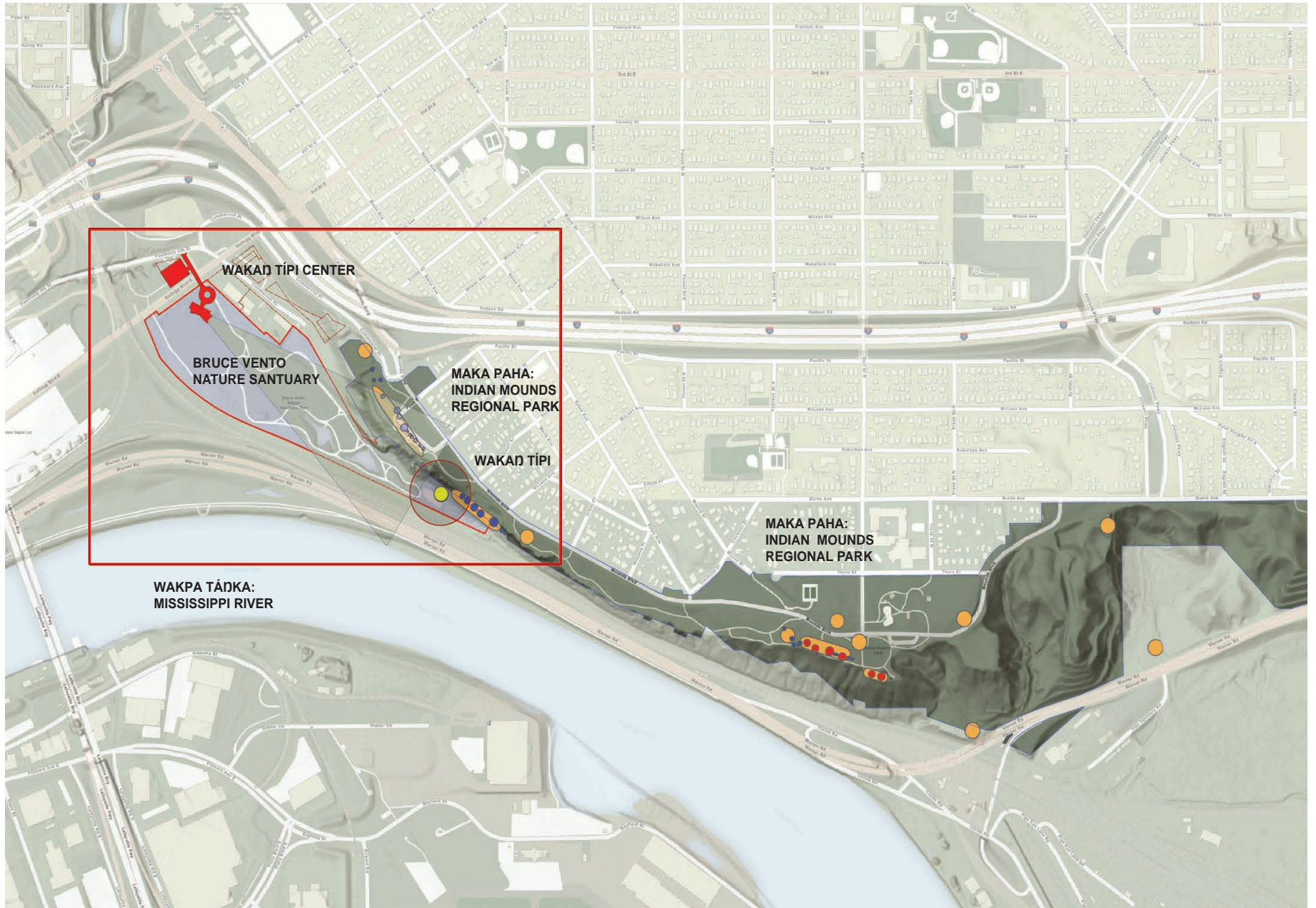
Minnesota Historical Society



Minnesota Historical Society

Waḡaŋ Ṭípi cave exterior, about 1870

Waḡaŋ Ṭípi cave interior, about 1870



Adapted from a map by Cuningham/Full Circle Planning, 2020

# PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2021, the LPCP contracted 106 Group to collaborate on the creation of a Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan (VIEP) for the Waḡaŋ Ṭípi Center. The VIEP will guide planning for the overall visitor experience throughout the site and lay the groundwork for development of interpretive exhibits and programs.

Earlier, in a 2017 survey, more than 1200 diverse local residents and park users, including Twin Cities Indigenous Peoples, expressed enthusiasm for authentic Daḡota interpretation of this site and a history of the area through an Indigenous lens. In 2018, LPCP was awarded \$3 million in bonding funds from the State of Minnesota to design and build the Center.

In early 2021, a Daḡota-led Design Team facilitated by Sam Olbekson, Principal at Full Circle Indigenous Planning, completed architectural pre-design planning for the building. As part of that process, the Design Team carried out three engagement sessions between 2019-2021 to gather further input from Indigenous community members. In the spring of 2021, the 106 Group project team met with LPCP leadership and members of the Design Team, as well as the project team that developed the 2020 Indian Mounds Cultural Landscape Study and Messaging Plan, to review the results of their work and discuss how to apply it to the VIEP.

In the spring of 2021, the LPCP formalized the Dakota-led Design Team into a Steering Committee of the Board, co-chaired by Kate Beane and Franky Jackson, two Dakota LPCP Board members. The committee includes Daḡota historians, language experts, educators, artists, community leaders, and cultural knowledge keepers to guide development of the Center. Between July and October, the 106 Group and LPCP project team participated in four meetings and workshops with Steering Committee members, including a site visit to the Sanctuary and WTC site.

Development of the VIEP has been a closely collaborative process. LPCP staff and Steering Committee members have engaged in active discussions and reviewed multiple working documents. Their ideas, priorities, insights, and feedback have profoundly shaped this document.

106 Group submitted a Draft VIEP for review on October 22, 2021 and met virtually with LPCP staff and Steering Committee members on November 3 to review the draft. On November 23, 106 Group, LPCP staff, and Steering Committee members facilitated an online community open house to gather additional feedback. Based on input from the LPCP, the Steering Committee, and open house participants, 106 Group has revised the document into this Final VIEP.

## NEXT STEPS

After completing the VIEP, concept planning will begin for the Center's exhibits and programs. Building on the VIEP's recommendations, the Concept Plan will identify stories to communicate interpretive messaging, connect them to specific locations on site, and recommend how to incorporate art and programming into a cohesive visitor experience. It also will map visitor flow through the indoor and outdoor spaces and define the look and feel of interpretive features.

