

# 'Tax-Free' Kenneth City Is a Sister Town Now Being Built by One Man, Sidney Colen

The desperate clamor about drainage problems in the county brings up a very pertinent and little-known fact.

We have a sister town to the south, Kenneth City. Not many people have heard of it, although it has been incorporated. Eventually it will have 5000 people and 1200 homes; right now it has about 450 homes either built or under construction between Pinellas Park and St. Petersburg.

The point is, its developer and builder, Sidney Colen, has actually created a "tax-free" city with all city utilities. A long-standing dream by a man who studied the humanities and sociology. It is about to burst on the nation via magazine and press wires as a model of what can be done. Of what can be done, given the component parts of a man who refused to compromise with a principle, who planned it properly in advance—and who had a half-million dollars in working capital which he was willing to gamble.

What Colen has done, actually, is applied a philosophy—its result the best form of capitalism—which does good for everybody involved.

He spent five years planning Kenneth City, then, in spite of opposition (from the least-expected quarters) he carried his dream through. He gambled, and he is winning the bet.

Colen has built 300 acres with no open drainage ditches. He has installed, and this before the first house was built, a complete sanitary and storm sewage system, with a sewage treatment plant, a chlorination plant and a water aeration plant.

There were a gillion important facets to getting these plants. When the City of St. Petersburg, for instance, and Colen couldn't see eye to eye about water, Colen gambled again, and won. He found wells, and so draws water from Kenneth City's own ground.

But this is only the beginning of the story. Since he realized that these plants are losing propositions until there are enough people using them to make them pay, he is maintaining them at his own expense and intends to turn them over to K.C. at absolute cost in about two years when the city will be entirely built and inhabited. He will take municipal revenue bonds in exchange.

These bonds will be of the tax-free variety, and be retired solely by revenue from the facilities over a period of years.

In other words the city will not have to pay the usual tremendous cost (it is one-half to two-thirds cheaper this way) of tearing up streets, lawns, etc., which is what is usually done after the need has been so apparent people are knocking at the City Hall doors.

Add to that the fact that maintaining these plants and other city facilities does cost more than the sewer and water charges on each resident's monthly bill, so Colen answers the question—Where will this extra money come from?—by showing that the usual cigarette tax, gasoline tax, occupational, building, liquor licenses, and such will approximate \$40,000 yearly income for the city and this is enough to maintain all the facilities in good order.

Colen also goes further. He is giving  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land in the middle of the city to K.C. for one dollar, for a community center and City Hall, and the \$25,000 building to be erected (contributions from business firms are expected to make this figure an actual \$10,000) will be maintained by Colen for five years or so until the city is ready to take it over—and again it will be given for absolute cost.

What is being done, in effect, is the creation of an entire city—and Colen is providing fire and police protection too, with no indebtedness hanging over the city. This means its residents know in advance they have no city tax to pay. In Clearwater we pay 14 mills. (Nor is there a 10 percent tax on Kenneth City's water bills as is the case in St. Petersburg.)

And Kenneth City is dry, even on those heavy rains, due to that forward planning. And what seems very significant is the fact it was all done without even county engineering aid (there is none available).



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## The Business Front

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**CITY-MAKER** — A typical street in Kenneth City, newly-created "tax-free" community between Pinellas Park and St. Petersburg, is shown in the top picture. Below is a scene during the incorporation celebration recently, when the city's developer and builder, Sidney Colen of St. Petersburg, greets his son Kenneth, after the boy in a surprise visit, unveils a picture of the completed town. Holding him is Herman Goldner, attorney, who wrote the charter for incorporation, and Mrs. Goldner. All city utilities, sanitary and storm sewers, and treatment plants, plus chlorination and water aeration plants, streets and upright curbs, were all installed before Colen began building his town for 5000 people.

For, as Colen points out, local government can never "project". All they can do is wait for the need and then try to meet it (which results in a money loss automatically). Therefore the county is not geared to giving aid to the developer. He must find his own water, engineer his own streets, post bonds, which he never gets back even after he's fulfilled the liability. He must go about developing and building with no help whatsoever from the county, even though the coming community will be part of that county, and pays its county taxes and abides by its rules.

Kenneth City has 12 acres set aside for a service center owned by Colen which he plans to build and rent for a supermarket and other shops. His houses, in the \$11,000 - \$22,000 category, are built on contract only and can enough sold to keep his large organization's nose comfortably in the wheel this year. All home buyers receive a complete, practically covering material contract. At present he has produced houses

under construction at once, with an estimated figure of 500 going up in 1957.

Not every developer can do what Colen has done, of course. It not only takes a dream, and the will to push it through—but a great deal of money. However, many men with these qualifications might be discouraged even to try, knowing how little aid, and how much opposition they receive from other sources.

But it can be done. It isn't necessary to have a ditch-like pond in your back and front lawn; a septic tank is not mandatory, nor does it have to back up into your bath room. If men with dreams and principles get together with the residents, can be in a Florida Utopia.