

The Vision for the UMore Park Property: Serving the Public, Transforming the U

A Summary of Planning Activities
November 2006 – June 2008

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

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In order to secure Minnesota's economic future, we must find new ways to stabilize and strengthen University funding while ensuring affordability and accountability. We need a new approach to financing our future – a principled approach based upon clear priorities, predictable outcomes, and a strong partnership with the state, one that supports a long-term vision for our future.

-- Robert H. Bruininks, President
March 6, 2008

The goal of the University of Minnesota is to become one of the top three public research universities in the world. In his March 2008 State of the University address *The Challenge of Change*, President Robert H. Bruininks emphasized that “we do not aspire to rank, but to stature” as the University pursues transformative change in this time of challenging societal issues and economic uncertainty.

The University of Minnesota is the state's sole public research institution. Created in 1851 and predating the establishment of the State of Minnesota by seven years, the University was “founded in the faith that men are ennobled by understanding, dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth, devoted to the instruction of youth and the welfare of the state (inscription on Northrop Memorial Auditorium, adopted by the Board of Regents, 1939).” The University is already an institution of noted national stature. However, it strives to continuously enhance quality within its core, tripartite mission of research, education and public engagement. The University has declared its goal of becoming among the top three public research institutions in the world. Four elements are essential for the University to achieve its goal: (1) Exceptional students, (2) exceptional faculty and staff members, (3) exceptional organization and (4) exceptional innovation.

The pursuit of the vision for a University-founded community at UMore Park offers a once-ever, unique opportunity. This vision, carried forward by a concept master planning process, addresses four overarching characteristics:

1. **Stewardship.** The University is committed to the best management of the UMore Park property, its natural resources and amenities, and its future uses.
2. **Legacy.** The University, an institution of the historic academy that spans the centuries, is committed to the research and discovery, and the teaching and learning that can be uniquely enhanced through UMore Park to bring value to generations upon generations of Minnesotans.
3. **Mission.** Future returns on investments that the University generates from the development of the UMore Park property would be directed toward support of the academic mission of the University in perpetuity, assuring benefits that will continue to flow from the creation of new knowledge.

4. Economic development. The University is committed to approaches to planning and development that add value to the region through job creation, workforce development, business development, entrepreneurial opportunities and education and lifelong learning.

The planning and development of the UMore Park property and the management of the Vermillion Highlands natural area adjacent and to the south is the unparalleled opportunity to serve the public and to transform the University into a top-three public institution.

A Vision, Shared

The desire to do better spawned an idea. The goal to steward a special gift generated momentum. The public discussion of a new vision created possibilities, enthusiasm and the initial partnership interests that can transform vision into reality.

The University of Minnesota vision is to build a community at the University of Minnesota Outreach, Research and Education (UMore) Park, a 5,000-acre site 25 miles southeast of the Twin Cities at the suburban-rural interface, near Rosemount, Minnesota. This 25- to 30-year endeavor was presented to the Board of Regents in November 2006. UMore Park is among the largest contiguous properties in the United States that is owned by a land grant university. The concept master planning phase of development for a unique, vibrant, intellectually and culturally rich, sustainable community of 20,000 to 30,000 people was launch in November 2007.

The Board of Regents in late 2006 carefully considered three plausible options to determine the management strategy for its valuable asset. The options were to (1) delay action and hold the land without development, (2) sell undeveloped land in small parcels at wholesale prices or (3) initiate concept master planning to develop a new community that embodies research, education and public engagement.

The Board of Regents determined that the University bore a responsibility to add value to the property and help to create something exceptional in the state. The Board of Regents developed guiding principles to anchor the planning and development process in transparency, quality and integrity. It required the best thinking of University faculty, the inspiration of students and broad public engagement. Following the Board of Regents directive to make the land ready for development, the University has moved forward with the concept master planning by engaging a nationally recognized consultant team and conducting an academic mission analysis, an aggregate assessment, an environmental site assessment in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an Environmental Impact Statement, comprehensive planning with local jurisdictions and a joint management plan for the 2,822-acre natural area called Vermillion Highlands.

Now, the University brings forward four scenarios to be considered for further concept master planning. The scenarios are evaluated against six criteria that stem from guiding principles developed by the Board of Regents. The criteria are:

- Sustainability and innovation,
- Natural resource stewardship,
- Economic development in the region,
- Partnerships,
- Financial returns to the University, and
- University legacy.