As the Concept Plan takes shape, it will be used to develop digital content to augment and expand access to the WTC visitor experience. Other stages of work will follow. They include design development, fabrication, and installation of exhibits and other physical interpretive features on site as well as development and implementation of new programming.



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# FOUNDATIONS

# VISION, MISSION & GOALS

## WHY DOES THE WAḐAŃ ȚÍPI CENTER EXIST?

### Lower Phalen Creek Project

The Lower Phalen Creek Project is leading development of the WaḐaŃ Țípi Center and will be responsible for managing it; therefore, the LPCP vision and mission also guide the Center.

#### LPCP VISION

The Lower Phalen Creek Project serves as a bold leader for place-based Indigenous environmental and cultural restoration work in urban settings.

#### LPCP MISSION

Lower Phalen Creek Project is an East Side Saint Paul organization whose mission is to engage people in honoring and caring for our natural places and the sacred sites and cultural value within them.

### WaḐaŃ Țípi Center

Through collaborative workshops and discussion, LPCP staff and Steering Committee members have developed vision and mission statements and a set of goals for the WTC. There are two kinds of goals outlined below:

The **ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS** articulate what the organization's leaders, staff, and advisors seek to accomplish through the WTC. They are written from the organization's perspective.

The **VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS** express what people should sense, feel, think, understand, and do through their experience of the WTC. They are written from the visitors' perspective. For the WTC, the experience goals are further categorized by type of visitor.

### WTC VISION

Tag Owasin İçikoyake: Everything is connected.

WaḐaŃ Țípi is a place of gathering and healing, where Daḓota people restore our land, language, and lifeways, now and forever into the future. This place is safe and secure, knowing that our traditional Daḓota values and protocols have been implemented and are followed. We have reclaimed what was stolen and gathered what was waiting to be picked up here.

### WTC MISSION

WaḐaŃ Țípi Center is an intergenerational gathering place that honors WaḐaŃ Țípi and the maḓa paha as Daḓota sacred sites. We connect people to this sacred landscape through immersive experiences in Daḓota history, lifeways, language, and values.



Art by Hapistinna Graci Horne



Courtesy Lower Phalen Creek Project

## WTC ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

The Waḡaŋ Țipi Center will ...

- **Reconnect** Daḡota people with their land, language, and teachings, and **restore** relationships with their human, plant, and animal relatives who also are connected to this place.
- **Tell the story** of Daḡota culture, history, and places in Saint Paul, from a distinctly **Daḡota perspective**.
- Offer **environmental education** about the geology, ecology, and restoration of the area around Waḡaŋ Țipi and the nearby burial mounds through an authentically **Indigenous lens**.
- **Build a community** of Native and non-Native people who understand and appreciate Indigenous ecological knowledge as it is practiced here.
- Create space for **cultural connections and healing** through the arts and nature.

## WTC VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

For Daḡota people, the Waḡaŋ Țipi Center will provide a safe gathering space where they can ...

- Feel a sense of **belonging** and know that they have come **home**.
- Better understand themselves as part of the Daḡota Oyate by connecting with their language, medicines, ceremonies, teachings, and other **ancestral knowledge and lifeways**.
- **Care** for and be nurtured by the **land** once again.
- **Reclaim** this as a Daḡota place.

At Waḡaŋ Țipi Center, all Indigenous people with ancestral connections to this place will find a safe gathering space where they can ...

- **Connect** with the sacred.
- **Restore their caretaking relationships** with the land and water, their plant and animal relatives, and each other.



Art by Jeremy RedEagle



Art by Cole Redhorse Jacobson



All visitors to the Waḡaŋ Țipi Center will ...

- Feel **welcomed**.
- Recognize Waḡaŋ Țipi and the maḡa paha as **sacred Daḡota places**.
- Develop a **deeper understanding** of Daḡota history, lifeways, art, and values.
- Understand the value of **restoring the natural environment** here.
- Be inspired to treat this place with **respect**.

# AUDIENCE, CONNECTIONS, STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS

## WHO IS THE WAŦAŦ TĪPI CENTER FOR?

### Audiences

Audiences include **visitors**, those who will actively visit, use, and engage with the WaŦaŦ TĪpi Center, whether in person or virtually. The Center's target visitors include:

- DaŦota people, both in Minnesota and in diaspora
- DaŦota and other urban Native youth in the Twin Cities
- Other OŦeti ŦakowiŦ (Seven Council Fires) people and other Indigenous people with ancestral connections here
- The Center's neighbors: East Side, Lowertown, and Downtown Saint Paul residents
- Other Twin Cities metropolitan-area residents
- K-12 and college/university students and educators across the northern plains and upper Midwest regions

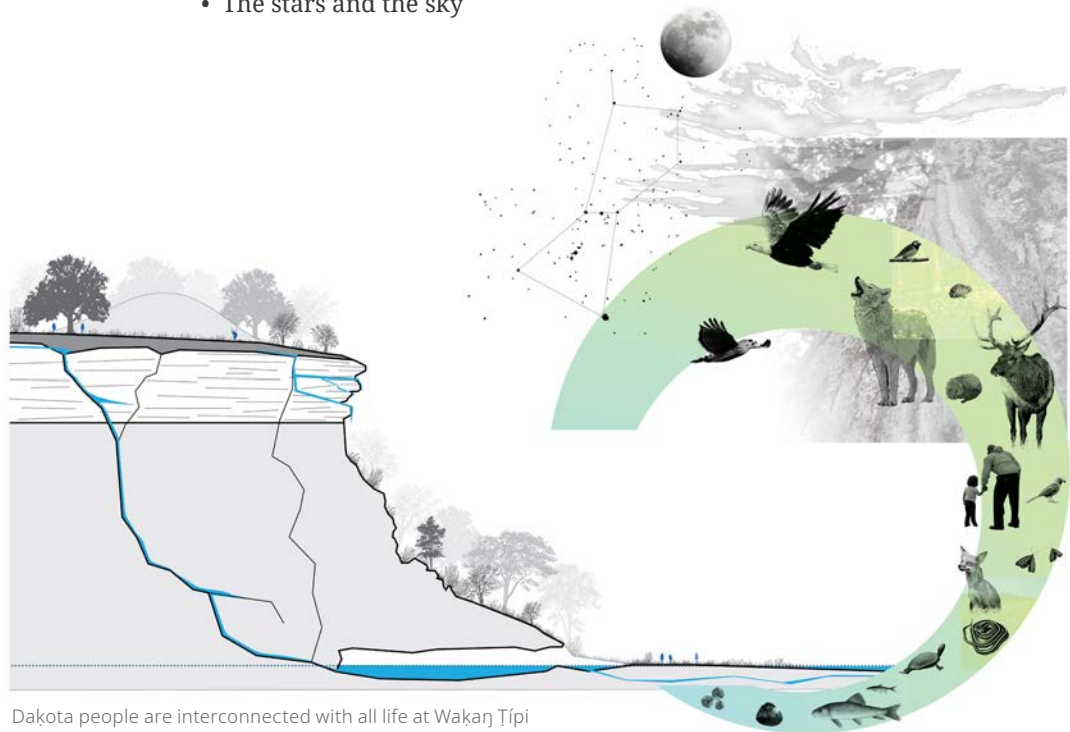
The Center's work also will speak to or influence **other audiences**. They include:

- Tribal governments and communities
- Leaders in other urban Indian communities
- City, county, and state governments in the region
- Environmental professionals

### Connections

DaŦota people are connected to, and have the responsibility to care for, all of these interrelated beings:

- Human ancestors, living relatives, and future generations
- Plant and animal relatives
- The earth, caves, and cliffs
- The springs, creek, and river
- The stars and the sky



DaŦota people are interconnected with all life at WaŦaŦ TĪpi

Courtesy: TEN x TEN, 2019

## Stakeholders

Stakeholder groups are invested in the Waḡaŋ Ṭípi Center or might influence what it becomes.

- City of Saint Paul
  - Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
  - Office of the State Archaeologist
  - Bde Maya To/Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
  - Cansa'yapi/Lower Sioux Indian Community
  - Pezihutazizi Oyate/Upper Sioux Community
  - Tinta Wita/Prairie Island Indian Community
  - Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
  - Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
  - Spirit Lake Nation
  - Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin
  - Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska
- 

## Partners

Partners are groups or organizations who actively work with the Center to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.

### CURRENT PARTNERS

- Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Prairie Island Indian Community
- City of Saint Paul
- Metropolitan Council
- Payne-Phalen Community Council
- Dayton's Bluff Community Council
- Capitol Region Watershed District
- Ramsey-Washington Watershed District
- Urban Roots
- Oyate Hotanin
- Native Roots Radio
- New Native Theater
- Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)
- Minnesota Humanities Center
- University of Minnesota, Bee Lab
- Hamline University Center for Global Environmental Education
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Mississippi Park Connection
- Saint Paul Parks Conservancy
- Public Art Saint Paul
- Friends of Swede Hollow
- University of Minnesota's Dakota Language Program
- We Are Still Here MN
- Shakopee's Understand Native Minnesota Initiative
- Ain Dah Yung Center
- American Indian Family Center
- Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI)
- Indigenous Environmental Network
- Honor the Earth
- Great River Passage Conservancy (River Learning Center in development)
- Friends of the Falls
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Bell Museum
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- Metropolitan State University
- Ramsey County

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Bdote Learning Center
- Hoçokata Ti cultural center
- Prairie Island Indian Community's cultural center (in development)
- All My Relations Gallery
- Two Rivers Gallery
- Daḡota Wiçoḡaŋ
- Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakiçhiye

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## WHERE DOES THE CENTER STAND?

### Challenges

#### **What challenges make it difficult to achieve the WTC mission and goals? What obstacles stand in the way?**

The Waḡaŋ Ṭípi Center will serve a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders, and balancing their needs and priorities will be an ongoing challenge. It is essential that the Center honor and interpret this site as a distinctly Daḡota place, while also making it accessible, understandable, and welcoming for all visitors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Providing space for the practice of Daḡota traditions could prove challenging since the Center does not own or have full control over the land. Daḡota people will need safe, protected space to carry out cultural practices on site, despite it being public land.

Fostering connection to nature and helping people "find the quiet" and sense the sacred in the Sanctuary can be difficult. The sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of an industrial city surround the site and encroach on the experience. Nearby industry also poses threats to the site via air, water, and noise pollution and potential toxic spills from the railroad.

Indigenous commitments to deliberate process and deep collaboration sometimes conflict with the timelines and parameters imposed by government agencies, grant requirements, and funding cycles.

### Opportunities

#### **What opportunities should the WTC make the most of?**

- Teaching about the preservation of land and sacred sites and their importance for everyone
- Engaging with and attracting visitors from tribal schools across the United States and creating resources for their learning
- Creating a gathering place for Indigenous people in the Twin Cities area
- Reaching the growing numbers of people outside Native communities who want to learn about and support environmental and cultural restoration work

### Resources

#### **What resources can the WTC draw from to ensure success?**

The LPCP has a deeply engaged Board of Directors, over half of whom are Indigenous, and development of the Center is guided by a Steering Committee of Daḡota community leaders. The talented, dedicated staff has grown to five full-time employees and one part-time employee.

The LPCP also has strong community support. In 2020, 130 volunteers donated 750 hours to LPCP initiatives. Residents of East Side, Lowertown, and Downtown Saint Paul are attached to the Sanctuary and supportive of plans for the Center. Daḡota communities in Minnesota and across the region are eager to see their dreams for the Center become reality.

The LPCP has established productive partnerships with a broad range of tribal, state, and local government agencies as well as educational and non-profit organizations. The LPCP also has a track record of successful fundraising from federal and state grants, state appropriations, foundations, and other sources. The organization raised \$10 million to restore the Sanctuary and has raised \$8.1 million toward a \$9.3 million goal for development of the Center.

# INTERPRETIVE MESSAGING

## WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE ABOUT?

The LPCP, Steering Committee, and 106 Group developed a framework for interpretive messaging to be communicated through the WTC experience.

### Interpretive Principles

A set of **principles**, grounded in the WTC vision, mission, and goals, will guide the development and implementation of all interpretation.

#### MITAKUYE OWASIN: WE ARE ALL RELATED

All beings, human and more-than-human, are interconnected in relationship. We take care of one another.

#### HDI UNHIPI: RETURNING BACK HOME HERE

All relatives who belong here—people, plants, animals, water—are reclaiming our birthright and returning to this place.

#### EKIÇETU: RESTORATION AND RENEWAL

We are restoring the land and the plant and animal relatives and healing the people.

