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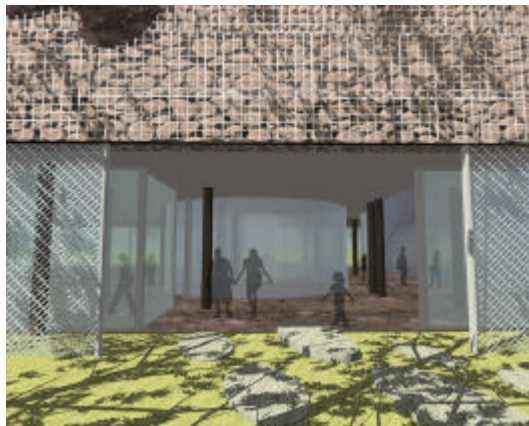
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Our proposal for the Ford Calumet Environmental Center has evolved from our research to thoroughly understand the Calumet region, the impact that the past century has had on its natural habitat, and the kind of awareness that is required for our culture to move forward in a responsible way. The programmatic objective is to provide an environment where people from age 3 to 103 can improve their understand of the historical value of the area and more importantly the value of the natural cycles of earth, water, plant and animal life that flow through the area. Therefore, our building hopes to become a

responsible part of the natural cycle. In the past decades buildings have become ever more mechanized and closed to the natural environment. These structures have interrupted the natural cycles by becoming virtually impenetrable. We offer an alternative occupation and understanding of the earth. A portion of the site is extracted to reveal the subsurface value of the earth and exhibit its organic processes. The act of the extraction creates a condition that generates curiosity, stimulates investigation, and encourages understanding of our impact on and our use of the natural environment. The building creates an event, which makes its site the activity, unlike a traditional building that creates an environment to enclose a set of activities.

As a tectonic idea, the building marries natural materials with industrial technologies to optimize them with the reliability that comes with contemporary advances in building science. The careful choreography of natural and industrial materials also produces an educational building that benefits from thermal mass, natural ventilation, sun lighting and water filtration. The building gently adjusts to natural fluctuations and dynamically demonstrates that filtering and recharging of resources can be a model for building systems. Therefore, the building processes and the act of its construction becomes a tangible and logical extension of the exhibits in and around it.

While the building is memorable as a levitating mass, it is also selectively permeable. Water will flow through the building's walls, be collected, used and cleaned before being released back into nature. The exterior enclosure will respond physically to seasonal change. Plants grown in the

marsh machine and on the building will continually transform the building as the site around it is restored and transformed. Sounds, scents and views of the wetlands will permeate the buildings exterior walls constantly reinforcing a sense of connection to natural cycles.

