

V. Conclusion: Next Steps and Recommendations

The next step in the process of envisioning what Eureka Township might look like 10, 20, or 30 years from now ultimately lies with the citizens and elected officials of the community. The list of suggested next steps and recommendations below is intended to carry forward the work of the Eureka Envisioning Task Force by encouraging more citizen participation and input. The decision to go forward with these recommendations and build upon the work presented in this report ultimately rests with the Board of Supervisors, so ***it is critical that you make your voice heard on these issues if you would like to see this work continue.***

1. Recognize and encourage citizen involvement to build a sense of community and a create a genuine investment in the future of the township. Task Force members would like to see Eureka become a place where residents take genuine pride in their Township, where people know and feel a connection to their neighbors, where citizens have many opportunities for civic participation, and where volunteers are recognized and appreciated for their efforts. Therefore, we would recommend:

- ▶ continuing the use of **citizen task forces** to assist the Town Board and Planning Commission
- ▶ holding an annual event such as a Township clean-up day to encourage pride in Eureka
- ▶ holding an annual "Citizen Appreciation Day" to recognize and thank citizen volunteers who contribute to the community

2. Build the technical capacity of the township. Task Force members believe it is important that the Township make an investment in building the technical capacity of Eureka officials, staff, and citizens so they are able to address the complex issues surrounding development and growth. This might include:

- ▶ initiating citizen focus groups, workshops, and informational meetings to provide Eureka residents with the necessary information to participate effectively in discussions about the future of Eureka
- ▶ requiring appropriate training for all Township officials and staff in how to address issues related to growth and rural development
- ▶ identifying and obtaining the data and other information resources necessary to make development decisions in the best interest of the community

3. Utilize current Envisioning Task Force members and other interested citizen volunteers as a resource to further research and inform the Town Board, Planning Commission, and Eureka residents about issues related to growth and development. A number of issues that were raised during the course of the Envisioning Task Force's work require additional study and would be of value in future discussions of development in the Township, including the following:

- ▶ **transfer of development rights (TDR)** programs
- ▶ **greenway corridors** and **open space** areas
- ▶ alternative/innovative commercial-agricultural opportunities
- ▶ wastewater treatment and fresh water supply options
- ▶ alternative design options for **mixed-use** and residential development
- ▶ annexation issues
- ▶ Airlake Airport expansion
- ▶ refining existing, and creating additional, growth **scenarios** and **indicators** based on citizen input

4. Stay abreast of developments beyond our borders and become engaged with Dakota County, the Metropolitan Council, and surrounding communities on issues of mutual interest or concern. This might include:

- ▶ Creating a committee of citizens and township officials from Eureka, Castle Rock, Greenvale, etc. to discuss problems or issues of mutual concern
- ▶ Becoming more proactive in communicating to Dakota County the goals and vision of Eureka Township, and actively seeking input on and assistance from the county in implementing Eureka's long-range plans
- ▶ Formalizing a relationship with the **Metropolitan Council** on long-term plans for Eureka and surrounding communities
- ▶ Formally tracking development plans and zoning in neighboring towns such as Lakeville, Farmington, Castle Rock, Elko-New Market, etc.
- ▶ Looking for opportunities to collaborate with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

V. Conclusion: Next Steps and Recommendations—Continued

5. **□ Create a vision statement for Eureka Township, based on input from residents, that describes what the Township would ideally look like 30 years from now.** Without a shared vision for our community, there is a real risk that future growth in Eureka will be haphazard and inefficient and will be dictated by the needs of developers, not the interests of the township or its residents. Ultimately, the citizens of Eureka Township should decide—through public meetings, focus groups, and citizen surveys—what type of community they would like, because it is they who will have to live with and pay for those choices.

6. **□ Commission a fiscal impact study for future development in Eureka Township that considers the regional context for growth.** Recent studies have called into question the widely held assumption that development always has a positive economic benefit because it generates additional tax revenue. What is often left out of this equation is the hidden costs of development in terms of **infrastructure** and public services. We recommend the Township commission a fiscal impact study that shows the costs of infrastructure and public services versus the revenue generated by residential, industrial, and commercial development. The **Metropolitan Council** or Minnesota Association of Townships may be able to provide assistance with such a study.

7. **□ Introduce guidelines and incentives to mitigate the impacts of development and encourage preservation and protection of natural resources, farmland, and scenic viewsheds.** These might include some or all of the following:

- ▶ **□ incentives for clustering homes to preserve open space and reduce impacts on farmland and natural areas**
- ▶ **□ guidelines for the use of shielded outdoor lighting to reduce light pollution**
- ▶ **□ incentives for siting new buildings in ways that preserve scenic viewsheds along roadways**
- ▶ **□ guidelines for shielding or buffering around sheds and outbuildings**

8. **□ Identify specific indicators to track over time to measure and document changes in the community.** One of the key features of **indicators** is the ability to track changes or identify trends over time. Therefore, it is useful to measure

□ certain key indicators regularly and to compare trends to see whether existing policies are having the intended effect and are appropriate to achieve the long-term goals identified by the community. Such information can help inform future decision making.

9. **□ Utilize the services of professional planners or planning consultants with expertise in rural development.** Task force members believe Eureka needs a comprehensive, long-term plan in place for the entire Township before development pressures increase and before any changes to current **zoning** regulations are undertaken. In creating such a plan, Eureka would be best served by seeking the advice of qualified planners or consultants who have prior experience working successfully with rural-agricultural communities. It is important that Township officials investigate the cost and feasibility of using professional planning services prior to the 2004 Annual Meeting so that citizens can be asked to authorize funds for this purpose at the meeting.

10. **□ Research and apply for grant opportunities available to the Township.** Millions of dollars in state, federal, and private grants are available to Eureka Township. The Envisioning Task Force's work with Dakota County and 1000 Friends of Minnesota is only one example of how our community can benefit from grants and other collaborative opportunities. In increasingly difficult fiscal times it is even more important for the Township to seek out other sources of revenue to support the preparation and planning that should precede any growth or development in Eureka. Task Force members believe Eureka Township must be more aggressive in identifying and pursuing grant opportunities. We encourage the Board of Supervisors to approve grant-acquisition training for existing Township staff, consider hiring additional staff with grant-writing skills, or seek out citizen volunteers with grant-writing experience who would be willing to research and apply for grant opportunities available to Eureka.