The history of Minneapolis, and of Bde Maka Ska, is woven through the stories of many people who have traversed these lands and these waters. In a pluralist society, no one story is more true or more valuable than another. Dakota cosmology refers to Etu, the personification of time; this proposal uses Etu as a springpoint for design: a place of many paths, many choices, many uses, many stories. Getting to know this place requires you to move: up, down, over, across, and through, a journey that can be shared, crossed, and remembered.

The sloping site allows the building to be sunk into the ground so the gateway to Bde Maka Ska is a 2.5 degree sloped, planted roof sprinkled with story poles: colorful installations with stories of the people and cultures who have contributed to this land. The story poles draw on the vibrant, electric nature of the Uptown area, with an adjacent orientation space with maps and event plaza of colored concrete. Land and sky are framed by the cantilevered roof, while cutouts in the boardwalk and in the roof allow for views up and down to the water and to the sky.

A wetland edge restores the lake, while a wild rice field serves as demonstration, ecological management, and a source for the kitchen. The facility can be used year-round, with restrooms that can be separated and kept open, and a dining area that opens to outdoor seating. The building's gestures honor the land, the water, the earth, and the sky.