

OPINION

Fairfield defines community action



Located in the heart of downtown, the **Fairfield Arts & Convention Center** is a gathering place designed to showcase a world of arts and culture, and features the **Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts**. **WERNER ELMKER**

Greenhouse in a new Maharishi University classroom building. **COPYRIGHT 2013 MAHARISHI UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT/USED WITH PERMISSION**

Jefferson County town shows how to 'manufacture dreams' through civic collaboration

Fairfield, Ia. — Drive around this Jefferson County seat with Mayor Ed Malloy and you begin to understand why this town is considered unique in Iowa.

The obvious reason is the presence of Maharishi University of Management that is a magnet for Transcendental Meditation devotees from around the world, which is evident as Malloy wheels around the downtown square. It is lined with unusual shops, art galleries, bookstores, restaurants offering international fare, imported chocolates and teas. A monthly First Friday Art Walk draws a cross-section of the community and people from around the state.

Just off the square, across from the Jefferson County Courthouse, sits the community center and the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts. It is home to what is described as the only professional live musical theater company in the state and attracts a variety of performing arts events.

A couple of blocks on is Malloy's oil trading company, housed in an office building built according to the ancient Indian principles of Maharishi Vedic architecture that seeks harmony with the energy of the sun and nature for the well-being of occupants. Many examples of Vedic design can be seen in Fairfield and in Maharishi Vedic City, incorporated in recent years.

Fairfield is a town of contrasts, where you can see a BMW parked on the street next to a pickup truck. The native population has increasingly accepted immigrants who brought a different culture and an



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entrepreneurial spirit that invigorates the city's economy. Fairfield has earned a long list of plaudits in numerous "best of" categories, including the April Smithsonian magazine's list of "The 20 Best Small Towns in America."

Fairfield lives green

Among the striking things about Fairfield is its ethic of self-sufficient sustainability. This manifests itself in many ways, such as a cooperative organic food market and a solar-powered radio station run by volunteers. Solar panels sprout from roofs and from freestanding structures. The city of Fairfield has an energy efficiency coordinator, whose salary is shared by the city and by Iowa State University's extension service.

In the city's industrial park, Sky Factory uses backlit photography to create outdoor scenes for ceilings of hospitals and medical clinics. The plant has set aside space next to its parking lot for an array of solar panels and a garden tended by employees.

On the opposite side of town, a mostly off-the-grid subdivision called Abundance EcoVillage captures energy from the wind and the sun, and draws air for heating and cooling from the Earth.

This conservation ethic runs deeper in the community than these outward

symbols of alternative and renewable energy sources. As a participant in Alliant Energy's Hometown Rewards program, Fairfield took on a challenge beginning on Earth Day in 2012 to reduce its overall energy consumption by 4 percent. It hit that and exceeded it: Fairfield residents shaved electric and natural gas consumption by 8.5 percent and businesses cut theirs by 8 percent.

Working with Alliant, which provided marketing and technical support, the city held workshops for residents and business owners, some 4,500 participants pledged to meet energy savings goals by doing laundry in cold water and installing compact fluorescent light bulbs. A fund was created to make loans for new windows and insulation.

The total savings of 10.2 million kilowatt hours of gas and electricity is enough energy to power 1,077 homes for one year, according to Alliant, which independently verified the energy savings. Besides the savings on power bills, Alliant dangled a carrot in the form of a grant of nearly \$19,000, which the city put toward installation of solar panels on the roof of the Fairfield Library this summer.

Alliant Energy spokesman Justin Foss attributed the success of this impressive energy savings to the level of community engagement, working at a neighbor-to-neighbor level creating peer pressure that came from an active group that led the charge.

"This is a program that works really well for Fairfield," Foss said. "You can't do that in every community."



Ed Malloy

A foot in both worlds

Ed Malloy is perhaps the best example of how Fairfield has melded small town Iowa values with the exotic culture inspired by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Malloy is an immigrant from New York, practices TM and lives in a spacious and handsome home built to the exacting Vedic principles. He moves comfortably among traditional and nontraditional Fairfield, which

is evident from his support by voters for more than a decade.

Malloy says Fairfield's can-do culture begins with setting ambitious goals, but achievements are celebrated by the entire community, not just the strong core of Transcendental Meditation followers fed by Maharishi University.

In Fairfield, Malloy said, "people go out and manufacture their dreams. When we all share the pride, that's when everything changes."



The Schwartz-Guich Sustainable Living Center on the campus of Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield. COPYRIGHT 2013 MAHARISHI UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT/USED WITH PERMISSION



Lawrence Gamble, professor of sustainable living at Maharishi University.

SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

This classroom building is lesson in sustainability

Fairfield, Ia. — Maharishi University of Management here set out three years ago to build a new classroom building for its sustainable living program that lived up to the department's mission. The finished product may be the greenest building in Iowa.

The building is constructed of compressed-earthen blocks manufactured by students on site and load-bearing timbers consisting of full-size aspen tree trunks. It generates more energy than it consumes. It collects and treats rainwater from the roof for drinking and flushing. Daylight supplies two-thirds of light in classrooms and offices during the day.

Passive and active solar energy is stored in 600 tons of earthen blocks and a 5,000-gallon water tank, which is supplemented with wind-generated electricity. It has a greenhouse for growing plants indoors and edible landscaping outdoors.

The Schwartz-Guich Sustainable Living Center is performing exactly as intended. In fact, it is "exceeding our expectations in energy efficiency in cooling and heating seasons," said Lawrence Gamble, professor of sustainable living at MUM and an irrepressible evangelist on the subject of renewable energy and natural resource conservation.

Standing beside the center's electric meter outside the building recently, Gamble pointed to the spinning wheel that measures electric consumption. The wheel was going backward, however, meaning the building was returning power to the electric grid. In fact, according to Gamble, the center produces about a third more energy than it consumes. And it consumes less than a quarter of what an ordinary building of the same size would consume.

Besides employing nearly every imaginable green building technique, the Sustainable Living Center design follows the principles of Maharishi Vedic architecture, an ancient design philosophy from India that puts buildings in harmony with nature. It is hard to imagine a building that does a better job of meeting that goal.

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