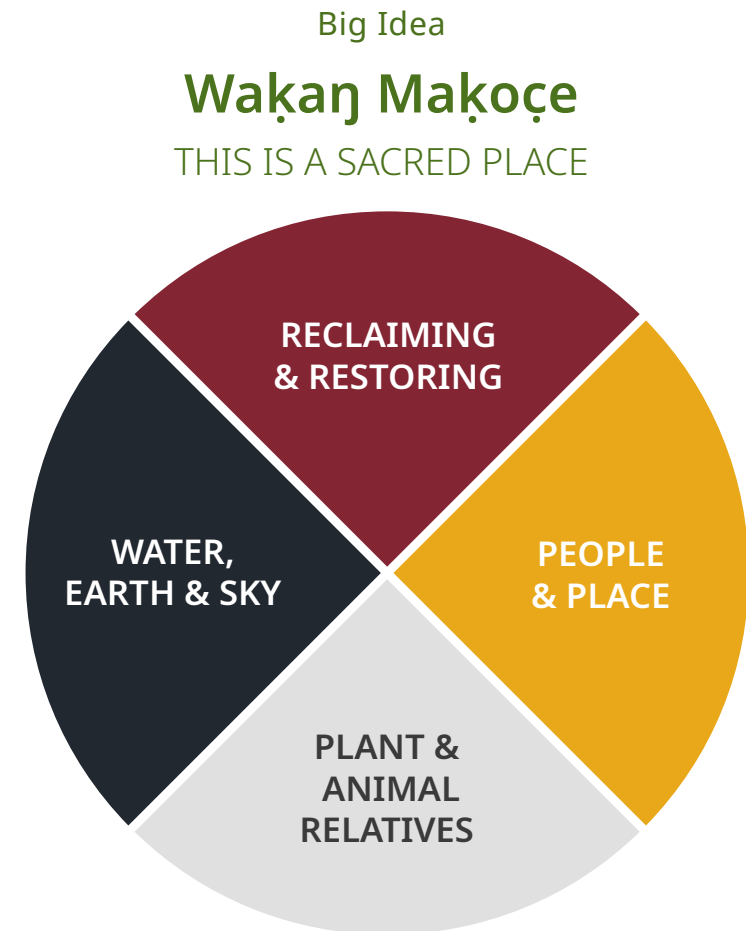
#### WÓKSAPE: SHARING WISDOM GAINED OVER TIME

We are sharing Indigenous science and ecological knowledge through Indigenous pedagogies. We also are sharing Dağota teachings across generations in appropriate ways.

#### HINAĦ UNHIPI: WE ARE STILL HERE

Through perseverance, resilience, and resistance, Dağota and other Indigenous people remain here today. There is a continuity of Dağota presence and connection to this place.

The **Big Idea** is the main message, the core concept that visitors should take away from their experience. The interpretation coheres around four **themes**, each of which engages visitors with a set of **topics**. The Big Idea, themes, and topics provide a cohesive focus for the stories the site will tell.



Use of the medicine wheel symbol was guided by Dağota protocols in consultation with LPCP staff and the WTC steering committee

## Interpretive Themes & Topics



### WATER, EARTH & SKY

**The elements of life converge in this sacred place: birth, death, water, earth, and sky.**

- Mni Wiçoni: Water is life
- Water is our first medicine
- Water as connection between places
- The sacred springs, the creek, and the river
- Imniža Ska: The white cliffs
- Mağa paha: The burial mounds
- Wağan Țipi cave and other caves
- Site and regional geology
- Star connections and knowledge



Art by Cole Redhorse Jacobson

Courtesy Cole Redhorse Jacobson: arbyredhorse.com



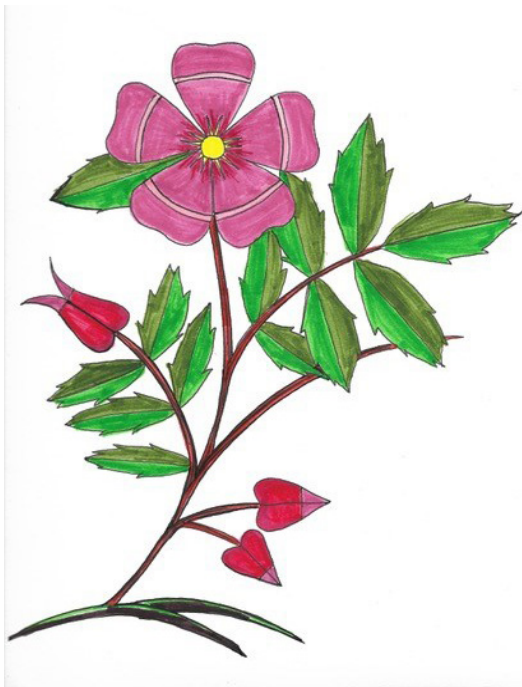




## RECLAIMING & RESTORING

**This place tells a story of loss, exile, homecoming, reclamation, and restoration.**

- Industrialization, urbanization, and damage to the site
- Reclaiming this place
- Restoration of plants, animals, and ecosystem
- Disruption, continuity, and renewal of Dakota presence and connection to this place
- Indigenous futures



Courtesy Cole Redhorse Jacobson  
artbyredhorse.com

Art by Cole Redhorse Jacobson



## PEOPLE & PLACE

**This is Dakota Homeland and an Indigenous gathering place.**

- Dakota Oyate, Oçeti Šakowiŋ, and other Indigenous people connected to this place
- Generations of Dakota ancestors and living relatives
- Connection to Bdote and other river places
- Language and the land
- Dakota Wiçoh’anj: Dakota lifeways
- Dakota teachings
- Who and where Dakota people are today



## PLANT & ANIMAL RELATIVES

**Human, plant, and animal beings are interrelated and interdependent.**

- Indigenous ecological knowledge
- Plant foods and medicines
- Making useful things from plants
- Birds, insects, and other animal relatives
- Caring for plant and animal relatives
- Shifts in landscapes and plant communities



Courtesy Cole Redhorse Jacobson  
artbyredhorse.com

Art by Cole Redhorse Jacobson



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# VISITOR EXPERIENCE FRAMEWORK

# EXPERIENCE STAGES

The visitor experience extends beyond interacting with interpretive content. It is important to consider and plan for all stages of the in-person experience from visitors' perspectives.

## DISCOVERY & PLANNING

How will people learn about the Waḡaŋ Ṭipi Center? Discovery can happen via multi-channel marketing or other deliberate communication strategies. It also will happen through web browsing and social media. The WTC should have a fully developed, stand-alone **website** and active **social media** accounts that are linked to, but not subsumed within, the LPCP's online presence. **Word of mouth** will be a powerful way to raise awareness and generate interest in the Twin Cities as well as across regional Daḡota and other Indigenous communities.

