



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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Subdivision Practices

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Article No. 1.

In the very beginning of the Country Club District we abandoned the standardized, checkerboard street plan and developed curving streets to fit the contours of our land, giving much more pleasing results, avoiding high terraces and harsh straight lines. As you drive around a curving street a new scene comes constantly before your eyes and creates allure to see beyond. This also avoids the blowing of clouds of dust that are more likely to develop on straight streets. They relieve the monotony of streets, and gives more individuality to the various home sites. Then, too, frequently it enables you to save fine old trees, stone ledges, or other important features. It also tends to discourage speeding through a district.

There is no greater crime in city planning than to have all of your streets of the same size, the same distance apart, or having all of your lots and blocks of the same size. It creates monotony and does not develop strategic locations for homes; preserve the best views, or add charm and interest to the layout of your town.

Article No. 2.

We were one of the first firms in the United States to give ample consideration to the garden side of the home, making the rear into a living lawn; and very early we advocated the holding of floor levels close to the ground so as to make a more intimate relation between lawn and home.

Article No. 3.

In the beginning we advocated wider lots to give more open space between homes. As the old idea that the porch had to be on the front of the house gradually gave way and we started placing the porch on the side, we made every effort to encourage the greater lot width. As the horse and buggy days passes and with it the stable and its manure pile, we vigorously advocated the placing of the porch on the garden side of the house for the more intensive use of the rear lawn for living purposes. As the garage took the place of the barn, we advocated its incorporation as a part of the house resulting in the house becoming wider in the front and requiring greater lot widths. We find that today a 70 or 75 foot lot does not give much more open space between the houses than the old 50 foot lot did with the narrow front of the house to the street, and the porch on the front.

In the beginning we advocated deeper lots for the purpose of vegetable gardens. However in the very early days we found that after two or three years at least 19 out of 20 of these vegetable gardens were abandoned. This was true in the smaller home sections as well as in the larger ones.

Article No. 4.

We were one of the first real estate companies in the country as the automobile age developed to advocate the use of longer blocks, reducing the number of side streets, thereby saving money in the cost of street improvements, as well as giving a greater amount of private land for sale. The increasing traffic later made corner lots less desirable, and longer blocks out down the number of these corner lots, less desirable in the minds of some people. Of course, these long blocks should not conflict with the main lines of traffic. Some of our blocks are now made 1200 to 1500 feet in length.

Article No. 5.

Frequently we have used pedestrian ways in the middle of long blocks in order to afford quicker and more convenient pedestrian travel from one section to the other. The pedestrian ways are improved with sidewalks and planted with shrubbery and dedicated to the public.

Article No. 6.

Very soon after the beginning of the Country Club District, we realized the importance of developing main traffic ways, boulevards or parkways spaced about 1/2 mile or more apart, to carry the general flow of traffic in and out of a district, and endeavored to make our other streets as minor in size and character of street improvements as possible, not only to reduce the cost of building such side residential streets, but to maintain their quiet residential character and eliminate as much through traffic as possible.

Article No. 7.

We have long preached the doctrine of discouragement of through traffic on many of our streets, and to this end have built many of our streets with rather sharp curves; rather narrow paving, and avoided alignments that would encourage through traffic.

Article No. 8.

Some twenty-five years ago we began to install the small triangular parks at street intersections. We feel these give refinement of character to street entrances; they overcome the effect of ugly and barren wide stretches of pavement in front of homes, and also help to check through traffic. These parks have been generously planted with shrubbery and trees to give a park effect to the district, and later they became the setting for objects of art purchased in various parts of the world.

Article No. 9.

Where we had a stream we frequently built a roadway on either side of it in order to preserve the character of the open stream, as well as give character to the homes facing it, as well as to the entire neighborhood. We developed the stream as a parkway, but we found if you make this parkway too large in area and provide any playground facilities, it is often overrun by noisy, boisterous crowds from all parts of the city which is injurious to the adjoining homes.

In the early days a parkway of some four miles in length was given to the city for the building of a double roadway with park space in the center. The width of this parkway extended from a maximum of four to five hundred feet, to a minimum of some one hundred sixty feet. No effort has been made to develop playground area within this central parkway.

