

Henry McKnight wanted something different and he got it: a city called

Jonathan



Although he's a busy man, Henry McKnight gets a big kick out of watching his town go up. He visits construction sites regularly.

HENRY MCKNIGHT has a lot of money. He also has a lot of enthusiasm—he could get excited about a bowl of oatmeal. As he sits in his office right now, however, he's excited about his cheap new camera. "Never saw anything like it before," he says. "It's so small, it fits right in your pocket. And it only cost me \$30. Amazing what they come up with these days."

McKnight, 59, is unpretentious. Associates are hard-pressed to remember the last time they saw him wearing a tie. Instead, he usually runs around in old clothes and boots.

Now, don't think that McKnight is an eccentric who spends his time and fortune chasing butterflies. Far from it. At one time, Henry McKnight was a very vocal Minnesota state senator, campaigning vigorously for the state's natural resources bill. Now he's in the news as a real estate developer—the man behind a new town called Jonathan.

Jonathan is being created from the ground up—from scratch. When this town is completed, it will be unlike any other in the Midwest. For everything in Jonathan is planned, including population, industry, housing and recreation.

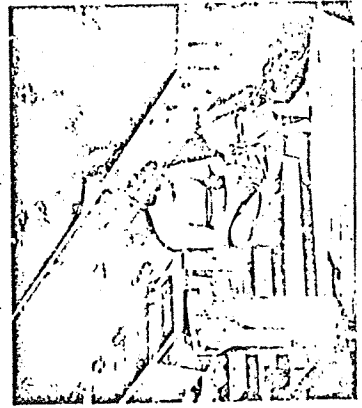
Jonathan is located some 25 miles southwest of Minneapolis on 8,000 acres of woods, lakes and rolling farmland. Named after Jonathan Carver—an 18th century English explorer who discovered the Minnesota River—it borders on a game farm, Hazeltine National Golf Course and the University of Minnesota's Landscape Arboretum. Although Jonathan lies within the city limits of Chaska, Minn., McKnight and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) consider it a town in itself. In 1970, in fact, it became the first large-scale development to qualify for federal assistance under the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968.* For Jonathan, this nod of approval meant a loan guarantee of up to \$21 million, enabling Jonathan's developers to borrow long-term capital at considerably lower interest rates.

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*The act has been compared with the Homestead Act of 1862. Says one of its backers: "It was clear that new towns were an expensive experiment, and that private enterprise would be hard-pressed to make things go." The act was passed, then, to give assistance to large-scale, privately financed developments.

Jonathan CONTINUED

McKnight is for progress, but he doesn't let it get in the way of nature.



Some ways and walks are found throughout Jonathon's park and greenway system. They're all designed to blend in with the landscape.

Today, as almost every day, McKnight is at his office in Jonathon, signing papers and giving okay's. It's a busy day, and people keep popping in and out of his office. But McKnight seems restless. And when someone suggests a tour of Jonathon, he jumps at the chance to leave the office. Outside, McKnight climbs into his Mercedes, and he explains about the figure of a black bull that's used as an ornament on the hood of his car. He raises Black Angus cattle, he says, and thinks bulls are great. Before long, though, McKnight is back on his favorite subject—Jonathon.

Unlike the towns of the gold rush days, he explains, Jonathon won't spring up overnight. It's a 20-year project being built in stages. McKnight is for progress, but he doesn't let it get in the way of nature. He won't allow bulldozers to run amuck, and he's making sure that one-fifth of all the land will be left open.

If McKnight has his way, Jonathon will eventually be home for some 50,000 people. It will consist of five villages, an industrial park and a large town center. Each village will have its own churches, schools, village center and recreational area. The nucleus of Jonathon — the town center — will house department stores, offices, restaurants, theaters and other major facilities. Plans also call for two kinds of roadways—one for cars and buses and another for pedestrians and bicyclists, complete with underpasses to assure safe crossing of major thoroughfares.

"I know I sound like a dreamer," McKnight says as he turns a corner, "but I see this town as a place that will grow with people and never stop improving itself. We're not just starting with woods and open spaces. We'll be ending up with them, too. We'll have a town that's entirely for people, not machines."