In his State of the University address, President Bruininks stated, “Our challenge is to evolve in a way that builds on our historic strengths and public responsibilities. I believe the University is meeting that challenge every day – but we cannot simply tread water....We are subject to changing tides and fortunes like anyone else. We must continue to propel ourselves forward with bold strokes toward our goal.”

As the University adds value to the UMore Park property through planning and development, it will create new opportunities. For the academic enterprise. For the region. For the state.

History of the Property

In 1942 and 1943, the U.S. War Department acquired about 12,000 acres of farmland in Dakota County for the construction of the Gopher Ordnance Works (GOW). The GOW facility was designed to manufacture smokeless gun powder and related products, assisting the war effort by producing a propellant for American military ordnance. Production commenced in January 1945 and ceased in October 1945.

Title to 8,000 acres of the property was transferred to the University in two stages, in August 1947 and in March 1948. In 1948-1949, the Rosemount Agricultural Experiment Station – now known as the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center – was established, joining five others across the state to engage University researchers in regional agricultural projects. In addition to approximately 600 to 900 acres of the property devoted to agricultural research annually, the University has also leased land over time to local farmers and commercial concerns. Currently, the University has short-term leases with 44 tenants.

Regents' Actions

At its November 10, 2005, meeting, the Board of Regents recognized the potential of UMore Park as an asset that supports the University’s goal of becoming among the top three public research institutions in the world. The Regents discussed “the need to determine the highest and best land use consistent with the institution’s academic mission” and to explore opportunities that can ensure revenues that will further support the long-term mission of the University – research, education and engagement.

On February 9, 2006, the Regents confirmed Sasaki Associates, Inc., of Boston, as the consultant that would assist the University’s UMore Park Steering Committee with

strategic planning. The Board of Regents also provided key principles that would guide the planning of a new future for UMore Park. The goal was to undertake an inclusive process to create a vision and new opportunities for UMore Park that support the fundamental academic mission of the University while also adding value to a legacy endowment and to the region and its communities. The vision would emphasize the University's nationally recognized leadership in education, sustainability, and the range of quality research that contributes to quality of life for people, their families and their communities.

The strategic planning report *UMore Park Strategic Plan* by Sasaki Associates was completed in October 2006. It addressed the strategic planning process, site analysis, market analysis and development strategy, and program and physical plan options. Subsequently, the UMore Park Strategic Planning Steering Committee recommendations report entitled *Creating the Vision: The Future of UMore Park* was accepted by the Board of Regents in November 2006. Both reports and related information on the UMore Park property are at www.umorepark.umn.edu.

UMore Park

In December 2006 the Board of Regents voted unanimously to pursue concept master planning on its Dakota County land. The vision is to transform the property into a unique, vibrant, intellectually and culturally rich, sustainable community with attendant amenities. The community ultimately would include residential, retail and industrial areas and significant amounts of green space. Most important, the community would be notably distinctive through the University's unique imprimatur of education and discovery that brings quality of life to individuals and their families. Hallmarks of the values contributed through the University academic mission include the integrated elements of education, health, energy, environment, transportation and interdisciplinary strengths. The development of a community would provide the pathway to:

- A unique and lasting University legacy of discovery and research-based education that helps to sustain people and communities in the region over the generations;
- A vital regional economy that is characterized by enriched communities, thriving businesses, and educational, social and natural amenities;
- An attractive locale to live in, work in and visit that incorporates University research and education to achieve quality of life, innovation, a sense of place, close connection with the natural environment and sustainability; and
- A growing University endowment that supports the academic mission in perpetuity.

Concept master planning has proceeded with the assistance of the developer-consultant team Design Workshop, Inc., of Aspen, Colorado and the support of neighboring jurisdictions: The City of Rosemount, Empire Township and Dakota County.

Vermillion Highlands

The University has long recognized the south portion of its property as an ecological jewel that should be preserved as it integrates into the fabric of the larger property and the surrounding region. Following the Board of Regents action to approve a land/stadium plan in March 2006, the property was established as a research, recreation and wildlife management area in May 2006 by legislation and signed into law by the Governor of Minnesota. The law provides for the state to acquire the 2,822-acre property in 2032 following a contribution of approximately \$10.25 million each year over 25 years toward the construction of the Gopher football stadium on campus.

