



*Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols*  
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**Outline of Remarks to Accompany Slides**

Washington, D.C. April 30, 1936

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

1. Topography of the 10-mile square showing the level area chosen by President Washington and planned by L'Enfant as the site for the Federal City, comprising about one tenth of the District of Columbia. The Virginia portion, including Alexandria, was ceded back to Virginia in 1846.
2. The L'Enfant Plan of 1791 closely followed in the actual plan in all major aspects. The plan was adapted to the topography of the site by first locating the positions for the Capitol, White House, and other public buildings, and squares. The street system was then designed to fit these positions and the sites connected by diagonal avenues, not for the purpose of defense but to shorten distances and afford direct lines of communication from the city entrances to the principal buildings. The city grew within the limits of this plan until the close of the Civil War.
3. Washington, 1840 to 1865, illustrating early Federal development in an era when some of the best architectural work was accomplished.
4. Washington, 1885 to 1901, illustrating an entirely different type of Architecture, greatly criticized in these days, such as the old State War and Navy Building and the old Post Office Building. This is the era prior to the modern influence.
5. Washington, 1901 to 1928, showing public buildings located in accordance with the Plan of 1901, approved by the Commission of Fine Arts.

II. CENTRAL AREA PLANS

1. McMillan Plan, 1901. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of moving the Federal establishment to Washington, the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia appointed the McMillan Park Commission to revive the L'Enfant Plan and bring it up to date. The major contribution of the 1901 Plan was the development of a plan for the Mall and adjoining areas in which Government establishments relating to the legislative branch were to be located near the Capitol, and the executive establishments located around the White House. The Plan proposed the development of the Triangle, formalization of the Mall and the Washington Monument

Grounds, a site for the Lincoln Memorial, and a site on the South axis of the White House for a Memorial to the Founders of the Republic.

2. Air View, McMillan Plan, illustrating the relation of the plan to the surrounding city.
3. Map showing location of public buildings, about 1928, illustrating how the temporary war-time buildings interrupted the orderly realization of the 1901 Plan, and the unrelated location of public buildings.
4. N.C.P. & P.C. Central Area Plan, 1932, showing the following principal changes in the 1901 Plan:
  - A. Abandonment of the 1901 Monument Gardens Plan and South axis development in the Tidal Basin.
  - B. Extension of public buildings' area in the Southwest Triangle to the railroad, and in the Northwest Triangle to E. Street.

### III: MALL DEVELOPMENT:

1. Model of the Central Area looking west from over the Capitol showing the Mall development now under way, and adjoining public building groups, as proposed in the 1932 plan.
2. The Mall East from the Monument, about 1922, showing the lack of relationship between the Capitol and the Monument, the Center Market, and other activities adjacent to the National Museum and the Mall.
3. The Mall East from the Monument today, showing the vista planned by L'Enfant opened, and development of Mall roadways nearing completion. The border panel on either side of the Central Panel will be planted with four rows of elms 50' on centers. These plans were developed by the Commission and approved by the Commission for the Enlargement of the Capitol Grounds.

### IV. PUBLIC BUILDING GROUPS:

1. The Triangle prior to 1926 illustrating haphazard and inappropriate use of land in a key area between the Capitol and the White House immediately adjacent to the Mall and the Ellipse.
2. Building Plan for Triangle Buildings, illustrating the uninteresting character of a series of individual buildings not designed as a group.
3. Model of the Triangle Development.
4. Approved Plan of Triangle Buildings developed as a group in accordance with the recommendation of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1927.
5. The Triangle East of 14th Street, as developed today, providing a fitting facade for Constitution Avenue.
6. Air view of the Triangle showing relation to the Mall and the Ellipse, about 1933.

