When you think about what a city will look like in the future, what do you imagine? Flying cars and fancy moving sidewalks?

Or how about a cure for Alzheimer's disease and the fabulous state-of-the-art research hospital that discovered it? That's what Abhinaya, Fatima, and Lauren chose to create for their entry in Future City, an annual competition for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. And that vision took them from Iowa to the final round of the national Future City Competition in Washington, D.C.

The three girls conceived and designed the colorful city of Watanobbigo using Sim City 4. Then, they carefully constructed a scale model of the city from recycled materials. Abhinaya, Fatima, and Lauren kept their cool while the judges took their seats. Then, they began their presentation.

Watanobbigo is set in the year 2121 and is populated by 150,000 people, all of whom have access to incredible health care. The large biomedical research facility and hospital keeps watch over the health of city residents constantly. Every morning a Watanobbigo citizen needs only to provide a
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saliva sample, and any illness discovered will be treated. Anyone with the genetic predisposition for Alzheimer’s can take a preventative vaccine (which was discovered in the Watanobbigoo research facility and is 99% effective). If that doesn’t work, a daily pill and nasal spray are also available. If all else fails, the girls explained, someone suffering from Alzheimer’s can have nanotechnology implanted into their heads to keep unwanted proteins from building up.

These health advantages are only one reason to consider living in Watanobbigoo. There are also pristine beaches that are kept clean with a biodisposable waste system, the world-famous Latima University, museums, arcades, and much more. As the girls gave their presentation, they demonstrated their moving transit system and answered a few questions.

This year, 35 teams presented at the national competition. Down every hallway of the hotel where the finals took place, people were carefully moving beautiful model cities on tables. "We had six hours to fix our city once we got here," Lauren said, "but we only used two." Before arriving, the girls had agreed who would be in charge of fixing what. That way, they could divide the work and be efficient since they didn’t know how much damage the city would undergo during its cross-country journey from Iowa. "Working as a team," Abhinaya said, "was one of my favorite parts." Everyone agreed that making the model was another favorite aspect of the Future City Competition. "It’s a lot of fun but also a lot of work!" exclaimed Lauren. And their hard work paid off. Not only did they go all the way to D.C., Abhinaya won the Best Essay award during the special awards ceremony.

Next year will be Future City’s 20th year, so if designing a city for the future sounds like fun to you, be sure to keep this fantastic competition in mind. Registration starts in September. Only a little while ago Abhinaya and Fatima had never thought about becoming an engineer. Now both girls are interested in learning more about biomedical engineering. Who knows what the Future (City) holds?