The University retains its right to use the land for its research, education and public engagement mission in perpetuity. By resolution, the Board of Regents in June 2007 approved the name of the property, formally called *Vermillion Highlands: A Research, Recreation and Wildlife Management Area*.

Guiding Principles for Planning and Development

As the strategic planning phase for the property was launched in early 2006, the Board of Regents on Feb. 6, 2006, provided overarching principles to guide the University's planning and development efforts. The Regents stated:

The goal is to develop UMore Park in a manner that furthers the University's mission. A strategic long-range master plan for UMore Park will be developed that prioritizes University needs and considers current regional planning and development activities. This master plan will be developed in a timely manner, but the execution of the plan and the development of the UMore Park property is likely to require as much as 25 years.

The following principles shall guide deliberations and decisions regarding UMore Park:

- Protect and enhance the value of UMore Park through timely planning and action.
- Advance the University's research, education, and engagement mission through the physical and financial resources that UMore Park will provide over the long term.
- Improve the long-term financial health of the University through application of sound fiscal principles and stewardship, including investing the income generated through UMore Park in ways that support academic priorities to complement, supplement, and leverage state and private support.
- Retain oversight of UMore Park's planning and development and remain accountable for the master plan.

- Plan in such a way so as to optimize the value of UMore Park utilizing short-term strategies without restricting options for long-term strategies.
- Utilize market value as a benchmark in assessing alternative development strategies.
- Ensure that all planning and development activities are conducted with the highest standards of fairness, integrity, and sound business practice.
- Respect the needs of neighboring communities and local, regional, and state governments.

Regents' Directive

The Board of Regents in its December 2006 resolution directed the University administration to undertake the following steps, consistent with the guiding principles:

1. Continue to maintain the UMore Park development property as an intact whole parcel and use it in a manner that supports the University's teaching, research and outreach mission while the University plans for the future use of the entire property;
2. Prepare for consideration by the Board of Regents a concept master plan for the entire parcel, and periodically confer with the appropriate local and regional units of government engaged in preparing comprehensive plans regarding the University's master planning effort;
3. Prepare to make the land ready for development, including the following:
 - (a) Preparing a plan for the removal of concrete remnants from the former Gopher Ordnance Works buildings;
 - (b) Preparing a plan for the extraction of sand and gravel from the site; and
 - (c) Taking appropriate steps to secure a site investigation of the property by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leading to the development of plans for any necessary environmental remediation related to the Gopher Ordnance Works.

Pursing the Vision for a New Community

Through its UMore Park Management Team and its UMore Park Executive Committee, the University has pursued planning and development consistent with the Board of Regents three-part resolution of December 2006. Over the past 18 months, all

components of the Regent’s directive have been addressed. Work to date that corresponds to each of the three components of the resolution is described below.

Part I. The Whole of the Property, Academic Mission

The Regents directed in the first component of the resolution that the University “continue to maintain the UMore Park development property as an intact whole parcel and use it in a manner that supports the University’s teaching, research and outreach mission while the University plans for the future use of the entire property.”

Planning for the Whole

Subsequently, concept master planning was initiated for both the northerly 5,000 acres of the property and for the 2,822-acre Vermillion Highlands (jointly with the DNR and Dakota County). Although these processes are separate and distinct, the University and its collaborators have been attentive to the inherent relationships of the properties. Linkages have been emphasized both through connectors such as wildlife corridors, greenways, and trails and through the properties’ overall complementary values of residential and commercial development balanced with the expanse of natural open space.

The University is managing the UMore Park property intact. In fact, discussions are under way to potentially expand the open space that Vermillion Highlands offers the public via development of an adjacent Dakota County regional park. To that end, on May 20, 2008, the Dakota County Commissioners approved purchase of adjacent property referred to as the Butler property that will contribute to additional park and recreation areas for the public. The partners anticipate that taken together, a total of nearly 4,000 acres of land will be committed for public use (see *Vermillion Highlands* section below).

Academic Mission

Nearly 100 members of the University community participated on six academic mission tasks forces from May 2007 through December 2007 to explore ways that University research, education and public engagement could add value to the envisioned new community at UMore Park. The task forces engaged citizens via six public listening sessions in September 2007 and faculty, student and staff through two Twin Cities campus forums in November 2007. More than 450 citizens and nearly 300 members of the University community engaged with the task forces and offered their perspectives.