Discovery might happen on site or at other nearby Daḡota cultural sites or recreational areas. Someone might come to the Sanctuary for a trail walk and find the Center and its exhibits and programs for the first time. A bicyclist passing by on the **Bruce Vento Regional Trail** might spot a sign or see the building and stop to investigate. Visitors to **Indian Mounds cemetery** or **Swede Hollow Park** could discover that there is another culturally significant site nearby. WTC planners should attract potential visitors at all possible points of discovery.

Whether they find out about the Center ahead of time or on the spot, visitors will need sufficient information to plan their time engaging with it. Those planning a visit in advance need to know how to get there, what amenities are available, and what to expect from their time on site. Those who discover the Center more serendipitously will want to quickly assess what experiences are possible, how to access them, how long they might spend on site, what amenities are available, and whether they should engage now or return later.

## ARRIVAL

Visitors will arrive at the WTC on foot; on bicycle, scooter, or skateboard; or by bus, car, or motorcycle, coming in from multiple entry points:

- From the Bruce Vento Regional Trail and into the Sanctuary along the bike trail
- Along Fourth St. from Lowertown
- Down Commercial St. from Mounds Blvd.
- Through the parking lot
- Through the building grounds and into the Sanctuary
- Into and/or through the building

In the longer term, people also might arrive along the planned new trail coming up from the Mississippi River, or down the bluff on the planned staircase that will connect the Sanctuary with Indian Mounds Cemetery.

However they arrive, visitors should feel **safe, welcomed, and comfortable** beginning their experience. Prominent **wayfinding** signage should guide them in and make it clear where and how to enter the site. Visitors will need ample **parking** for bikes, scooters, motorcycles, and cars as well as bus parking and turnaround space for school and tour groups. While accomodating vehicle traffic, the site also should welcome and protect pedestrians with dedicated, interconnected **walkways**.

## ON-SITE EXPERIENCE

The on-site Waḡaŋ Tĭpi Center experience has multiple possible dimensions. Some visitors will engage with only one dimension, some will experience them all in one visit, and others will experience various dimensions across multiple visits.

The on-site possibilities include:

- Engaging with the natural world
- Experiencing the sacred
- Experiencing the site in solitude
- Connecting with other people
- Connecting with plants, animals, and other more-than-human beings
- Experiencing art
- Engaging with interpretive exhibits
- Attending an event
- Participating in a program or activity

Another essential dimension of the WTC experience, particularly for Daḡota and other Indigenous people, will be **traditional lifeway practices**.

This Plan does not make any recommendations regarding ceremony or incorporate it into the interpretive framework that follows. LPCP and WTC leadership and staff will develop plans for these practices outside of this VIEP planning process, in consultation with spiritual leaders and cultural knowledge keepers.

## DEPARTURE AND INTEGRATION

As they depart the site and after they leave, people need opportunities to integrate their experience into their lives and have it shape the ways that they see and act in the world. Visitors might want to better understand what they've experienced, or they might seek other similar experiences. The Center should help visitors put this place in **context** and **connect** it with other natural and culturally significant places in Saint Paul, particularly those with connections to Daḡota history and communities.

Those who come for the exhibits or time in the Sanctuary should have access to **information** about future programming. Those whose time on site makes them want to become involved or take some sort of action should find **guidance** and **encouragement** to make that possible. Most importantly, Daḡota people seeking cultural reconnection will need the Center to be an ongoing resource for **restoring relationships** with their land, language, lifeways, and communities.

# INTERPRETIVE METHODS & MEDIA

This Plan recommends a range of methods and media, from subtle to substantial, to communicate interpretive messaging and create spaces for people to have meaningful experiences on site.

Regardless of the chosen method, these principles should guide future planning and implementation:

- The interpretive features should **rest lightly on the land**.
- Interpretation should **enhance the natural experience** and provide buffers from the sensory encroachment of the industrial, urban surroundings. As one Steering Committee member expressed, it should help visitors **“find the quiet”** in the midst of the city.
- There should be a **shift in the balance** between physical interpretive features and natural environment as visitors move through the site. The quantity, size, and substance of physical features, and their intrusion on the landscape, should decrease as visitors move away from the building and deeper into the Sanctuary.
- Interpretation in and around the building should provide the interpretive context for the overall site experience. Deeper into the Sanctuary, as a Steering Committee member suggested, **“the land speaks for herself.”**
- The interpretation should have an **emotional impact** as well as an intellectual effect.
- The interpretive experience should foster recognition of and respect for **sacred space**.

The following pages provide a menu of options to implement on site, illustrated with precedent images. These images are not prescriptive; they are not meant to be reproduced at the Center exactly as they appear. Rather, they are intended as inspirational examples of what is possible.

## LANDSCAPING

The grounds surrounding the new building will be planted with native, culturally significant plants, particularly those used by Dakota people for food, tools, crafts, arts, and medicine. Landscaping around the building also will feature plants that attract birds and pollinators.

Even without any added interpretive features, on their own these plants communicate messaging about Dakota Homelands, lifeways, teachings, and relationships with plant and animal relatives. Native cultural landscapes also embody the restoration of Indigenous ecosystems and the continuity and renewal of Dakota relationships to this place. Selected plants also will help welcome visitors to the site and enhance the sense of transitioning from the urban industrial surroundings into the natural world.

Cultural landscaping will help define and protect ceremonial spaces. These plants also will contribute to the site’s emotional impact and provide opportunities for educational programming.



Bee balm is a medicinal plant relative that also feeds many pollinators

pixabay.com

## PROGRAMS

The Lower Phalen Creek Project already has been hosting a range of programs in the Sanctuary, including volunteer clean-up and restoration work, guided tours, storytelling, youth activities, and community events like the Pollinator Festival and Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations.

With the construction of the new building and grounds, the programming opportunities will increase significantly. This will be a place for intergenerational sharing and learning. The WTC is especially committed to providing programs for Dakota and other urban Indigenous youth, K-12 and college-level school groups, and local neighborhood residents.

Programming can happen anywhere in and around the building and in the Sanctuary. It can communicate all interpretive themes and topics.



 **GIFTS OF THE COTTONWOOD TREE**  
With Nakota/Dakota Elder Jim Red Eagle  
Wednesday, July 7th, 6:00 - 7:30 pm  lowerphalencreek.org

Programs can connect visitors with Dakota elders and share stories that are tied to the land

## ART

Art will be a significant component of the WTC experience, particularly works by Dakota and other Indigenous artists. Art can convey a sense of welcome and safety, create space for healing, facilitate connection, evoke emotions, and encourage reflection. It can be located indoors or outdoors and communicate all interpretive themes and topics.

