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## Eureka task force findings to be presented

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Eureka residents will have a chance to look into the future – or at least several future possibilities – when the township’s Envisioning Task Force presents findings from a two-year project Nov. 20.

With the help of Dakota County and 1000 Friends of Minnesota, the task force concluded work on a study of development alternatives for the rural region. According to task force chairman Mike Greco, the point of the study was to give the township options and allow it to plan for the future as development pressures mount.

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“Located where we are, it’s easy to look at Farmington and Lakeville and say that suburban model is the only option,” Greco said. “But I think this process shows there are other options.”

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The project summary outlines six hypothetical build-out scenarios for the township, each under a different zoning premise: one house per 40 acres (currently in place), one per 10 acres, one per two and a half acres, residential clustering with net density of one house per 10 acres, town center-focused development, and suburban (1/3-acre lots) growth.

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According to the task force report, maintaining Eureka’s current rural zoning, most of the township would have the opportunity to remain in agriculture. With about 1,500 residents in Eureka, this build-out scenario would provide space for only about 852 more, according to the report.

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Reducing the minimum lot size to 10 acres would allow for 1,527 new homes, the report shows, and about 4,600 new residents. There would be almost no potential farmland remaining after the township is built out under that scenario.

The task force found that clustering residential development would allow Eureka to maintain large farmable areas and still reduce the houses-per-acre ratio to one in 10, the report shows. Instead of requiring all lots to be 10

acres, lot sizes could be dropped to one acre but the number of lots would be limited.

A town center scenario explores the possibility of zoning for dense, mixed-use commercial and residential development occurring within a small central location. Outside of that area, zoning would still allow for one house every 40 acres.

The report shows considerably more growth if suburban-style developments are allowed. As an example, the task force found that allowing for 1/3-acre lots only in the portion of Eureka north of the Vermillion River could result in more than 6,000 homes being built. This scenario would also require the construction of a community wastewater treatment facility or connection to existing utilities, according to the report.

Finally, the task force looked at allowing development to occur at one home per 2.5 acres. Nearly 7,000 homes could be built in Eureka under this scenario.

The task force also looked at the effects all of the scenarios would have on the government, environment and economy. Greco noted that the effects of development are often overlooked.

“It’s important to think about what growth means,” he said. “Even if a housing development is on the other side of town, it has a tremendous effect on everyone in terms of tax revenue or water quality. Those are things we have to consider.”

Greco said it is important to note the Envisioning Task Force was not charged with recommending any one option. Instead, he says this is just a beginning point for planning Eureka’s future and he is hopeful it will help residents get involved.

“I think this puts us in a lot better situation than some other communities. We’ve maintained our one-per-40 zoning and it’s allowed us to see the good and bad development surrounding us,” he said. “It shows we have choices to make, and we need to make them soon.”

The public review session is scheduled for Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. at the Dakota County Extension Office in Farmington. Greco said the meeting is primarily to inform residents of the task force’s findings, but feedback will be welcome.

More information about the task force and its work is available by visiting the township’s Web site at <http://eurekatownship-mn.us/taskforce/envisioning.html>.

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