

“*Veda* means knowledge,” says the city’s director of economic development, Dr. Kent Boyum. “Everything in the city is designed to use Vedic principles of architecture, health and education to increase the good fortune of its citizens.”

You can experience the city’s vision for yourself August 20–21 and August 27–28 when homeowners open their doors for the town’s Festival of Homes, which includes a self-guided tour of homes, a tour of the city’s organic greenhouse and the nearby Vedic Observatory, an arts fair and an organic food market.

FACE THE RISING SUN

“Orienting the homes to the east is an important design principle of Maharishi Vedic architecture,” says Jonathan Lipman, an architect who designed some of the city’s buildings.

Other Vedic design features, such as the gold-colored *kalash* (“vessel” in Sanskrit) topping each building, connect the individual home to the cosmos. Each building also is surrounded by a *vastu*, or homesite, which is usually rectangular or square and has an entrance to the east. An ordinary fence of wood, metal or stone delineates the edges of the *vastu*, although its dimensions are calculated to create a harmonious relationship between the homeowner and the sun, moon and planets. Like the fence styles, the home’s physical architectural styles vary widely, from Victorian revival to classical to modern. The Vedic tradition is evident in the placement of rooms, their dimensions, the slope and shape of the land and the location of bodies of water.

“What we are creating is an entire city that repels negative influences,” says Lipman. “To me it’s the most extraordinary experiment happening in the field of urban design.”

Near the city’s east entrance, Lipman designed a New York-style condo on the top floor of a three-story red brick commercial building. Open for touring, his home’s design includes expansive prairie vistas, a variety of wall finishes, including plasters and clay and sand paints using 19th-century techniques, plus a colorful Tibetan rug collection.

Looking north from Lipman’s living room you can see the Mandala One Village. Mandala One, which is now 40 percent developed, includes 15 homes inspired by the early 20th-century Arts and Crafts Movement. With clapboard siding in pastel colors, white picket fences and front porches, it looks like an idealized small town straight from *The Music Man*.

South of the city, author and entrepreneur Fred Gratzon’s 10,000-square-foot home is an eclectic blend of Japanese roofs, Corinthian columns and Spanish tile. Like other homes, it includes a *Brahmasthan*, a central area that serves as a building’s silent core. Here, Fred, his wife, Shelley, and their 16-year-old son, Jake, practice transcendental meditation, which is believed to improve health, increase mental clarity and enhance relationships.

To tour a building on a larger scale, drive to the north side of the city to the Rukmapura Park Hotel, a 25-room wood structure in the tradition of European country inns. The songs of meadowlarks and the honking of geese greet visitors from the bird sanctuary and estuary below the hotel.

Dee Johnson and her husband, Chris, developed this 240-acre resort that includes their own home and 24 others built around two lakes. They moved from San Francisco to Iowa with their two young sons 15 years ago, and were soon joined by Chris’ parents.