Art pieces and elements can be featured prominently inside the new building and in the surrounding grounds, where it will be integrated with landscaping. Art can be part of the design for custom outdoor exhibits and can be incorporated into WTC programming.



At Hemnicar, interpretive panels feature art by Dakota artists

## INTEGRATED INTERPRETIVE DESIGN

Interpretive messaging can be conveyed subtly but effectively by integrating design elements into the indoor and outdoor built environments, e.g., on paved ground surfaces, floor finishes, walls, ceilings, railings, benches, bike racks, and other newly built or existing structures. Integrated design could incorporate art works and elements by Dakota and other Native artists.

A planned art installation by Seitu Jones on the piers of the Kellogg Blvd. bridge that cuts across the northwest end of the WTC will be a large-scale outdoor integrated design feature on site.

Integrated design can communicate much of the site's interpretive messaging. It could feature native plant and animal relatives found in the building grounds and out in the Sanctuary as well as elements related to the theme of water, earth, and sky. Integrating Dakota language onto built surfaces on and around the building is another recommended strategy.



Design elements can be integrated into benches or ground surfaces to help tell a story or reinforce interpretive themes



## MULTIMEDIA INDOOR EXHIBITS

The interior of the new building provides the best location for multimedia exhibits that incorporate text, images, objects, and audiovisual media, as well as physical and digital interactive features. Power sources and internet access are readily available indoors and lighting, temperature, and humidity can be controlled. Exhibit structures and equipment will not be exposed to the elements and will be easier to maintain.

Keeping the most physically substantial and high-tech interpretive features inside the building also allows the interpretation to rest more lightly on the landscape and prevents it from competing with or overwhelming the experience of nature and sacred space in the Sanctuary.



Colors, textures, photographs, and art can bring nature indoors and provide context for the outdoor experience



Interactive exhibits do not have to be digital; physical, tactile elements also engage visitors in exploration and learning

## CUSTOM OUTDOOR EXHIBITS

Interpretive exhibits will communicate more extensive or in-depth messaging than an art work or integrated design can carry. Outside of the building, however, there are concerns about imposing on or overwhelming the landscape and detracting from the experience of nature and sacred space. Standard National Park Service-style wayside exhibits or text-heavy panels also would not be culturally relevant or aesthetically appropriate here. Custom outdoor exhibits are therefore recommended for this site.

Custom-designed and fabricated exhibits offer more flexibility in shape, size, profile, and materials than standard waysides. In addition to the content, their form and design can express or reinforce messaging and shape the visitor's emotional experience. Tactile components make interpretive content more accessible for sight-impaired visitors and more engaging for everyone.



Custom outdoor exhibits at Hemniçay catch visitors' interest with their imposing size and striking forms



A custom shape attached to a wayside panel adds dimension and reinforces interpretive content

## CUSTOM OUTDOOR EXHIBITS (CONT.)



Images and textures tell a story about people's relationship to the land, even without much text



3D tactile exhibits make interpretive content more accessible and engaging

## SMALL SIGNS OR MARKERS

In places where some information or identification would be helpful but the interpretation should remain minimal, small signs or low-profile markers can serve the purpose. In the building grounds, markers could identify plant names in Dakota, English, and other languages spoken by East Side Saint Paul residents. Small signs could feature photographs or illustrations of the foods or medicines made from particular plants.

In the Sanctuary, small signs can identify features like the caves, the springs, and the cliff, and invite people to visit the exhibits in and around the building to learn more. Markers can remind people to respect the sacred.



Small markers can encourage respect for sacred places

# AUDIO

Throughout the planning process, there has been widespread enthusiasm among LPCP staff and Steering Committee members for audio as an interpretive media of choice. Audio features can be incorporated into indoor multimedia exhibits or custom outdoor exhibits. They can accompany integrated design elements on structures like benches, walls, or bike racks in or around the building.

Solar or hand-cranked audio posts are low-profile interpretive features that rest lightly on the landscape. Heavy-duty handsets can be used to keep the sound localized. A self-guided audio tour is a viable program option.

The voices of Dakota people—in particular, elders—speaking the language, expressing their knowledge, and sharing stories and songs will resonate emotionally and bring the site to life. Where interpretive exhibits include text in Dakota, visitors can hear the words pronounced. In selected places, audio also could enhance the natural sounds of birds, insects, frogs, water, and wind in the trees to counteract the noises of the surrounding city.



Audio features can be subtle or eye-catching, solar-powered or activated by a hand-cranked wheel

# INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE ZONES

This Plan maps the on-site experience across four interpretive zones. Each zone provides a distinctive experience through its combination of location, landscape, features, sensory and emotional qualities, interpretive messages, methods, and media.

