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## UMore making progress behind the scenes

**Nathan Hansen** Rosemount Town Pages

Published Friday, July 20, 2007

Trees started disappearing earlier this month from the University of Minnesota's UMore Park property in Empire Township, one of several steps currently taking place as the University prepares for the construction of a 5,000-acre housing development on the property.

The trees in all, were cleared by District Energy St. Paul for use in a recycling biomass project. District Energy is a non-profit corporation that provides heating, cooling and related energy services.

The newly cleared property is not necessarily the site of any future development. It's just where the trees were. But Charles Muscoplat, the U of M's vice president of statewide strategic resource development, said they would have had to go eventually to allow for soil testing and the removal of concrete left over from the Gopher Ordinance plant once located on the site.

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District Energy did not pay anything for the trees but Muscoplat said the University will save the cost of having to clear that area itself sometime in the

next couple of years.

"It saved us a lot of money," Muscoplat said.

The University will need that money as the planning process continues. Muscoplat expects several pieces of the process to come into clearer focus in early to mid September, when the University's board of regents holds its monthly meeting. At that time, Muscoplat said, there should be several proposals for regents to consider.

Last Friday was the deadline for proposals from companies interested in helping develop the master plan for the property. There were 11 proposals from a mix of local and national firms. Muscoplat expects to take a recommendation to University president Robert Bruiniks by the end of August.

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The University has also requested proposals for an aggregate assessment that will help identify how much gravel is on the UMore property and exactly where it is.

“We think there’s aggregate there,” Muscoplat said. “We don’t know how much is there and where it is. We want to hire a firm that will tell us where it is, how deep it is and what’s the quality.”

Muscoplat expects gravel mining and the sale of concrete from the site to pay for much of the planning process.

In the meantime, U of M faculty members are working on a vision for the development and on finding ways to extend the University into the new community.

“These are just big concepts that we’re trying to get,” Muscoplat said. “What does it mean to say we have a community that we hope to have principles of healthy living? ... We’re trying to stay at the philosophical level.”

The University has held meetings with representatives of local governments to keep them updated, and Muscoplat said there will be sessions with the general public next fall or winter to get input on some of the ideas that have come up.

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