UMore Park is a plot of land, located just south of Rosemount, Minnesota, that is currently owned by the University of Minnesota. In decades to come, there are plans to develop the area, creating an entirely new community, comprised of six districts. The new proposal is currently referred to the “UMore Master Plan.”

This semester, we had the unique opportunity to work with the professionals currently dedicated to developing the UMore Master Plan. Over the last few months, our time was consumed by researching, critiquing, and designing the various elements that comprise the Master Plan.
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We kicked off the beginning of the semester by paying a visit to what is currently known as UMore Park. We spent the day on a “treasure hunt,” allowing us to discover not only the site itself, but some of the history that lies beneath. Based upon our site visit, we then created experiential models and diagrams, depicting our feelings towards the site in its current state.
Once we had our initial reactions regarding the site out, we then jumped in and began a session of intense research. All aspects of the site were looked into, from the history to water tables, even to the site’s sources of energy. My group looked researched and analyzed the demographics of the site, as well as the surrounding communities.
After obtaining a thorough understanding of the site in its present and previous states, we moved forward and began to analyze the proposed ideas of the site. We were able to accomplish this by modeling the proposed design of UMore Park. Our studio class broke into groups, and each group focused on modeling one of the six districts, that, when put together, would create the UMore Master Plan in its entirety. My group, comprised of William Alt and myself, modeled District 5, which is also known as the “Marina” district.
Preceding the completion of our model, Richard Strong from the Center for Sustainable Building Research came in and gave a lecture regarding sustainable housing and developments. With the knowledge obtained from Richard’s lecture, we then were given the opportunity to redesign the district that we previously model, and we also started to develop neighborhoods within our districts.
Excelsior, MN

Dividing Agents

Road Orientation
By this point in the semester, we had spent a significant amount of time enveloped in UMore Park. So, we took a step back and each researched different precedents that had qualities similar to our districts. I researched Excelsior, Minnesota, which actually was a precedent that had previously been looked into when the preliminary design of District 5 had begun.
District 5/Excelsior Overlay

Excelsior Site Section
Using concepts and ideas from our precedents, we jumped back in to UMore for another revision of our districts. We also began to further develop neighborhoods within our district through models that exemplified our driving factors that were shaping our district designs.
With one last push forward, we developed our site plans further before our midterm review. Through a series of models and drawings, we touched on the issues that were important to our design as our plans started to come together. For District 5, some of the important issues were the lake, the natural vs. man-made boundaries, as well as public and private areas.
Upon completion of the midterm review, we zoomed even further into the site and began designing a dwelling for a lot within our district. In order to decide which type of housing was most appropriate for our site, we studied the characteristics of several different types, and diagramed their various components.
Moving forward, we chose one of the housing types previously researched, and created a program for that specific type. We allotted specific square footages for each room in the dwelling, and then began creating spatial diagrams depicting how rooms may relate to one another. We allotted specific square footages for each room in the dwelling, and then began creating spatial diagrams depicting how rooms may relate to one another.
Once we had a general idea of how large we wanted our dwelling unit to be, we began creating parti diagrams, both in plan and section. Through the parti diagrams, we were able to see how rooms would actually be laid out, and whether or not different arrangements would actually be realistic. Throughout this process, we also created several models that depicted our diagrams in 3D form.
Due to the great successes we found when we researched precedents for site work, we decided to do the same when it came to housing. Originally, I had decided to focus on rowhouses, so I researched a rowhouse type live/work dwelling unit located in Berlin, Germany. Similar to our previous precedent study, we were able to depict the main, underlying themes and ideas of the project through a series of models and drawings.
Section 1

West Elevation

Section 2
Precedent Model

Floor Plans

Space Uses
Site Plan Options
When our dwelling design was becoming more concrete, we stepped back for a moment to look at the site on which it would be located. In my particular case, I settled on an arrangement where the building would be repeated throughout the site, although it took quite some time to come to this conclusion.
As we neared the home stretch, we then closed in even more and started to get very specific with our designs. We created a series of entry models, showing the different lighting, textural, and spatial qualities of our entryways. Through these models we were able to define ways in which entries could be distinguished from the rest of the house, and in my personal case, how I could differentiate between public and private solely through the use of materials.
With all of our work now being focused on our final review, we created drawings and models depicting our designs and ideas. Floor plans were included to show the layout of the space, as well as the practicality of it. A site plan was created to show our building within context, and models were created to bring our building to life.
Building Perspective

Section Perspective

Southwest Elevation  Northwest Elevation
To see our projects come together was a very rewarding experience. So much time had been invested in these projects, and it was very evident in the final results. Personally, I do not think the outcome would have been nearly as successful without all of the time we spent learning about the site and its history, because that is what so many of our ideas sprung from.

I really enjoyed being able to complete the process in the way we did. Without the previous knowledge of the site, I would have had no idea where to begin in my design. However, because of what we learned, I knew exactly what direction I wanted to proceed.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this semester. We had enough guidance to know what we needed to do, yet we were given enough room for our creativity to blossom. Without this flexibility, our designs, I believe, would have been stifled. In the time given, we learned a tremendous amount, and I sincerely believe that each one of us is extremely happy with what we have created.