McKnight says he's been interested in building a town most of his life, but didn't start working on the idea until the mid '60s. By then, he'd had a chance to look over new communities in Europe that were built to replace those destroyed by bombings during World War II. Also, two new towns had sprung up in the United States—Columbia, Md., and Reston, Va.—and they were similar in design to what McKnight had in mind for Jonathon. The time was ripe. Soon McKnight was successful in bringing a group of investors together to form the Jonathon Development Corporation, with McKnight serving as its president. By the fall of 1968, plans for the project were rolling.

McKnight drives by the oldest neighborhood in town, and he remarks how it and everything else has grown. "Something new is happening every day," he says, "and I hate to miss out on it. It's fun. Watching

NWS

Where One resident has their own lake, which covers some 70 acres. Late Grace, named after McKnight's wife, it within very walking distance from any part of town.

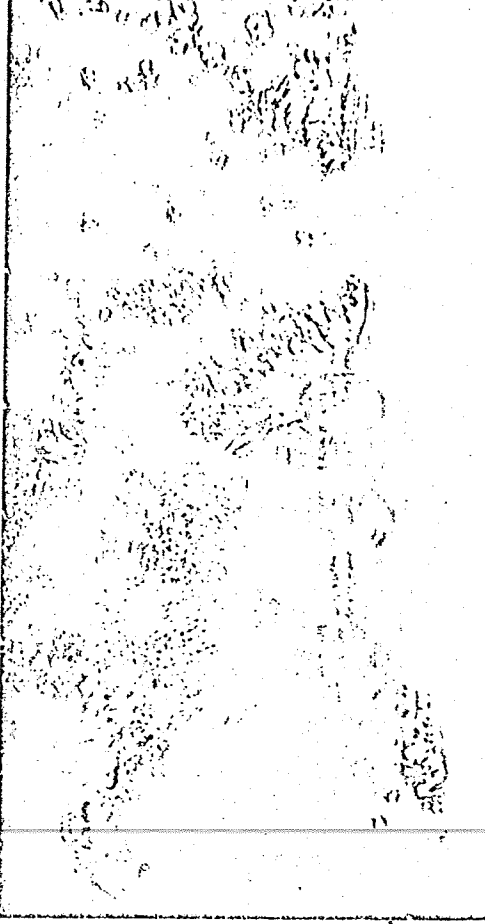
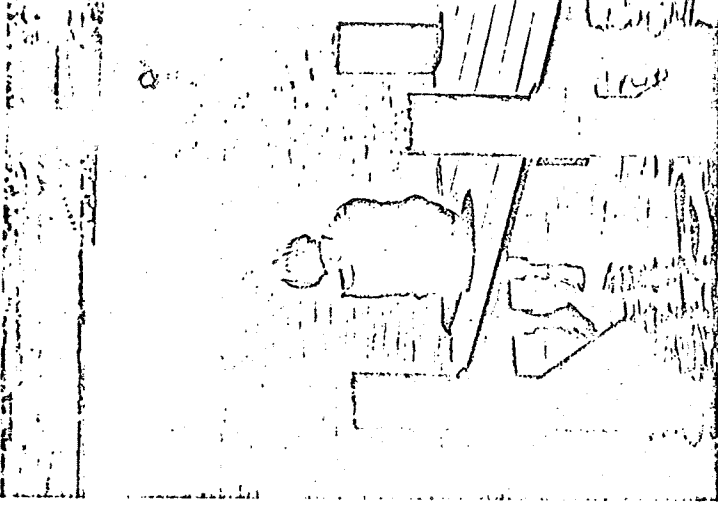
this place grow is really something. You should have seen what it was like when the Browns moved in. There wasn't anything here."

Bill and Margie Brown were the town's first residents, and they know what McKnight is talking about. They'd given up an apartment in Minneapolis for a house in the middle of a cornfield—far from people and shops. At first, there weren't any roads either, so the Browns had to drive through the fields to get to their property. "We really felt like pioneers for awhile," Brown says. "Then before we knew it, there were houses, then neighborhoods, and all kinds of people were moving in. Seeing a house go up is one thing. But seeing a town go up is quite an experience."