7. Air view of the Mall and the Triangle from over the Capitol, March 1936, showing progress on the Union Square development.
8. Proposed Municipal Center; court buildings in Judiciary Square. The site of the present District Supreme Court originally chosen by L'Enfant as the site for the City Hall. The plans, developed by the Municipal Architect and approved by the District Commissioners, proposed court buildings in the early Federal style, preserving the open park like character of the Square. The plans have been approved by the National Capitol Park and Planning Commission.
9. Union Station Plaza, showing temporary war buildings close to the Senate Office Building and obstructing the view and approach to the Capitol and the Mall.
10. The plan approved by the "Commission for the Enlargement of the Capitol Grounds," recently completed.
11. Library of Congress obstructing the Pennsylvania Avenue vista of the Capitol, showing one of the major mistakes in public building location in the 80's and 90's in violation of the L'Enfant Plan and during the period when no up to date plan was being followed.
12. Maryland Avenue from over the Capitol showing the Supreme Court located to preserve the vista of the Capitol, as requested by the Commission.
13. Shipstead Area. The Shipstead-Luce Act of 1930 provided that plans of all buildings, public and private, fronting on the Capitol and the White House, the Triangle and other areas shown on the plan submitted by the District Commissioners to the Commission of Fine Arts for recommendation as to height, appearance, color and texture of the materials of exterior construction, thus providing for coordinate relationship between the public building areas and adjacent private development.
14. Northwest Rectangle showing post War conditions, a heterogeneous grouping of temporary buildings, and the Lincoln Memorial and Reflecting Pool under construction. Constitution Avenue is an important road.
15. Model of the Northwest Rectangle showing the Commission's plan for development of a group of public buildings to house the Interior, War and Navy Departments, South of E Streets. The Navy Building overlooks the river, with a site for the Naval Museum along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The chief features of the plan are provision for keeping Virginia Avenue open, the creation of a panel of park space along E Street from 18th to 23rd Streets, providing ample traffic capacity for east-west circulation North of the Rectangle development. The plan proposes also that E Street be extended East from 17th to 15th Street,

between the Ellipse and the White House grounds. The plan proposes an average density of development less than in the Triangle.

16. Northwest Rectangle today showing the New Interior Building and the Federal Reserve Board Building under construction in accordance with the plan.
17. East Capitol Street. Air view, existing conditions at the end of East Capitol Street. L'Enfants plan anticipated that the East end of the city would be the community and cultural center of the city, particularly along the high land on East Capitol Street. Early speculation in land resulted in the stagnation of this section of the city and an unbalanced growth in the Northwest section where today 62 percent of the population in the District lives.
18. Air View of plan for development of East Capitol Street. The Commission proposes a development along the lines of East Capitol Street with a great parade ground and playfield, stadium and other sports facilities in Anacostia Park, where 130 acres are available as shown in the photograph. One of the early plans for this development illustrating the possibilities of this conception.
19. The Avenue of States plan showing relation to the Central Area West of the Capitol.

#### V. OTHER CITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES:

1. Stages in development of Washington. From the Civil War to 1893 was the period of uncontrolled growth outside of the original city. The areas in black show the development that took place without the guidance of any plan. Narrow jogged streets, badly shaped squares and lots, have already resulted in the blighting and decay of these sections.
2. Jogs in Columbia Road and Harvard Street. Harvard Street is one of the results of uncontrolled growth. The Commission has proposed that the properties at 14th Street and at Georgia Avenue be condemned to eliminate these jogs and facilitate the movement of east-west traffic. Early planning would have avoided this eventual expense.
3. Highway Changes, 1926 to 1936. Under the Highway Plan law of 1893 as amended, a highway plan was provided for all the undeveloped portions of the District. Changes in that plan can be made by the District Commissioners after public hearing and approval by the Park and Planning Commission, as the successor to the former Highway Commission. This is a usual city planning function. Nearly 150 changes have been approved by the Commission.
4. Stages of Growth. The Highway plan functions to control the progressive yet sporadic growth which this slide indicates to have taken place during the last 100 years.

