
University of Minnesota to gather input on UMore development at six meetings in Rosemount this month

BY KATIE MINTZ - SUN NEWSPAPERS

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A new mini-metropolis outside of Rosemount's city center will join studies in potato pathology and turkey nutrition with daily life.

While University of Minnesota officials envision growing a community of 20,000 to 30,000 people at their Outreach, Research and Education Park in the next 25 to 30 years, exactly what the UMore project will entail is open for discussion.

To gather input on the locale that will incorporate University research and education with living, social, cultural and business opportunities, the University will host six "listening sessions" in Rosemount over the next two weeks.

"We are hosting the listening sessions to involve people very early in our planning process," said Charles Muscoplat, University of Minnesota vice president of statewide strategic resource development. "We'd like to hear what people would like to have in a community if they could help build it from the ground up."

The 5,000-acre site split between Rosemount and Empire Township - home to a government-owned smokeless gunpowder plant in the early '40s before being deeded to the University in 1947 - has been slated to develop a sustainable community since a vote of the University's Board of Regents in December 2006. Academic task forces were formed to consider and identify University strengths that would contribute to the quality of life in the community on the following topics: interdisciplinary opportunities, education, energy, environment, health and transportation.

The six sessions are tailored around those areas and will include a brief presentation about the vision for the new community, an overview about the specific subject being discussed and roundtable discussions to hear from those attending.

Rosemount's Community Development Director Kim Lindquist said the UMore project will have a dramatic impact on the city, Empire Township and Dakota County as a whole. And all three jurisdictions have recently formed a university advisory council. Collaboration will continue as part of the city's comprehensive planning process as well.

The upcoming sessions are opportunities for the project's neighbors and other individuals interested to share their thoughts and opinions, Lindquist said.

"There are people who are very opposed to this and people who are very much in favor, and we hope both those people show up," Muscoplat said.

All sessions will run 5 to 7:15 p.m. and are free and open to anyone who would like to attend.

The first, Monday, Sept. 17, will cover education, including early childhood development, daycare, K-12, post-secondary, adult education and lifelong learning. On Wednesday, Sept. 19, environment, including green building and infrastructure, the landscape and natural resources, storm water management, air and water quality, will be discussed. Energy is the topic of the third session, Thursday, Sept. 20, covering renewable energy, energy production and efficiency, reduction of greenhouse gases and conservation practices. On Tuesday, Sept. 25, health for individuals and families, including nutrition, prevention, recreation, safety, health care and health services will be discussed. Interdisciplinary opportunities like housing, diversity, arts and culture, technology and international linkages, is the subject of the session Wednesday, Sept. 26. Finally, on Thursday, Sept. 27, transportation issues, including increased access and mobility through multiple transit options, innovative transit services, transportation infrastructure and safety, will be at hand.

The Sept. 17 and Sept. 19 sessions will be in the Dakota Room at the Dakota County Technical College, 1300 145th St. E., Rosemount. All other sessions will be in the Banquet Room at the Rosemount Community Center, 13885 S. Robert Trail, Rosemount. Because a light meal will be served, reservations are appreciated. Register online at www.umorepark.umn.edu or by calling 612-626-3976.

Those who cannot attend may provide input at www.umorepark.umn.edu or by calling 612-624-6252.

Final task force reports with conclusions and recommendations for the "community of the future" will be completed and published sometime in December, synthesizing ideas that came from the sessions and how areas like transportation and environment are interrelated, Muscoplat said.

Before any final plans are made, a number of other tasks, such as a gravel assessment to determine development potential and securing of finances, must be completed.

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