Article No. 10.

Many years ago we tried out the building and improving of many little parks or playgrounds in the interior of residential blocks. With one exception they have all proved unsuccessful. They encourage neighborhood quarrels; are very hard to police; and families who did not have children objected to the noise of the children playing in the rear of their homes. We generally tried to protect these interior block playgrounds and parks by prohibiting any detached garages along the borderlines, thereby improving the view from the garden side of the homes across the interior space.

We found that we had to contend with much intrusion into these parks by rough and unruly children and adults who would impose upon the purposes of the park. Several of these interior block parks have been completely abandoned although we originally provided some of them with wading pools; pergolas; teahouses; concrete sandboxes, and other playground equipment.

Article No. 11.

We have developed several playgrounds with complete playground equipment, but believe it is better to build them out where there are streets on all sides so as to give at least the protection of the street area and the front lawn area between the playground and the adjoining homes.

Article No. 12.

We think there is an unnecessary waste in the width of streets and sidewalks in many residential developments. A few years ago we cut down the sidewalk widths on our minor streets to four and four and a half feet and have found this width ample. We have cut down our paving width to 26 or 27 feet which we find is ample for handling three lanes of traffic. The slight saving effected in even reducing a sidewalk six inches or a foot, or two or three feet in the paving width of a street, becomes enormous when applied to the cost of developing a large subdivision and gives more grass space in the parkways to grow trees.

Article No 13.

In the early days we provided a parking strip between sidewalk and curb not to exceed seven or eight feet in width. However, we found this insufficient for the growing of trees in the parkway. The roots of the growing trees cause the sidewalks or curbs to bulge, thereby creating immense maintenance costs. It is our opinion this parking strip should not be less than ten feet in width to give room for the growth of the customary type of parking tree.

Article No. 14.

In many of our subdivisions we have found it practical to put a sidewalk on only one side of the street. We found that many buyers prefer the side of the street without any sidewalk. In some subdivisions we have left out the sidewalks on both sides of the streets – particularly among our larger homes. There is some neighborhood objection to this, as it gives no place for children to ride their velocipedes, bicycles, etc.

We would never favor leaving out sidewalks on both sides of the street in a smaller house neighborhood which is pretty closely built up, and where there is considerable traffic.

Article No. 15.

A few years ago we used a combination curb and gutter with only a slight rise at the back of the curb. We found, however, that it was too easy for an automobile driver to run over the curb and park two wheels of his car on the grass, chewing up the sod, and making a very unsightly condition. In recent years, though, we do not think it looks so well, we are building a straight up and down vertical curb in order to prevent cars from cutting up the parking.

Article No, 16.

We do not favor large flamboyant gateways at the entrance to our property, or in certain areas of our property. We have used a number of gateways, but we have tried to make them very modest in size, neutral in color and subordinated them to the architecture of the surrounding homes.

Article No. 17.

In the early days we planted our corner lots abundantly, but we found that this planting created traffic hazards cutting off the view of the motorists using the streets, and we had to go back at large expense and remove tall growing shrubs where we could get consent of owner and replace them with low growing ones.

Article No. 18.

At first we exercised no control over the size of the radii on driveways leading from streets into homes. We soon found that where the radii were quite sharp cars would get off the driveways as they crossed the parking and dig out deep muddy holes on either side of the driveway making an unsightly condition. Consequently, in recent years, we

have set up a control in the size of these radii in order to make a broad easy turn for cars entering a home.

This also greatly facilitates the handling of traffic on the streets.

Article No 19.

We started out by using largely elm trees for planting through the district, but in recent years have used oaks, lindens, hard maples and many other varieties that have beautiful color in the autumn to give beauty to the district during the fall months.

In many of our streets we have tried out staggering of parking trees in order to give a more informal effect, particularly where there are sharp curves, but this has not been successful. It does not create an orderly appearance in the street.