5. Relocation of Michigan Avenue. A typical highway change and land transfer which was proposed by the Commission in 1927 and specially authorized by Congress.
6. High Level Crossings, Rock Creek Park. To preserve the natural park character of the upper sections of Rock Creek Park, the Commission has proposed four high level crossings to eliminate the necessity for cross traffic traversing the valley. The one at Calvert Street has recently been improved by the new bridge. The one at Tilden Street is probably next in importance. The other two are at Military Road and Aspen Street.
7. Scott Circle: This is an early type of split circle to meet modern traffic requirements. Note the inefficient design and the waste space.
8. Ward Circle: Note in contrast to Scott Circle that Ward Circle has been designed by the Commission and development carried out in accordance with the plan. It is located at Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues adjacent to American University. It is streamlined to fit the traffic pattern.
9. Georgetown, Key Bridge Plaza. In order to relieve traffic conditions on M Street the Commission has proposed the building of a viaduct on K Street and the use of the C. & O. Canal in the vicinity of Key Bridge as a route for through traffic destined either to Virginia or the Western portion of the District. A traffic circle at the plaza in Georgetown would facilitate the increasing number of vehicles which this point is destined to handle in future years particularly as the western portion of the District is built up. The Francis Scott Key Mansion, acquired by the Commission, is featured in the plan.
10. Thorofare Plan. The original plan shown here as developed in 1928 is being constantly revised and kept up to date. A revised edition is exhibited tonight.
11. Thorofare Plan. The gaps in this plan indicate missing links to be realized in the future. Two of these have been realized within the last year by special authority from Congress, namely the Terminal Yard Crossings in Northeast Washington, which received special study by the Commission in 1931.
12. Waterfront Development. The Potomac River was the principal reason for the choice of the site for the Federal City. Hence a plan for the development of the waterfront is of major importance. The Commission has plans for the commercial development of four sections of the waterfront, as shown. Since 1927 the Commission has proposed a commercial airport at Gravelly Point which it believes can be coordinated with the operation of the Army Airport at Bolling Field. In any case the proximity of the commercial airport to downtown Washington is of greater importance than is the proximity of the Army airfield. The relatively inadequate area at the present airport is evident.

13. Washington Channel Waterfront. This plan, developed by the U. S. Engineer Office has received the endorsement of the Commission. The plan includes a proposal of the Commission for a waterfront boulevard along Water Street, providing a route for traffic from the Potomac Parks to the Anacostia Parks, via P. Street and the proposed South Capitol St. Bridge. This plan was approved by Congress last year.
14. Buzzards Point Waterfront Plan. In 1931 the Commission proposed an industrial development for South Washington at Buzzard's Point to relieve pressure on other sections of the city where such development was threatening to impinge upon residential areas. Congress approved legislation for extension of the railroad tracks through this area and the Potomac Electric Power Company established a large power station there. Large areas of land heretofore vacant have been developed in the last three years.
15. Inhabited alleys. The slums and blighted areas of Washington center around the Inhabited Alleys, which are an aftermath of the Civil War and the era of unplanned growth. For five or six years the Commission advocated the passage of legislation which was finally approved by President Roosevelt in June 1934, creating an Authority to eliminate the alley dwellings over a ten year period.
16. Changes in Population, 1920 to 1930. The shifts of population during only one decade as shown on this chart indicate many of the city planning problems which the Commission has studied. You will note that with the exception of Southeast Washington the entire original city declined in population although in many sections of this area the colored population increased.

VI. DISTRICT PARK, PARKWAY, and PLAYGROUND SYSTEM:

1. The first park system plan for the area outside the L'Enfant city was proposed by the McMillan Park Commission of 1901. This plan included many of the old Civil War forts, the Fort Drive, several other Parkways, stream valley parks.
2. Park Progress, 1901-1926. With no agency designated to carry out the plan, 25 years passed with very little achievement. During this period the population increased 64 percent, while the park areas increased only 20 percent.
3. Park, Parkway and Playground System: The plan developed by the National Capitol Park and Planning Commission is shown here. It includes parks of all sizes, extent and function, varying from the extended and enlarged Rock Creek Park to small neighborhood units similar to those provided in the L'Enfant Plan. Numerous connecting parkways provide the essential links between the major and many of the lesser parks, of which the old Civil War Forts are among the chief features. In addition a playground and Recreation system has been planned utilizing many park

areas which are suitable for this purpose. Washington has three major parks which are all or in part gifts, and several smaller parks have been donated also.