Ideas for ways that research, education and public engagement could be incorporated in the planning and development of the property – now and over time – are recorded in the 128-page report *Distinctiveness through Academic Mission* (March 2008). Ideas are highlighted under the broad priority areas of education, energy, the environment, health and wellness, transportation and interdisciplinary opportunities, including arts and culture, diversity, housing, emerging technologies, and partnerships.

The planner-developer consultant team subsequently created an academic mission matrix to characterize the ideas that emanated from the task force report. This matrix has been used as a measure for evaluating the capacity of the concept master planning scenarios to incorporate academic mission that engages University faculty and students and adds value and innovation to the community.

Academic Mission Advisory Board. A UMore Park Academic Mission Advisory Board is being established to help ensure that University research, education and public engagement are integrated into planning and development of the properties and that students and faculty are aware of the opportunities that planning and development offer for learning and discovery. A nominations and appointment process for membership to the Board, which will be composed of faculty, students and staff members, will be concluded in Summer 2008.

The following principles guide the integration of research, education and public engagement into the planning and development of UMore Park and Vermillion Highlands:

- Create awareness of the research and education opportunities that exist for faculty members and students during all phases of planning and development at UMore Park.
- Support the creativity of faculty research and discovery that pursues unanswered questions and creates new knowledge, through both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.
- Optimize opportunities to foster student projects, new curricula and models for experiential learning that contribute to learning opportunities for students during planning and development and in the community setting.
- Encourage research collaborations and partnerships that extend into the private and nonprofit sectors as well as across University departments and campuses.
- Engage citizens and surrounding communities in discussions of potential research contributions and the creation of opportunities for research and education that bring innovation and distinctiveness to the new community and the region.
- Coordinate the process for research and education endeavors to best facilitate faculty, student and community interactions around research projects and teaching and learning experiences.

Part II. The Concept Master Plan

The second component of the Regent's December 2006 resolution directed the University to "prepare for consideration by the Board of Regents a concept master plan for the entire parcel, and periodically confer with the appropriate local and regional units of government engaged in preparing comprehensive plans regarding the University's master planning effort."

UMore Park

The Design Workshop consultant team commenced work in November 2007. The team analyzed the physical characteristics of the northerly 5,000 acre property; infrastructure,

transportation and utilities; remnants of the former Gopher Ordnance Works; aggregate resources; jurisdictional interests; academic mission strengths; the market and economics. They generated initially 30 potential development themes for the UMore Park property. With input from citizens and the local jurisdictions – City of Rosemount, Empire Township, Dakota County and the Metropolitan Council – and the University’s UMore Park leadership, scenarios were refined as more data was incorporated into the planning. Now, seven months later, four concept scenarios are brought forward for public comment and consideration. The scenarios present possibilities and potentials. With public input and additional assessment, a preferred scenario can be refined and enhanced over time.

The four scenarios are described as:

1. **A traditional master planned community.** Provides a baseline case that follows current standards and typical best practices,
2. **A new urban center.** Contains residential densities necessary to support public transit – bus rapid transit and/or light rail transit. Transit in turn allows for the creation of a major community “center” with multi-story mixed-use buildings.
3. **A life style community.** Incorporates major amenities within the community, including lakes (created following potential gravel extraction), large community gardens, parks and municipal golf courses.
4. **A new sustainable community.** Pairs a business and research park with the master planned community to help ensure employment for residents as the community develops. Features a diverse mix of housing choices, rail transit, amenities and sustainability initiatives that are built upon University research education and public engagement in the community and beyond.

The scenarios are described in detail in the report *Interim Brief: Concept Scenarios for UMore Park, Design Workshop Draft Report to the UMore Park Management Team* (June 2008).

Evaluating the Scenarios

Six criteria were developed to evaluate potential development scenarios. Importantly, the criteria flow from the Board of Regents principles for planning and development as well as from the perspectives of local jurisdictions, citizens and the University community. The criteria also capture key ideas from the academic mission task force reports. Each broad criterion covers important elements by which the four scenarios can be assessed. The criteria are:

- **Sustainability and innovation.** For the UMore Park planning and development process, sustainability is defined as the integration of environmental, socio-cultural and economic opportunities with a specific focus on innovation in education and life-long learning, health and wellness and renewable energy through design and programming. The three intersecting elements of sustainability notably can be supported through University research, education and public engagement.