We also made the mistake in the early days of planting our trees too close together, frequently having four rows of trees on the street – one row on each side of the sidewalk. As these trees grew in size they so completely shaded the grass that it was impossible to grow grass, and they also cut off the light, air and breeze from the home. At the same time it is difficult to get people to let you cut out these trees after they get too large, and even if you do take them out, it is almost impossible to do it and still retain uniformity in the appearance of the street.

We feel one of the most important things in the development of beauty of a residential subdivision as it takes on age is to prune the trees very carefully upward so as to create a nice arching effect as you drive up and down the street. We always have low hanging branches out away. They tend to split and either kill the tree or destroy its shape, and they always cut off the air and view of the homes.

Article No. 20.

We have discouraged the building of walls or fences along street lines, feeling it is much more desirable to have an open feeling from lawn to lawn. We realize in some communities there would be a good public acceptance of enclosing lawns behind walls and fences, but we feel it is very difficult to get a pleasing appearance on account of the great variety of walls, or fences which might be built, varying in size, height, color, and general design.

Article No. 21.

In the early days we exercised no control of steps leading up terraces, and almost invariably builders would let these steps stick out of the ground six inches to a foot, making a very unsightly, jagged appearance up and down the street. We feel these terrace steps should be imbedded in the ground so that no part of the steps appear above the ground level.

We also find that the risers on such steps, or any steps in a lawn should be held to not over six inches. Higher risers in steps seem inappropriate in a lawn development.

Article No. 22.

When our streets cross a stream we often put in a little ford instead of bridge structures, in order to maintain a pleasing rural feeling. In such cases, of course, it is necessary to have another street available with a bridge to serve the same section so that in time of high water traffic can still be handled.

Article No. 23.

One of the greatest problems the subdivider has is to create neighborhoods in which you can establish certain character of property and maintain values and desirability through the years. We believe it is almost impossible to do this in a small area; that it is necessary for a developer to control a large area, or at least get appropriate restrictions on adjoining property.

Property devoted to uses injurious to residential neighborhoods around the boundary of a subdivision reflects upon and becomes a menace to property for considerable distance back into the subdivision. It does not only destroy the value of the abutting property, but has a very bad effect extending back for a block or two.

Of course, the finer you make your subdivision the more you invite injurious uses of the property around your boundary lines. The owner of such property sometimes is prompted to make a nuisance of his property in order to influence you to buy him out at his own price, or else he finds his property more valuable if used for commercial purposes because you have restricted your property against such use.

We have long since gotten away from the idea of trying to create home sites of individual value alone. We feel the objective of a subdivider should be to create neighborhood values extending over a large area and give this fundamental, basic protection to the whole neighborhood, then, of course, try to create as much individual character as possible for each home site in the property.

Of course, the load of carrying a large area of undeveloped land in order to give protection for your development is extremely serious. If a subdivider cannot afford to carry the load of a large tract, or adjoining tracts of ground, he should at least try to get options on adjoining property extending over ten years or more, or get the adjoining owners to join in some kind of restrictions before he starts to develop.

Article No. 24.

After you establish a new neighborhood, it is extremely important to set up homes associations and develop other neighborhood activities, so as to maintain a neighborhood morale which is just as important as army morale in time of war. Regardless of how fine you lay out your street plans; or how carefully you may set up and enforce your building restrictions, unless you can create neighborhood enthusiasm and confidence in the permanence of the neighborhood, it is difficult to maintain values.

Article No. 25

Any property that you are reserving for churches, schools, or business use should be so indicated on your maps and abstracts, and we believe that signs should be

maintained on such property so anybody buying in a subdivision would know absolutely any property that is reserved for other than residential uses.

Article No. 26.

Of course, in setting up restrictions for your approval of plans should apply to all future colors or remodeling of houses, or rebuilding in case of fire.

Article No. 27.

In planning your subdivision, as much of a buffer as possible should be created between your neighborhood shops, or any other commercial use and your single residence areas. This may be done by parks, playgrounds, churches, schools, or in some instances if you have apartments you can allow them to come between your commercial property and your single residential property.

Article No. 28.

We believe in segregating property as to size of homes and size of lots, and your subdivision should be so developed as to make a gradual transition from homes of smaller size and smaller lots to homes of larger proportions. We believe that full two story houses should not be permitted among one-story bungalows, or vice versa.

