

October 29, 2007

real estate

### **U to turn UMore into sustainable community**

There are hopes that the 5,000 acre plot will become home for at least 20,000 by 2011, as well as host research opportunities.

*By Ahnalese Rushmann*

**A**lmost a year ago, the Board of Regents approved initial plans for the University's UMore Park site - plans that involved creating a sustainable and research-enriched community near Rosemount, Minn.

Now, the University is fleshing out details to turn the mostly agricultural site into a habitable community for 20,000 to 30,000 people.

 **Where To Go**

#### **Umore Discussion**

**What:** Join The Individuals Who Have Been Exploring The Six UMore Park Academic Mission Task Forces

**When:** 8 To 10:30 A.M., Nov. 8

**Where:** North Star Ballroom, St. Paul Student Center

#### **ALSO AT**

**When:** 8 To 10:30 A.M., Nov. 9

**Where:** Coffman Union Theater

For Forum Agendas, Drafts, And More Information, [www.umorepark.umn.edu/Campus\\_Forums](http://www.umorepark.umn.edu/Campus_Forums)

Charles Muscoplat, vice president for statewide strategic resource development, is heading UMore Park plans and said the University won't start building on the property for at least three years.

He'll present his findings at the November Regents meeting, he said.

"The University has had the land for 60 years," he said. "It's not like we have to rush."

Ideally, the community would leave a light environmental footprint, Muscoplat said, which means working with renewable and biomass energy systems and an efficient transportation system.

"The U just can't build a community that isn't green," he said. "Ten years ago, this was sort of too far away to consider."

He said plans will also pay attention to affordable housing, modern health care and education needs.

"This could be worth an enormous amount of money," he said.

However, Muscoplat said revenue from the research enterprise would be piped back into University research and education.

Greg Cuomo, director of operations for UMore Park, said a large reserve of gravel below the surface needs to be looked at.

"We need to understand what's underneath the soil before we build on top of it," he said, adding people will hopefully be living on the land by 2011.

Muscoplat said the gravel could be worth anywhere from \$50 million to \$200 million, at a dollar per ton.

The UMore Park site was once home to Gopher Ordinance Works, a factory built to make gun powder for the armed services during World War II. The war ended before the factory was completed.

Muscoplat said there are still more than 120 bomb shelters on the property.

He said approximately 100 faculty members have helped with the project this year and information sessions will be held to get input from students, faculty and staff.

Muscoplat said the project won't be funded with University money but he's confident real estate investors will be interested in the site - the largest contiguous property in the United States owned by a land-grant university.

"People are going to line up to do this," he said. "This will be the real estate development of the century."

"There isn't a 5,000 acre plot of land that's undeveloped and trying to be as modern as creative as we are," Muscoplat said.

The acres are currently home to turkey and crop research facilities and a beef cow herd, as well as farmers and other tenants.

Eighty tenants rent space on year-to-year leases, Muscoplat said.

Jim Kinville, chief operating officer of Reese Enterprises, said his business has been on the site for 40 years. He said he hasn't been notified of any major plans.

"Until we hear something concrete, a lot of this stuff is kind of a master plan but there isn't any funding attached to it," he said. "Quite often, plans change."

Kinville said he's heard of plans over the past few years but hasn't seen action.

"Up until now, they haven't had the funding," he said.

"We'll be interested in seeing how it may impact us," Kinville said.

Brian Pahl, a vegetable farmer who rents 100 acres of the property, said the University sometimes uses his land for research sample tests but he hasn't heard of any imminent changes.

"We like working with them," he said. "But some day I know it will come to an end."

Muscoplat said early notification of major plans would give more time to businesses to relocate or consider their options.

"We do have to tell people there are plans underway," he said.

Muscoplat said construction will likely start on the northwest corner of the property, where few tenants

are located.

"Most of the tenants are safe for more than five years," he said, adding it could be longer until they would have to relocate.