- Environmental sustainability. The community is developed with a light footprint on the landscape; infrastructure is developed with attention to ecological systems; and buildings are constructed with materials and technologies that are energy efficient, energy producing and conserve water.
 - Social sustainability. The physical design of the community and its neighborhoods, its amenities (parks and green spaces, recreational facilities, public facilities such as a learning center or community center) and community-based programs and activities intentionally draw people together. Arts and culture as well as learning opportunities and shared experiences enrich the community.
 - Economic sustainability. The community is a destination, a place where people can live, work and play. The community thrives, with a strong economic base that serves generations into the future (see separate criterion on regional economic development.)
- **Natural resource stewardship.** The University is a responsible landowner and steward of its valuable asset. Planning and development must specifically address removal of the nearly 263,000 tons of concrete remnants remaining from the World War II Gopher Ordnance Works and any potential contamination that may be present at the site of this former production facility. Glacial sand and gravel deposits are present on the property, and could be extracted to meet the need for this nearly depleted resource in the metropolitan area. Following the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement process in late 2009, the University will determine whether mining this resource is appropriate. Green space as a valued amenity – both for the UMore Park property and Vermillion Highlands – is addressed through the design of parks, gardens, natural areas and trails. Lakes and ponds could be created on the landscape following the potential extraction of gravel.
 - **Economic development in the region.** Although economic sustainability is a key component of the overall sustainability criterion, it is important to emphasize regional economic development as a distinct criterion. The University imprimatur adds unique value and resources to attract and expand businesses and services, resulting in job creation. Workforce development and job training are incorporated into community programs. Enhanced transportation networks provide easy access to retail shopping, the workplace and community events. Other economic benefits include public-private partnerships, entrepreneurial opportunities, and potential tourism benefits that a destination can attract.
 - **Partnerships.** The success of the development at UMore Park will be based on the University's ability to work collaboratively and innovatively with local jurisdictions, with the DNR and Dakota County on Vermillion Highlands, and with multiple public and private entities. Such partnerships will serve as a catalyst for improved living and regional economic development, including business development and job creation. Public and private partnerships could

contribute to amenities and services in areas of energy, health and lifestyle facilities, recreational and cultural features and a lifelong learning system that is integrated across the community through schools, libraries, technology services and other learning facilities.

- **Financial returns to the University.** The vision for development would contribute to economic development in the region and enhance the lives of citizens. The University, too, must derive value from this unique undertaking, both financially and through opportunities for its students and faculty members. First, the University must recover investments it has made during the planning and initial development phase. Then, the University should maximize its long-term financial outcome through articulation of the primary property development goal: To substantially increase the University's endowment in order to support its academic mission (for example, student scholarships, research and aspects of institutional priorities that are not sufficiently supported by state or private funds) and contributions to the public good long into the future.
- **University legacy.** Since 1851 the University has placed graduates in Minnesota businesses and services, created new jobs, converted research into application, leveraged additional funds and opportunities for the state and created knowledge for a changing world. It will continue to do so over the generations. The development at UMore Park is the unprecedented opportunity to, more than ever, refresh the land grant mission for today and tomorrow and contribute to the public good through research, education and public engagement.

A concept master planning process for the 2,822-acre Vermillion Highlands property was also initiated in early 2007, and concept scenarios have been generated under the auspices of the Joint Management Steering Committee for the Vermillion Highlands property (see details in the final section of this report). Planning for both properties will benefit from public comment and discussion before scenarios are refined as final concept master plans.

Part III. Ready the Land for Development

The final component of the Regent's December 2006 resolution directed the University to "prepare to make the land ready for development, including the following:

- a) Preparing a plan for the removal of concrete remnants from the former Gopher Ordnance Works buildings;
- b) Preparing a plan for the extraction of sand and gravel from the site; and
- c) Taking appropriate steps to secure a site investigation of the property by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leading to the development of plans for any necessary environmental remediation related to the Gopher Ordnance Works."

The approach to the Regents directive on the three aspects of making the land ready for development have been conducted in a public, transparent fashion that involves competitive bidding processes, attentiveness to state and local standards and stepwise processes that require detailed technical assessments and analyses. The University's priority as a good steward of its asset has been paramount to the approach and execution of each activity.

The approach to concrete remnants and the environmental site investigation are specific to the subset of acres on the property that constitutes the former Gopher Ordnance Works (GOW).

