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U of M creating vision for UMore Park's future

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By Janet Kubat Willette

Agri News staff writer

ROSEMOUNT, Minn. -- The University of Minnesota is creating a vision for the future of UMore Park.

UMore Park is a 7,686 acre university-owned property 25 miles south of the Twin Cities in Dakota County.

Before World War II, the property was described as "the Garden Spot of Minnesota" by a farmer who was sent packing when the government acquired 11,500 acres for a government-owned, contractor-operated defense plant. In all, 84 farm families were displaced.

Construction of the plant, Gopher Ordnance Works, began in May 1942. Farm buildings were demolished or removed. Black-and-white photographs from the era show a busy place with railroads, roads and power lines crisscrossing the land. Nondescript buildings sit beside the roads, power lines and railroads.

There were to be six production lines, explains Greg Cuomo, who is director of operations at UMore Park, but only one line came into full production. Production began in January 1945 and ended in October.

In 1947 and 1948, title to the property was transferred to the University of Minnesota.

The university has used the property for a variety of research efforts through the years, beginning with public health and aeronautical projects in 1946. Most recently, the property has been home to agricultural research.

The university has a beef cow herd, crop production



research and the state's only turkey production research facilities. Land is also rented to individual tenants, including a cabinet maker, Hmong farmers and airplane hobbyists.

Now, the university wants to clear the land again and start anew.

Charles Muscoplat, vice president for statewide strategic resource development, is charged with developing a vision for a new university community at UMore Park.

The goal, according to a Strategic Planning Steering Committee report titled "Creating the Vision The Future of UMore Park," is to "maximize the value of the property as a way of substantially growing the university endowment."

The committee recommends the university "transform its property into a unique, vibrant, intellectually and culturally rich, sustainable community with attendant amenities."

It's up to Muscoplat to chart that course and determine what the community will look like.