Article No 29.

In the beginning it is difficult to know the final size of homes and lots which may be developed in a particular area, and we feel the subdivider, as his property takes on character should be willing to redesign his lot sizes and his minimum cost of restrictions; as well as the type of architectural design in order to get a harmonious character to the various parts of his neighborhood. We have even found it necessary sometimes to re-plat an area making smaller or larger lots as the neighborhood began to take on a form different than we originally contemplated. The greatest elasticity should be retained in adapting the different parts of your subdivision to make the development of your remaining land as commensurate and appropriate as possible with the development that has already taken place.

Article No 30.

Where you have to contend with heavy arteries of traffic leading through your property, or on the boundary of your property, frequently it is advisable to avoid fronting homes on such arteries, or it is possible to develop such homes with the kitchen and service portions of the house and the garage facing such artery, placing the living portion of the house so it will face on the living lawn away from the heavy traffic.

All modern subdividers must recognize the need in our automobile age of certain heavy traveled streets. Such traffic may injure residential values. Consequently every possible buffer type of property that can be placed along such highways, i.e., golf courses, parks, playgrounds, churches, schools, neighborhood shops, etc., etc., may create a better use of the land rather than trying to force people to build these homes on such heavily traveled arteries.

Article No 31.

In laying out a street plan of a subdivision, if you contemplate building neighborhood shops as a part of your project, you should so design your streets as to lead as quickly as possible into your business center; or even if you do not plan to build a shopping center, but there is a nearby shopping center, your streets should be made to lead quickly and easily into such shopping center. This is also true as to your schools, and perhaps churches.

Article No. 32.

Many subdividers have endeavored to establish a neighborhood clubhouse. It is my opinion that as a rule they are not successful. A neighborhood starts with people who are acquainted with each other and some use may be made of such a clubhouse, but after the neighborhood grows older and people establish friendships, the attendance at such a clubhouse dwindles, and support falls off. In developing your property you may veer a large part of the expense of maintaining such a clubhouse, but often it is difficult to get the neighborhood to take it over, and in the meantime you may have completed the developing of your lands. Such a clubhouse has to have support from a very large area.

We feel it is very much better to establish country clubs and golf courses somewhere near your property, using them as buffers if possible and let these clubs look to a citywide support.

Article No 33.

We have used many measures to create interest in our subdivisions, such as the building of picnic ovens in some of our nearby vacant ground. However, after homes were built near these picnic ovens as a rule they became a menace and we had to remove them.

We have also put in houses for Campfire Girls or Boy Scout activities which are all right as long as they are remote from homes, but as the subdivision builds up around them we have found they often become objectionable.

We have laid out many bridle trails through our property which was all right as long as our ground was vacant, but when these bridle trails became near homes, the litter along them was objectionable; the riders using the trails early in the morning awakened sleepers; and there was some objection to rough language used by people using the trails which was heard by children in the neighborhood. We found it very difficult to maintain a bridle trail through a well built up area.

Article No. 34.

In the early days we made no effort to provide parking space for our churches. As these churches grew and the number of cars of those attending services, funerals or weddings increased so many cars were parked up and down the streets in front of the homes, even occasionally blocking driveways, that in recent years we have strongly urged provision of ample private parking space for churches.

This is also true of schools, clubs, and other institutions that may be incorporated in your property.

Article No. 35.

We think the design and color of street furnishings, i.e., fireplugs, streetlights, mail boxes, etc., is extremely important. There should be a harmony of color and design. Such fixtures on your streets are constantly seen, and can do much to mar or add beauty to the street scene.

Article. No. 36.

We feel it should be the purpose of every subdivider to try to create “monopoly” lots. By this, I mean try to give as many lots as possible certain distinctive features as to views, slope of the lawn; preservation of trees; pleasant vistas of approach; a sunrise or sunset view; preservation of an open stream or a rocky ledge, or any other feature that may create in the mind of your purchaser the feeling that he has a certain monopoly, or certain advantage which does not exist on any other lot which he is considering purchasing.