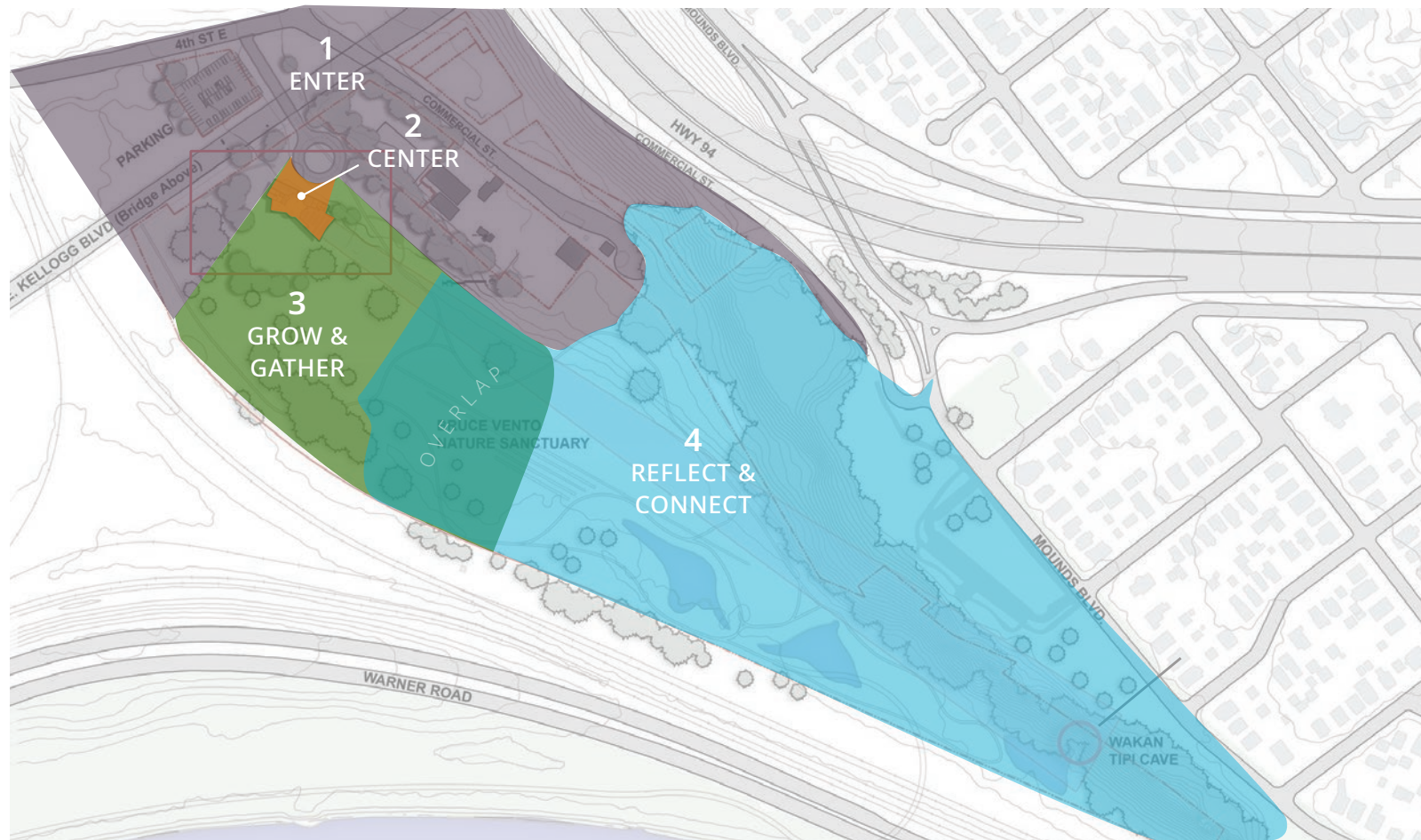
**Zone 1: Enter**

**Zone 2: Center**

**Zone 3: Grow & Gather**

**Zone 4: Reflect & Connect**

These are not hard and fast borders. Transitions between zones are subtle shifts within an overall cohesive experience. The edges between Zones 3 and 4 are particularly porous, and there is an area of experiential overlap between them. Zone characteristics will change according to time of day, season, and circumstances, including who is there and what is taking place.



# ZONE MAP: BUILDING & GROUNDS



# ZONE DESCRIPTIONS

## Zone 1: Enter

In this zone, visitors arrive at the WTC site, become oriented to it, and enter their experience. For some who arrive serendipitously, this zone also includes their discovery of the site itself. The zone includes the routes by which visitors approach the site as well as the paths by which they enter it.

### LANDSCAPE & FEATURES

There are a lot of paved surfaces and built structures as well as roads, bike trails, and pedestrian paths. There is ample parking for cars, bikes, and scooters and good lighting for safety. The building is clearly visible and anchors the view. Landscaping provides some softening of the hard surfaces, and the concentration of native plants and curved lines increases as visitors near the building. The plants provide welcome and enhance the sense of transitioning into a protected space.

### SENSES & EMOTIONS

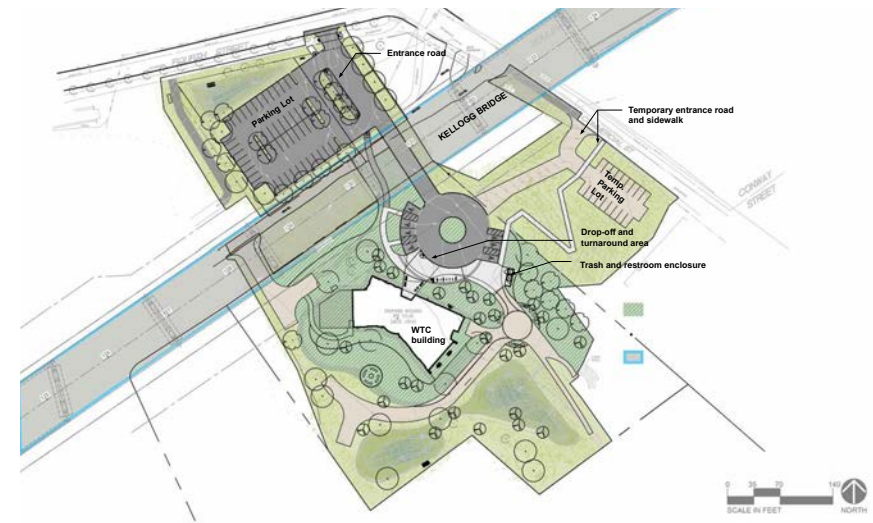
All visitors will feel a sense of Dakota welcome and hospitality:  
Yahipi Kiŋ Wašte! (Welcome, it is good that you are here!)

This zone is full of discovery and anticipation. It is a transitional area that transports visitors from the industrial city into sacred gathering space. People can see, feel, hear, and smell that they are moving into a different kind of place. There is a sense of care and comfort as their needs are met.

For Dakota people and others with ancestral connections to this place, the **Enter** zone provides a sense of homecoming and joyful return. For those who are coming to the Center for a cultural gathering, it begins to bring them into ceremonial space.



Courtesy Full Circle Planning, 2021



Courtesy Full Circle Planning, 2021

Concept sketches show the routes and paths by which visitors might enter the site (Details might change as the design continues to develop)

## Zone 2: Center

The **Center** zone focuses on the new WTC building: its exterior and interior and the area immediately surrounding its entrance. For those who visit the building, this zone centers their experience, providing introduction, orientation, and context. It will have the largest concentration of interpretive features, including those that are the most physically substantial. The zone also provides a hub for gathering and programming.

### LANDSCAPE & FEATURES

The central feature of this zone is the building itself, both its exterior surfaces and structures and the interior space. There is a mix of plants, art, and interpretive exhibits. The zone is colorful and inviting.

Digital technology is used thoughtfully and sparingly. The emphasis is on human interaction through art, programming, story, and lifeways.

### SENSES & EMOTIONS

This zone is lively, active, social, and energetic. It is full of different sensory experiences, and it engages visitors' minds, hearts, and bodies. Like the Enter zone, it actively welcomes people into the Center, the Sanctuary, and the experiences they offer and provides a sense of safety, care, and comfort.

The WTC does not feel like a museum. It is a living cultural and environmental learning center and a place for gathering and the practice of cultural traditions.