While McKnight keeps a lookout for new points of interest, he talks about the progress. Jonathon has made in its four years of existence. He's got a lot to be proud of. The town now has a population of some 1,300 people of all ages, races and backgrounds. There's also a mix in housing. Part of Village One is now completed, and in it are homes, apartments and townhouses—all different in style and price range. High-priced dwellings sit next to low-income units. Yet, as McKnight points out, all buildings are simple

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Alley of bicycle paths, wind through Henry McKnight's favorite spot in Jonathon — the woods. One-fifth of all the land will be left open.



Jonathan CONTINUED

Sometimes you can hike
without seeing anyone.

and unassuming and done in colors that blend with the landscape. McKnight's also proud of the way in which the neighborhoods are laid out. "There's no suburban sprawl here," he says as he looks out across town. The view shows buildings that look as though they've been placed to disturb as little of the land as possible. Backyards and neighborhoods are connected by a large park and greenway system, with winding paths that go under major streets. Throughout the system are picnic and playground areas, all designed to fit in with the landscape. Nearby are the woods, McKnight's favorite spot.

McKnight talks about other major attractions in the village: Lake Grace (a large man-made lake named after McKnight's wife), a recreational building and a village center, which houses a food market, several small stores, a dental clinic and offices. Then he focuses on industry. Some 15 different companies have moved to Jonathan, he says, including Vademecum, a Swedish toothpaste manufacturing concern. All have been selected for their pollution controls and are located in a 130-acre industrial park separated from the town's residential area. Together, they employ some 500 people, many of them residents of Jonathan.

McKnight is still talking about Jonathan's industries when he comes to an area still under construction. It interrupts his train of thought. "Look at that, will you?" he says. "My gosh, they're moving fast. Let's see where this new street goes." The car turns off on a narrow, muddy road. For awhile, the Mercedes does a good job of plowing through. But soon, the wheels start to spin and the car is in trouble. There's no room to turn around, so McKnight has to back the car out. Once on the main road again, McKnight is trying to explain just why people want to live in Jonathan. "Oh, they come for all kinds of reasons, I guess. But our biggest selling point is probably planning. It's given us the best of two worlds—countryside living and urban conveniences."

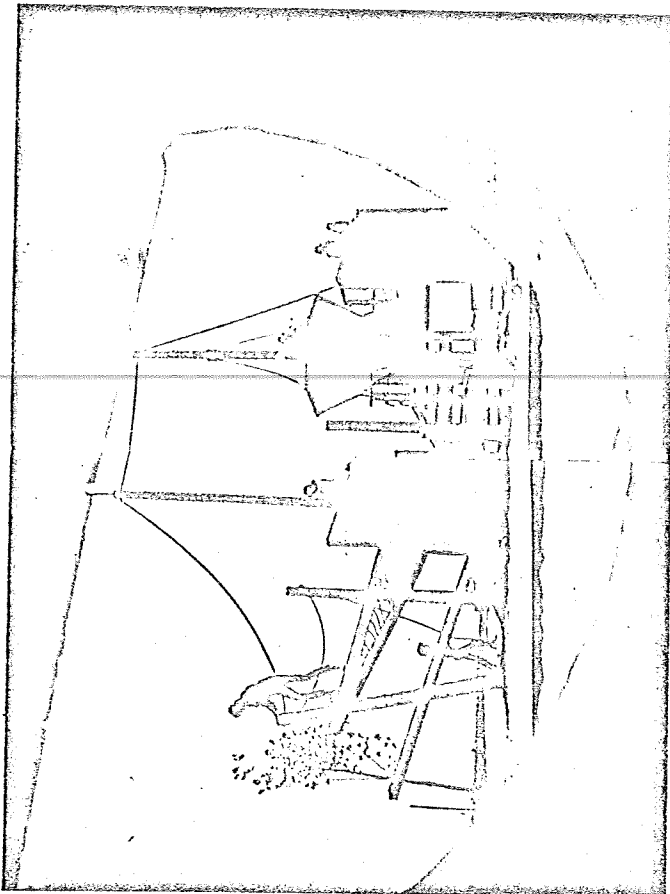
Planning was the factor for the Browns, Jonathan's first residents. But they were also taken by the wooded areas. "The woods are all around us out here," Maggie Brown says. "and sometimes you can hike or ride along the paths without seeing anyone. There's a sense of being close to the earth—a feeling you don't often get in the city."