Whenever you can make a purchaser feel that he is getting a lot that is a little more distinctive, and has more character than any other lot in the whole subdivision, you create not only additional value, but also a satisfaction and enthusiasm in your buyer after he is living there.

This same principle should be applied by trying to create a certain monopolistic feeling about certain groups of lots, or the whole block, or a certain area. For instance if you can develop a certain section where the majority of homes have a commanding view of the sunset; or through the preservation of open spaces can retain the prevailing breeze of your section of the country, you have not only an added argument in the sale of your ground, but an added source of satisfaction for the people living there.

Article No. 37.

We have long since abandoned providing alleys in our residential section. We feel they become the source of disorder and uncleanness; occupy land that could otherwise be used for the garden side of the home, and are very offensive to the use of the garden side of the home. When you have an alley it is difficult to keep people from putting trash in it, and it is difficult to keep people from having detached garages.

It is true, of course, that alleys make less necessity for building individual driveways for each home, but we believe considering all the aspects, it is preferable to have the driveways than the alleys.

Article No. 38.

We do reserve easements on the rear of all our lots for telephone, and electric light poles, conduits, sewers etc., and believe it is much better to have these lines in the rear of our lots than in the street.

In planting the rear of the lot an effort should be made not to install trees that will grow to a great height and interfere with such wires.

In some areas we have installed underground conduits for such service, but we have not found sufficient public appreciation and willingness to pay an increased cost for the ground to cover these costs.

If you do not have underground conduits, and still have the poles in the rear of your lots, it does make it necessary to retain easements at proper intervals along sides of the lots to carry light lines out to the street, for streetlights. In most of our subdivisions our streetlights have been put in underground conduits thereby eliminating overhead wires and poles on the streets.

Article No. 39.

Our name "Country Club District" is a comprehensive term. Our whole development is divided into a number of subdivisions with different names, comprising nearly fifty different designations. We feel that when you open a new part of your development it is important to give it a new name. Unsold lots can become shop-worn in the minds of the people if they are continually advertised in the name of the same subdivision. We believe it is better to give new and pleasing names to the new section of your subdivision as it is opened to the market.

We think the names for the various subdivisions is very important. They should have an alluring, euphonious swing. We also think the selection of street names is very important. A street name that is difficult to pronounce by deliverymen, and people in general becomes very confusing. Names should be chosen that are not subject to more than one pronunciation. We think pleasing names should be given to parks, playgrounds, etc.

Article No. 40.

We feel there should be a general street plan that makes it as easy as possible to find certain addresses, and the streets should be plainly marked. The names of streets should not be changed as you go up and down the same street. Certain general streets of the same name should be preserved if possible throughout the length of your property. Unrelated names may be given to certain short or minor streets, but even then there is some objection that arises as a result of the difficulty of taxi drivers, visitors and others in finding a home for which they may be looking.

We also think you should avoid using the name of a street that is produced through your property if the character of the property on that street further downtown, or elsewhere is of poor quality. For instance, if some street has a lot of industries located on it further downtown, it is bad to use that name for that street when it gets out into your purely residential property. A street name should have a ring of dignity and a certain exclusiveness, or at least be flavored with residential meaning rather than some other inferior property use.

Article No. 41.

On certain main highways, or boulevards running through our property we have installed circles at certain intersections at intervals, in order to discourage speeding. There is some objection to such circles as traffic hazards, and some resistance from the standpoint of motorists being forced to slow up as they pass around such circles.

It is rather revolutionary to suggest the intentional creation of a jog in order to reduce speeding, but at least a slight jog with fairly easy radii may accomplish this purpose. Safety of children in a neighborhood is a very important thing for a subdivider to consider.

Article No 42.

Every effort should be made by the subdivider to so lay out his street plan as to discourage as far as possible through traffic of trucks over any of his streets. This may be possible by different things to which consideration should be given.

Article No. 43.

In the sale of property to churches, schools, or any other institution, every effort should be made to get them to acquire a sufficient amount of ground to provide good open lawn space on all sides of the building. Otherwise, it becomes a considerable injury to nearby residences. All such structures should observe your building lines.

Article No. 44.