The WTC building will be integrated with the landscape and inspired by Dakota culture (Details might change as the design continues to develop)



### Zone 3: Grow & Gather

This zone surrounds the exterior of the new WTC building, encompassing the building grounds, and extends into the west end of the Sanctuary. Landscaping and built structures provide inviting gathering spaces. Cultural foods and medicines grow in the gardens around the building and out in the Sanctuary. Programs and cultural events offer opportunities to gather in community.

There are multiple interpretive features here, including art, custom outdoor exhibits, and small signs and markers, though the exhibits are less physically substantial than in the Center zone. Interpretive features are integrated with the native plantings and built environment in the building grounds and blend with the landscape as visitors move into the Sanctuary.

The **Grow & Gather** zone intersects and overlaps with **Reflect & Connect** as visitors move through the Sanctuary.

#### LANDSCAPE & FEATURES

This zone features the landscaped native plants surrounding the building as well as the cottonwood and oak trees on the west end of the Sanctuary. Near the building, it includes the fire circle, sweat lodge, and gathering spaces for exhibits, education, and programming. In the Sanctuary, it includes the cottonwood and oak trees and eagle's nest.

#### SENSES & EMOTIONS

This space is generative, regenerative, and social. It encourages active discovery and sharing of knowledge and experiences. Visitors' sense of connection and understanding grows the longer they spend time here. They notice the shifts in the landscape as they transition from the building exterior, through the grounds, and into the Sanctuary.



This zone is a place for gathering and connection with plant and human relatives

## Zone 4: Reflect & Connect

This zone takes visitors into the heart of the Sanctuary, from its middle section down to the east end near Waḡaḡ Țipi cave. There are trails to wander and places for elders and others to rest along the way: comfortable benches with backs and other scattered seating made from wood and stone recovered on site.

There are minimal interpretive features in this zone, and they are subtle, low-profile, and integrated so they do not distract people from connecting with the land. Small signs identify key landscape features and encourage respectful behavior. Interpretation along the railroad tracks on the south edge of the Sanctuary helps visitors envision the now-obscured connection to Wakpa Țaḡka (the Mississippi River). This might take the form of transparent panels, integrated into fencing or seating, that superimpose images of the historic landscape over the current view.

The **Reflect & Connect** zone overlaps with **Grow & Gather** as visitors move through the Sanctuary.

### LANDSCAPE & FEATURES

This zone is immersed in the landscapes of the Sanctuary. Visitors are surrounded by plant and animal relatives, the springs and ponds, and the bluff. Yet there also are visible and audible reminders of the site's industrial past and present. City noise and industrial infrastructure reveal how urbanization has damaged this sacred place. The buildings of downtown Saint Paul and the Minnesota State Capitol building can be seen from some places in the Sanctuary.

Features include the plants and trees, limestone and sandstone bluffs, springs and ponds, Waḡaḡ Țipi cave, and the maḡa paha on the bluff. There also are the brewery cave, Dayton's Bluff cave, and railroad pad remnants.

### SENSES & EMOTIONS

This is a space for visitors to connect with nature and reflect on what is around them as well as what they learned elsewhere on site. It is a place for quiet listening and contemplation. Those who seek solitude and introspection will find it here. Returning visitors will notice how the environment shifts from morning to evening and with the changing seasons.

Daḡota and other Indigenous people with connections to this place will feel the presence of their ancestors. Anyone who opens their heart will feel the presence of the sacred.

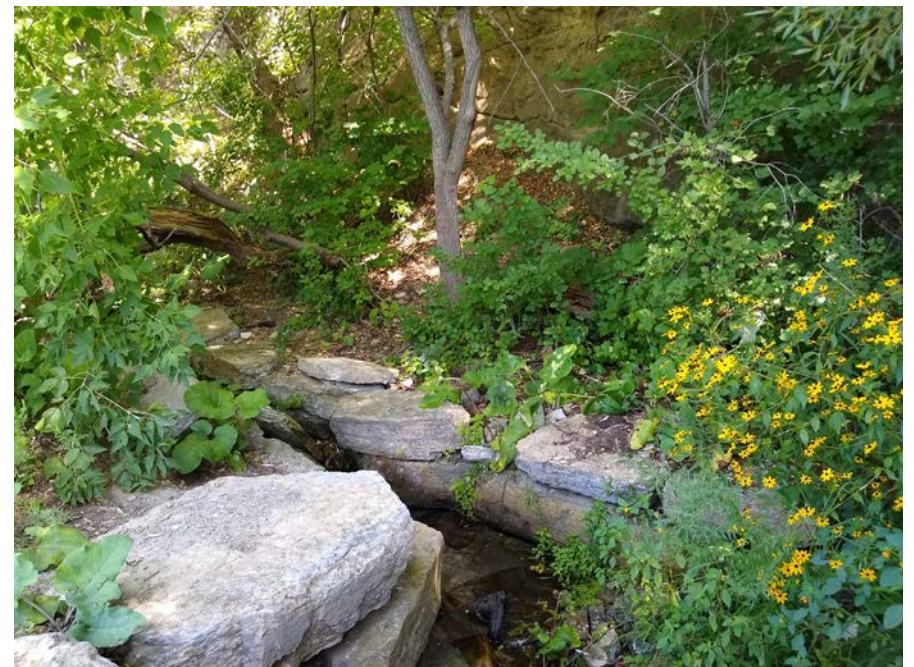
At the same time, the sights and sounds of the modern, industrial city surround and encroach on this peaceful place: bridges, highways, traffic, airplanes, trains, and railroad tracks. Scattered, low-profile audio features subtly enhance the sounds of birds, insects, trickling water, and wind in the trees to help people stay connected to the natural world.

When used for programming, this zone also can be more active and social. People will strengthen their family and community connections as they spend time restoring and caring for the land and water.



Community members restore the native landscape, one plant at a time

Courtesy LPCP



In Zone 4, visitors are immersed in nature yet surrounded by the industrial city

# ZONE MESSAGING, METHODS & MEDIA

ZONE	INTERPRETIVE MESSAGING		INTERPRETIVE METHODS & MEDIA										
	THEMES	TOPICS	Landscaping	Programs	Art	Integrated interpretive design	Multimedia indoor exhibits	Custom outdoor exhibits	Small signs or markers	Audio			
ENTER	People & Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Dakota Oyate &amp; Oçeti Šakowin</li> <li>• Dakota Homelands</li> <li>• Language &amp; land</li> </ul>	X		X	X		X		X			
CENTER	All themes	All topics	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
GROW & GATHER	All themes	All topics	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			
REFLECT & CONNECT	People & Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language &amp; land</li> <li>• Dakota lifeways</li> </ul>											
	Plant & Animal Relatives	All topics									X	X	X
	Water, Earth & Sky	All topics											