Concrete

A concrete and soil assessment work plan was completed in October 2006 by Peer Engineering, Inc. It concluded that for at least 70 percent of the concrete remnants from the former GOW, removal, crushing and reuse of the concrete as road base and/or structural and general fill is the most economically feasible and cost-effective disposition option. Approximately 30 percent of concrete carries asbestos-containing mastic or other hazardous materials. A specific determination must yet be made to determine whether it is more environmentally appropriate and cost effective to abate asbestos or other hazardous substance, and then reuse the concrete; or remove the concrete as-is (with mastic intact), and dispose of the concrete material at an appropriately permitted landfill.

Details on the location of GOW concrete remnants – largely below-surface foundations of approximately 900 raised buildings – and potential removal have been incorporated into the proposed scenarios for development.

Sand and Gravel

In May 2007, Jess Resources was hired as the aggregate consultant to the project, and designed the methodology for conducting a gravel assessment on the property. Subsequently, in August 2007, ProSource Technologies, Inc., was selected as the geotechnical firm to perform the aggregate assessment. The drilling of 659 holes on the property was completed on April 23, 2008. A comprehensive report will be completed in Summer 2008 that includes the analysis of boring samples, related geological data and recommendations for potential extraction options, should the University choose to pursue gravel mining.

To assist with decision-making regarding gravel mining and to engage the public in an impartial discussion of the environmental impacts of potential mining, the University is undertaking an environmental review specific to sand and gravel mining. The environmental review will also determine appropriate mitigation measures that would either avoid or minimize any adverse effects of mining or enhance environmental quality. The Board of Regents adopted a resolution on April 10, 2007, to affirm its role as the Responsible Governmental Unit for the gravel Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The contract for consulting services is to be approved by the Board of Regents Finance Committee on June 12, 2008.

The gravel EIS is slated for completion by the end of 2009. Upon completion of the EIS, the University will decide whether to mine gravel.

Environmental Site Investigation

In early 2007, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) agreed to conduct a site investigation of the former GOW. In mid-May 2007, Bay West, Inc., a local environmental consulting firm retained by the USACE, sent a plan for a Summer 2007 environmental site inspection of a portion of the GOW to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), a University collaborator on this issue. The USACE set aside adequate funding for FY 2007 to complete the site inspection, and Bay West, Inc., commenced the assessment in early August 2007. Field work consisted of trenching, soil probes and sample collections. The contractor completed the site inspection on a limited area of the former GOW on Oct. 9, 2007. The USACE is scheduled to deliver the site assessment report to the MPCA and the University in Summer 2008. It is anticipated that further discussions with the USACE will take place in 2008 regarding responsibility for completing additional work on the site inspection, and if necessary, remediation.

Additional Activities

To further address preparing the land for development, a consultant began work in June 2008 to remove debris from areas surrounding concrete foundations of former GOW buildings that had been raised. Deteriorating debris such as mastic or wood may contain asbestos or asbestos residue. Work is focused on an area of approximately 200 acres. The consultant VCI Environmental, Inc., was retained through the University's Facilities Management Hazardous Materials Program; the work plan was approved by the MPCA.

To complement the gravel EIS, the University has issued a request for proposal for an environmental investigation and support services. In particular, this work will focus on issues associated with groundwater use; soil, surface water and groundwater quality; EIS-related groundwater modeling and the development of environmental mitigation measures. The work will also result in estimates of the cost of remediation on the GOW acres. The contract for this environmental investigation will tentatively be approved by the Board of Regents in July 2008.

Further, the University is contemplating the initiation of an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR). An AUAR is a type of environmental assessment used to determine potential cumulative environmental impacts from future urban development over a broad geographic area – such as the 5,000-acre UMore Park property. The AUAR process includes the preparation of a mitigation plan that identifies methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate identified environmental impacts as future development takes place. Key to undertaking an AUAR will be discussion and coordination with the City of Rosemount and Empire Township.

Vermillion Highlands

Through a separate and distinct process from the UMore Park concept master planning, the concept master planning for Vermillion Highlands also began in Fall 2007. Consistent with the May 2006 legislation, planning is guided by a joint management steering committee that includes two representatives each from the University, the DNR and Dakota County. (An operations committee composed of one representative from the three organizations oversees day-to-day needs on the property.) The joint management steering committee contracted with the Center for Rural Design, University of Minnesota, to develop a concept master plan for Vermillion Highlands, based on a collaborative vision and 12 principles.