Edwin and Juanita Allen, a black couple with four children, came to Jonathan because of its publicly subsidized townhouses. But there was another reason,

too. The Allens grew up in Gary, Ind., a place they felt had an unhealthy environment for children. They wanted something different for their youngsters and thought Jonathan might be the answer. "It's everything we hoped it would be, and more," Allen says. "We feel we really belong here."

William and Marian Carrothers are an older couple who spent much of their lives in New York and Connecticut. Seven years ago, after Carrothers retired from his job with Sperry Rand, the two moved to Minneapolis to be close to their son and daughter and their families. At their son's suggestion, they made a trip to Jonathan one day. They liked it so well that they ended up staying. What appeals to them most, they say, are the fresh air and open spaces. But they also like the mixture of ages. "It doesn't matter how old you are," Carrothers says. "You're part of the community here. And my wife and I like it when the neighborhood youngsters call us grandma and grandpa."

McKnight comes to a curve in the road that jogs around a tree. That's the way Jonathan is planned. "Out here, we do things different," he says. "We try to keep the trees and build around them. If they have to go, we move them somewhere else. We figure it takes too long to grow a tree for us to cut it down." In addition, thousands of young oaks, pines and maples are planted each year. "My grandfather made his



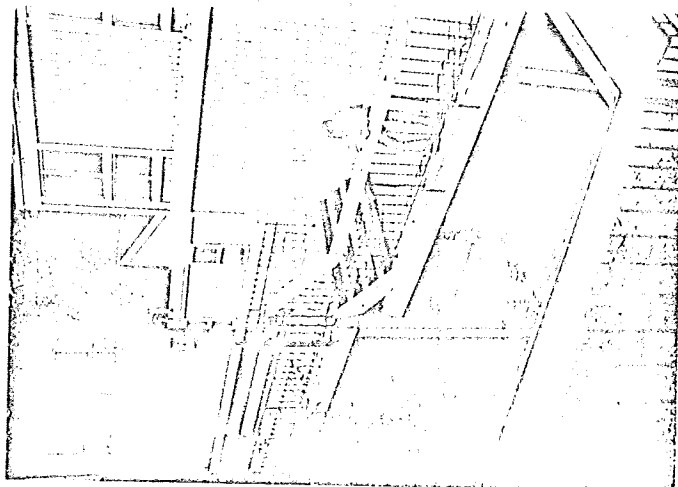
money in timber," McKnight says. "Out here, I'm trying to replace as many as he took."

Now McKnight is pointing to where the church, school and second village will be. They won't be built for awhile yet, he says. "But they'll be there. Just wait and see." Then he specs a construction crew putting up a prefabricated house. He has his \$20 camera along and wants to take a picture of the crane lifting the walls to the foundation. So he stops the car, gets out and slugs through the soggy sod to get to the area. Arriving, McKnight looks for higher ground—to get a better shot of the crane, he says. The best he can do is a haystack, so he scrambles up that. "This is just fine," he says, as he steadies his camera. "I've got a great view here, a great view."

When the picture-taking is over, McKnight heads for the car. Driving back to his office, he points out other sites, including a mock pirate's ship for youngsters that he thinks is pretty nifty. And he talks about the last time he took someone on a tour: "We walked around for more than four hours, and I showed the fellow everything—the lake, the townhouses, the apartments and the woods. When we got back to my place, all he could say was 'Where do you keep the beer?' Now, can you imagine that?"

Well, everyone doesn't have the imagination of Henry McKnight. •

Playgrounds at Jonathan have conventional equipment, but they feature some unusual items. On the right, there are a mock pirate ship (on left) and a wall of free-form sculptures for kids to climb.



Jonathan has many housing innovations. Pictured here are the Tree Left apartment, featuring what designers call a modular concept.