We believe that so-called large billboards have no right in residential property, even for advertising your own property. There should be great restraint exercised in the size and number of "for sale" signs.

Article No. 45.

Every subdivider should try to create the greatest variety of home sites possible. Human demands vary greatly. Some purchasers desire a formalized development on a high level lot; others are interested in a hillside site. Some buyers are attracted to the possibility of a rock garden, or the preservation of an open stream. Some people object strenuously to a high terrace, while others do not. It is fortunate that there is a variation of human desires, and it is a wise subdivider who creates as many types of lots so far as size, shape, lie of the terrain, and other features as he possibly can.

Article No. 46.

We have found that there is considerable danger in having lot lines run to the center of a stream, or the center of a stone ledge, or any other natural feature. The owner on one side may beautify his part and the other owner fail to do so. Wherever it is possible we believe it is better to throw all such a natural feature onto one lot. We realize this is not always possible.

Article No. 47.

We have placed nearly half million dollars worth of garden objects of art selected in various parts of the world in our little parks, triangles, circles, etc. We have also used many marble vases, and statues as gateways to our streets. We feel this tends to make a subdivision an outdoor museum of beauty; adds greatly to the character and peculiar individuality of your property, and also becomes an inspiration for your homeowners to develop their property more intensively.

Article No. 48.

We place a high value upon the preservation of any historical landmarks in our property. For instance the old Shawnee Mission, built in 1836 as one of the early missions to the Indians in the Middle West, lies within our property, and after many years we got the state to acquire these buildings and surround them with quite a large tract of ground as a state park.

There is a beautiful old Colonial home in our district known as the Wornall Homestead. It was built before the Civil War and was used as a hospital during the war. This has been carefully preserved.

We believe appropriate markings should be maintained on such historical buildings or sites, giving an intangible value to your whole subdivision, creating color and interest as a result of their preservation and perpetuation. Even the homestead of an old well-known pioneer can be capitalized.

Article No. 49.

One of the greatest problems of the subdividers is to create property of charm from perfectly flat, barren ground. In such instances a subdivider must spend a great deal more money in developing particular features – curving streets; winding roads; abundant tree planting; appropriate gateways; striking locations of homes, etc., etc.

A home placed on a broad axis of an approaching drive, or a view across an open park may add value to a whole neighborhood. The development of even a small park with an excellent object of art, and a reflecting pool may have an influence in increased value of neighborhood enthusiasm over quite a large area.

On such vacant barren lands, perhaps typical lots should have very complete planting to show the possibilities of the development. And, the first homes built, whether built by the subdivider or others, should be extremely well planted to overcome the rawness of the new vacant areas. Perhaps a subdivider, if necessary, can well afford to contribute quite largely to the more complete planting of the first two or three homes in order to set examples and make a demonstration.

Article No. 50.

The design and lawn treatment of the first homes built in a subdivision, and the character of the people to whom they are sold are extremely important. Bizarre or exotic type of design, or in fact, any extreme design that might not have very good public

acceptance, should be particularly avoided in the early stages of development of a new subdivision.

After a subdivision becomes pretty well developed, an occasional house just suiting the desire of some particular owner may blend into the property with much less injurious effect.

Article No. 51.

An unfortunate sale to a person of questionable character – particularly in the early part of the development may ruin the whole subdivision in the minds of the general public whom you wish to sell. In fact, the type of person to whom you sell is extremely important throughout the whole life of your subdivision. The subdivider assumes the responsibility to group around his early purchasers people of character who will make good neighbors and friends.

Of course, this is a very difficult thing to control in resales, but every effort should be made to create a feeling of neighborhood obligation among your owners in the event of resale to sell only to those who would be desirable to the particular neighborhood.

Article No. 52.

Every subdivider of close-in land is today confronted with the competition of land further out along the highways leading into our cities which is put on the market at much lower prices. It is extremely important to give your property such character that it will justify the higher price you must ask for it. The very protection afforded by your restrictions; your homes associations; the neighborhood morale you have built up; the individuality and personality you give your property may be rather intangible in value; the very saving in automobile travel really reflect the basic dollars and cents value to a man building a home in your subdivision. A certain size home may cost just the same whether built in your property or further out. The cost of your site may be very much more, but after all the value of the site is fairly small in proportion to the total cost of the home built out in unrestricted or remote areas which may easily depreciate 50 or 75% in value as its approaches or surroundings become uncongenial and injurious, while the values in your district may easily increase with age and the more complete development of your surroundings.

