

# Is this what San Diego could look like in the future?

## In Encinitas Saturday, 180 middle-schoolers reimagined cities of the future



(/staff/phillip-molnar/)

By Phillip Molnar (/staff/phillip-molnar/) | 5:14 p.m. Jan. 23, 2016 | Updated , 5:22 p.m.



Eighth-graders from the Wildwood School, located in Los Angeles, Tess Levy, 13, left, and Emily Ribeiro, 14, explain their city named Vivace, that is fueled on 100 percent renewable energy, during the Future City Competition at The Rhoades School in Encinitas on Saturday. *Hayne Palmour IV*

ENCINITAS — It is Saturday night in Vivace and its teenage residents twist and shake on public dance floors that generate piezoelectric energy to power buses.

Below their feet zooms compost through an intricate network of underground tubes from citizens' homes. Next to the 1980s Museum, the compost exits into a gold storage building where it is used to grow crops.

The city boasts incredible teachers, great views of the ocean, mixed-use skyscrapers and an entire building devoted to inventing.

“(Vivace) is so focused on inventing that we have many doctors curing diseases,” said Tess Levy, a 13-year-old student from Wildwood School in Los Angeles.

Tess and her friends, Emily Ribeiro and Chloe Sachs, invented Vivace and built a large-scale model to show it off as part of the Southern California Future City Competition. Launched in 1992, this year’s annual competition attracted 180 middle-school students to The Rhoades School in Encinitas.

The stakes were high. The winning team — from Wildwood School with its city FutureVille — gets to go to Washington, D.C., next month to compete in a national competition. If they win that, they get to show off their city to President Barack Obama.

More than 40,000 students from 1,350 middle schools compete in the Future City Competition, according to the [website \(http://futurecity.org/\)](http://futurecity.org/) of its national body.

Southern California organizer Deborah Orlik said the competition is growing as more students get interested in engineering and their schools make it a priority. She said the event had double its attendees this year compared to 2015. Schools from Santa Barbara and south were encouraged to attend.

This year's theme of "Waste Not, Want Not" prompted many of the city designs to take recycling and sustainability to a new level. For their models, students used a host of materials including soda cans, Legos, cardboard and paper mache.

In Cielo Vida, a city created by 13-year-olds Sabrina Bassler and Nikkala Kovacevic of The Child's Primary School in Clairemont, most of the city lives in large buildings designed to look like trees and their leaves are actually solar panels.

Far below the residences are agriculture fields, real trees and roads. "With everything higher, it makes more room for other things," Sabrina said.

Modern-day Rome was turned into Elixar, a city in 2769 that has 28,000 residents and is so prosperous it has a city hall made of gold. The invention of Preuss School in La Jolla students Mayerling Colin and Ben Arechiga, both 13, Elixar has a financial incentive for residents to be thoughtful about garbage.

Citizens get paid for correctly separating recycling, compost and trash. Despite potential digital advances, Ben insisted good separators would be paid by check.

Four budding capitalists from St. Michael's School in Poway took a step back from the green designs with a comparatively large industrial district in their Moria City. It also had a Times Square-style tower in its center to flash advertisements.

"Without factories, there is no growth," said Ben Cauldren, 14, who stated the factories would produce cars and other useful products.

Many large companies sent employees to judge the projects, including 3M, Booz Allen Hamilton, Nortek Security and Control, Northrup Grumman and Qualcomm. Judge Matthew Ellis from Bluemotif Architecture said he was looking to see how all the city's activities connected together in a seamless way.

"It's pretty cool. Some of these are really thorough," he said.

Science teacher Mauricio Rangel of Preuss School said students tend to get bogged down with details while studying science. But, the competition forces them to think on their feet about design and how to answer judges' questions about things they never considered.

"It's not the normal science thing: Like, here's a bunch of facts. Memorize them," he said.

*phillip.molnar@sduniontribune.com (619) 293-1891 Twitter: @phillipmolnar*

© Copyright 2016 The San Diego Union-Tribune. All rights reserved.