Guiding Principles

Vermillion Highlands:

1. Will be managed collaboratively to maintain or improve its current environmental character and level of ecological function with the goal to achieve the best ecological fit within the greater context of the site.
2. Will be managed collaboratively to meet the programmatic needs of the partners.
3. Will be managed to provide University research, maximum outdoor recreation opportunities and Wildlife Management Area goals such as hunting and trapping.
4. Will be managed to locate programmatic uses in a matter that best supports these principles. Within this context, research and more intensive public recreational and educational uses will generally be oriented toward the site's northern portions. More extensive wildlife management supporting hunting and trapping will generally be oriented toward the south.
5. The partnership will allow for flexible and responsive management of Vermillion Highlands to minimize user conflicts, optimize opportunities for public use and avoid public confusion.
6. Joint management of Vermillion Highlands by the University and the DNR in conjunction with Dakota County will assure a broad range of research, diverse, high-quality recreation uses and quality public hunting opportunities.
7. Will be managed to support continued environmental connections within its greater context and encourage neighbors to maintain and enhance those connections.
8. Will be managed to support social and cultural connections with the broader region.
9. All existing and any proposed new infrastructure with Vermillion Highlands will be maintained, designed and located in keeping with these principles in regard to environmental character and ecological function. For example, existing roads may be removed, relocated or have limited access. New infrastructure will generally be focused at the perimeter of the site. Adjacent and containing jurisdictions will be encouraged to plan infrastructure improvements and roads to avoid passing through the site.

10. Will be managed both spatially and temporally to achieve the best possible fit of divergent and/or competing programmatic uses both within and adjacent to the site.
11. Appropriate planning and design will provide the tools to accomplish the goals set forth within these principles.
12. Animal and plant species designated as threatened or endangered by the state or federal government will have priority consideration in wildlife management and other land management activities.

The 12 principles are intended to guide the development of a concept master plan and give direction to the ongoing management of Vermillion Highlands to provide the greatest possible benefit to the region and state.

Key Features of the Concept Scenario

The scenario for Vermillion Highlands has a number of specific recommendations to accommodate the needs of each partner organization to enhance research, recreation and hunting. Specifically, proposed features include:

- An area of 1,000 acres designated for University field research. Additional research can be pursued across the full extent of the property at the determination of the Vermillion Highlands Steering Committee.
- Combined visitor, administrative and interpretive facilities in two locations to serve the needs of all partners.
- Hunting and trapping opportunities throughout the site as deemed suitable by the DNR and the Vermillion Highlands Steering Committee.
- Road realignment, closure and the establishment of regional trail corridors to facilitate environmental connections with adjacent properties.
- Expansion of the currently located private shooting range to include public access.
- Additional equestrian trails that would be dedicated exclusively to equestrian use and remain open year-round.
- Current trails on the site that would be maintained as naturalistic trails for hiking and cross-country skiing.
- The current snowmobile trail that crosses the southern portion of the property would be rerouted outside the boundaries of the site.

A detailed description of the concept scenario is provided in the document *Concept Master Plan for Vermillion Highlands: A Research, Recreation and Wildlife Management Area* (June 2008).

Vermillion Highlands, with its varied uses, natural beauty and public access is an amenity that adds significant value to the adjacent UMore Park property to the north. As concept master planning proceeds on the two properties in tandem, the characteristics and the interconnectedness that enhance both properties are being addressed. Characteristics include greenways, wildlife corridors and trails that ensure connectivity and mechanisms for ease of access for the public. Public uses are envisioned to include education and

lifelong learning; research; recreation including hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, biking; and hunting and trapping.

The University and the state, through this unique partnership, have created a lasting gift of open space in an expanding metropolitan area.

Next Steps

Following the June 12, 2008, presentation to the Board of Regents, public forums and campus forums are being held to engage the University community and the general public in discussion of the proposed concept scenarios for UMore Park and Vermillion Highlands. Importantly, formal presentations will also be made in June to the leadership of the City of Rosemount, Dakota County and Empire Township. Public comments will be captured via multiple mechanisms, compiled and assessed to better inform the University leadership for future decision making on planning and development.

Future issues for consideration include continued collaboration with local jurisdictions, the potential for gravel mining, the refinement of a concept master plan, determination of a management structure and, with the Board of Regents decision to proceed, the identification of a development partner or partners.

Ongoing contributions to the UMore Park project from the following individuals are acknowledged:

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