Article No. 53.

We believe it is a serious mistake to put in street improvements and utilities on too much of your tract in advance. It loads up carrying costs, increases maintenance costs, and gives you a lot of shop-worn property.

Article No. 54.

We also believe that a subdivider should be careful not to commit too much of his land in advance to certain sized lots and minimum priced homes. We believe elasticity should be retained in order to adapt houses and lots to changing modes of life, changing demands and changing market conditions.

Article No. 55.

In the buying of land for subdivisions, every effort should be made to buy on long-term payments if you are not able to pay cash. We think a fifteen-year payment plan is about the minimum term; also, if possible, the subdivider should not have any required payments on principal except as he releases lots for sale. Also, if possible interest should be accumulative and only paid as the lots are sold; and if possible there should be a sliding scale of interest with a very low rate in the beginning, made up with larger rates in the last few years. We realize this is not always easy to obtain, but is very well worthwhile considering. If the seller of a farm or large tract of land does not have enough faith in the future of the property to be willing to make his terms easy, you should approach the purchase of such land with very great caution.

Article No. 56.

Everything you do in your subdivision should be done with an idea of the effect on your whole community. You must be community conscious at all times. You must cooperate with your City Planning Commission to fit in the planning of your property with the general plan of the city.

Article No. 57.

Tracts of land that require large expenses of grading in order to bring them to condition for sale should be avoided, or the price you pay per acre should be considerably less.

Article No. 58.

We have never sold any property subject to future bond and payments for street or other public utility improvements.

Article No. 59.

No subdivider should estimate his future profits based upon the profits of his first sales. He must always remember that he may have many lots left at the end of twenty or twenty-five years which he would better have given away in the beginning if he had known which lots would remain unsold. It is very dangerous to count upon future profits on unsold lots which cost so much to carry, and which may remain on your hands for a great many years. The real problem, however, of each subdivider should be to so handle his subdivision as to make his values increase through the years so as to keep ahead of the carrying costs on unsold lots.

Article No. 60.

We feel a subdivider should thoroughly inform each purchaser as to the size of water mains, sewer system, available transportation, etc., for if your buyers are not thoroughly informed this will be a boomerang upon you in the future.

Article No. 61.

We have tried both broken building lines and uniform building lines, and are rather inclined to favor the uniform lines with slight variations. However, we do follow a varied building line in rough topography.

Article No 62.

We believe that no subdivider can afford to depend alone upon the zoning regulations of the municipality affecting his property to protect the future. Your restrictions should go much farther than the zoning regulations, and their perpetuation from period to period should be placed in the hands of the owners in your property and not in the municipality.

Article No. 63.

We believe it is not essential to have your lots in square or rectangular shape. Frequently odd-shaped lots appeal to buyers. However, it is important not to create odd-shaped lots where it is difficult to place a house with the proper amount of free space. Extreme diagonally shaped lots can create considerable difficulty in the selling of the site due to the placement of a home upon it.

Article No. 64.

The turn-arounds at dead end streets should have a diameter of at least a hundred feet and provide space for continuous moving cars even if there is a complete line of cars parked all around the circle.

Article No. 65.

Key lots should be avoided in every subdivision. We, in our climate, prefer north and south frontages rather than east and west frontages, and we make every effort to avoid the shifting of the plan of frontage from block to block.

Article No 66.

We do not favor the so-called "Radburn Plan" of street and interior walk and lawn development. We think it presents many difficulties, and so far as our own city is concerned, we do not believe it would get the popular acceptance.

Article No. 67.

As far as possible, lot lines should be at right angles to the street.

Article No. 68.

We feel every effort should be made not to have too high terraces between lot lines. The handling of surface drainage water from site to site should be given very careful consideration.

Article No. 69.