4. Acquisitions 1924-1936. Contrasting with the meager progress made in the period 1901 to 1924, the Commission and its predecessor the Park Commission have made material progress since 1924, as shown on this slide. During the period some 84 park, parkway and playground projects have been started, of which 46 have been completed or are being completed. Half a million dollars will complete 22 additional projects. Many of these projects are endangered by the active real estate market which is characteristic of present day Washington. The Commission's policy has necessarily been controlled by the necessity to acquire property before it is subdivided and built upon. It has therefore had to work in the outlying areas. Where close in areas have been acquired these have in many cases been poorly improved property necessary for playground or active recreation purposes, where the cost is justified. A large part of the remaining authorizations given by Congress in 1930 is for playground and recreation areas in the built up sections.
5. Proposed Recreation System: The Commission has proposed a coordinated recreation system plan comprising 26 major recreation centers to serve all age groups usually located in conjunction with junior and senior high schools. Playground tributary to these centers are designed to be within one-quarter mile of every child. Approximately \$4,000,000 has been expended for completion of 23 units in the recreation system and the beginning of 7 others. The system as a whole is 60% complete as to cost and over 3/4 complete as to area. Naturally the downtown areas could not be as adequate as those farther out in undeveloped sections.
6. Typical Recreation Center showing the relation of the facilities to be provided in conjunction with a Junior High School. Some of the facilities are available during school hours and out of school hours for the general public under a coordinate supervision.
7. Banneker Recreation Center near Howard University, the development of which is being completed with W.P.A. funds. The swimming pool, constructed as a C.W.A. project, was in operation last year.
8. Swimming Pool at Takoma Recreation Center, constructed with C.W.A. funds.
9. Location of Swimming Pools. A plan for location of swimming pools has been approved by the Commission during the current year. The remaining two, of the six pools authorized by Congress in 1928, have been constructed in accordance with this plan.
10. Location of Public Libraries. In cooperation with the Librarian of the public libraries, the plan for the location of libraries has been developed

and it has been found that in several instances school or park property was properly located and suitable for this use.

11. Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Plan. The 1901 plan proposed a connecting parkway from Rock Creek Park above the zoo to the Potomac Parks via lower Rock Creek as shown on this plan, authorized in 1911.
12. Rock Creek valley looking south from P Street. Conditions before development. This slide shows the necessity for a plan of reclaiming the lower valley of Rock Creek.
14. Rock Creek Valley today showing the recently opened parkway now being prepared for planting. The Commission has acquired many stream valleys suitable for this type of development, retaining their natural park value.
15. The new Fort Drive Plan. The Fort Drive project which was one of the major features of the 1901 plan is approximately 80% complete. The plan provides for a continuous park drive or boulevard 23.6 miles long, encircling the city and connecting the principal public parks, residential sections, and institutions. Nearly 15 miles of the parkway has been acquired and is ready for construction. Approximately 1½ miles has been built or graded during the last two years. The Commission has advocated the use of gas tax funds for park roads, if the gas tax should be increased. The plans have been developed so that for a material distance District streets can be used where the adjoining development is of suitable character.
16. Fort Drive at Fort Reno looking towards the Alice Deal School, one of the sections constructed last year. It provides park environment for the Junior High School and suitable access, replacing a colored subdivision.
17. Fort Drive at Fort Reno, looking towards the Reno Water Tower. Another section completed last year.
18. Fort Drive at Fort Dupont. A section of one mile has been graded during the last year with C.C.C. forces.
19. Chart, population and assessed values in relation to parks, 1901 to 1936. Assuming an even relation between population, parks, and assessed values in 1901, this chart shows the relative increases to 1926 and to 1936. It illustrates that during the period from 1926 to 1936 the Commission has been successful in overcoming the deficiency existing in 1926 in park and recreation areas, but that so far as the future is concerned, no provision has been made. The assessed values (and these represent costs of acquiring park and recreation areas) have increased eleven fold during the 35-year period.
20. Charts of appropriations and expenditures for land. During the last 12 years the Commission has received on an average about \$800,000 for acquisition of land within the District. Because of the depression and the necessity for devoting funds to provide useful work, no funds have been appropriated and therefore little progress has been made during the years

in which building permits were on the decline and land values were low. Before land values rise materially it would be good business to continue the work begun during the last 12 years, especially in the outlying areas as yet undeveloped.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN041

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols' objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911- ), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.