We never determine on a street layout in rough topography without complete contour maps and the grades of all streets. Through the years we have greatly reduced the amount of grading we do upon our streets. It is also important to consider so establishing street grades that the waste excavated dirt may be put upon the site rather than having the expense of removing it.

Article No. 70.

There should be a definite concentration of the shopping center if one is planned in the subdivision. We feel that local shopping centers should not be nearer than a half-mile and general shopping centers should be at least a mile apart. In fact, we think it is better to spread this distance rather than to lessen it. Don't overestimate the amount of shopping area needed. It takes a large population to support even a small group of shops. Ample off-street parking space should be provided in such parking centers.

Article No. 71.

We believe in the encouraging of public school authorities to provide large playground areas in connection with the school, which may be used for neighborhood play grounds even in vacation periods. Where this is possible, it relieves the subdivider from providing playgrounds with the many problems which they develop.

Article No. 72.

For homes costing from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 we believe a lot depth of some 135 feet is desirable. Shorter lots crowd the house too close to the street or do not provide ample garden site area. We believe even minor residence streets should have a width of 50 feet over all. For homes running from \$12,600.00 to \$25,000.00, we have found a depth of 150 feet quite valuable.

On much larger homes greater depths can be used, but too great lot depths can considerably reduce the square foot price you can get for your ground. We think it is a fallacy to assume that you can, as a rule, get as much out of your ground with over-depth lots as you can with fairly moderate depth lots. The same is true with lot widths. While it is desirable, of course, to encourage the sale of the greatest amount of frontage possible with each home, we believe this must be approached with caution, because you are liable to get the ground costs out of proportion to the cost of the home itself.

However, no developer should over-crowd his ground. Where we want to retain a good view, we frequently step back the building line as you go down the street approaching such a view. We find there is not much objection to a variance of 5 feet from house to house in building lines. Topography frequently justifies a greater variance.

Article No 73.

Any subdivider must take into consideration the customs of his community and the public acceptance. You cannot afford to try to lead the buyers by too great jumps from preconceived opinions. But he should constantly strive to raise the standards a little bit higher each year and gradually lead his buyers to the acceptance of these higher

standards – more rigid architectural control, better landscaping designs, wider lots, etc. In other words, I wish to caution any subdivider from becoming too extreme too far in advance of public acceptance. The real measure of the success of any ideas in the long run is to have them received and applied, and still enable the developer to operate at a profit. The real test of the successful sub-division is the final average of the property, realizing that some of the first efforts may not be as advanced and as enlightened as some of the later elements as he gets up steam and gets his subdivision going on a profitable, active basis.

Article No. 74.

Every subdivider should be careful to avoid unfortunate backing up of homes with unpleasant rears to the sides or frontages of other homes. Up to the present time, we have not favored the building of a garage extending out beyond the main body of the house. We realize the variance of the sentiment in different parts of the country on this particular subject. Ample planting should be used to screen off any unpleasant views.

Article No. 75.

Service roadways along major highways create a very large expense, and can only be provided where the property can command a fairly high price.

Article No. 76.

The shops in a neighborhood center should not be permitted to project beyond building lines of neighboring homes. However, the value and success of merchandising may be greatly lessened if the shop fronts and show windows are too far removed from the line of travel.

Article No. 77.

Subdividers should provide ample setback of homes and shops to provide for future street widening, which may be anticipated throughout the years.

Article No. 78.

Houses placed on an echelon arrangement along a diagonal street, or, in fact, any other street, present a very unpleasant arrangement.

Article No. 79.

We are afraid of court arrangements in the placement of residences, although we realize it has been fairly successful in certain parts of the country.

Article No. 80.

Every effort should be made to so design your lots that you will not have homes on one side of the street facing into the rears or garages on the opposite side of the street.

Article No. 81.

Any subdivider should very carefully consider many plans of development in order to get the maximum number of front feet and still retain the proper width roads and provide proper ornamental features in his property. In other words, he should not too quickly decide upon his lot and block and street plan, but should give very careful consideration to many plans, weighing street costs and available saleable frontages one with the other, always keeping in consideration the attractiveness and appeal and character at the same time.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN053

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.