



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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**Mistakes We Have Made in
Developing Shopping Centers**

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It is realized that varying climates, local customs, building codes and regulations, location of competing shops, rapidly changing conditions, differing types of buying power, relation to transportation facilities, highways and boulevards, topographical barriers, and many other factors will modify the recommendations which follow. The suggestions in this bulletin are, therefore, presented as a guide rather than fixed rules.

First of all let me suggest the closest cooperation with all municipal, county and township authorities, particularly the City Planning and Zoning Commissions; transportation companies; Board of Education; park boards and recreational groups; Council of Churches, as well as with the Chamber of Commerce, Realtors' groups and downtown or central business organizations.

There is some decentralization of certain types of retail trade going on in most all of our cities, making an increased demand for outlying shopping locations. Every developer of new large residential neighborhoods should try to capitalize the shopping center values he creates. Consideration of possible future trade territory and proximity to high population density is important. "Walk-in" trade from nearby multiple housing is very helpful. These and many other influencing factors will receive continuing study by the Community Builders' Council whose members I wish to thank for their many valuable ideas. In addition to members of the Council, I have submitted this article to other suburban shopping center developers and insofar as feasible, their suggestions have been incorporated. Constructive suggestions from all readers will be welcome.

A. GENERAL PLAN

1. Don't make the mistake of placing stores on hillsides. Select as level land as possible. Hillside locations cause increased construction and maintenance costs and are less flexible.

2. Don't make the mistake of omitting buffers between your shopping center and adjoining single-family residential areas. Use parks, playgrounds, schools, churches, multiple housing, and public buildings as buffers. Such uses make a very desirable transition and protect the single-family homes. Walter Schmidt of Cincinnati warns against too large parks or play areas as they make too big a gap between the shops and the customers. He is strong for the use of multiple family dwellings which provide a mass of buyers.3. Don't make the mistake of selecting a site that will accommodate only a limited variation in store depth. We have shops all the way from 20-feet to 200-feet

deep. Newton C. Farr, Chicago, President of the Urban Land Institute, urges that special care be taken in site selection and in the general plan so that the room sizes can be adjusted to meet the future needs of the tenants.⁴ We don't like shops facing small off-street courts. We get much lower rents for shops located off the main street. Perhaps this is not so important in small neighborhood shopping centers where customers soon learn the location of all shops. However, close proximity to main thoroughfares is highly desirable in any project. We have made some serious mistakes in this. Streets and Alleys

5. We made the mistake of dedicating alleys to the city and later wished to change or use such alleys. We have successfully built a shop on one of the street ends of a short alley we owned, and the remaining “dead end” alley has proved satisfactory. This would not be practical in a long alley serving many stores. In alleys not dedicated you may have to give easements for various utilities.⁶ In some of our shopping centers, we did not study the surrounding street plan sufficiently to lead trade into the shopping centers from contributing areas. This should always be done.

7. In our Plaza center, where we have some 200 tenants, we have given 46% of our land for streets – not counting three large free parking stations. This was not a mistake.

8. We believe in short blocks in shopping centers, providing more corner locations and shorter distances to shop around the block. We made some of our blocks too long. Shops on important street intersections are desirable rather than buried in the middle of the block. (Harold Janss, builder of Westwood Village in Los Angeles, thinks longer blocks advisable, especially where interior parking is involved.)

9. We also recommend interior loading courts in larger blocks. It is important to get all deliveries off streets, if possible. Here again we have made some mistakes. It is wise not to dedicate these interior courts unless you reserve adjoining border areas for possible later deeper building uses.

10. We believe in a “mass” shop center rather than a “string” street type of development. We also believe in a horizontal type of development rather than vertical in suburban centers. In few cases are buildings of more than two stories profitable and higher buildings with greater tenant density accentuate the parking problem.

11. If the shop center is small, it is better to have all shops on one side of the street, and of course, on the “going home” side of a street if possible, although this is not absolutely necessary. Here again we made some mistakes.

12. Curb parking is a necessity for “drop in” trade.

Competing Centers

13. In some of our shopping centers we did not give sufficient consideration to future competing centers. Trade is shifting. Be sure to check your zoning ordinance for future possible nearby competing areas.

14. We made the mistake of putting some of our ten shopping centers too close together. Perhaps about one mile apart is right for small groups of shops in single-family residential areas. Of course, Highway approaches, transportation, multiple housing, and relation to other centers, all enter into such decisions. Larger centers should be much

farther apart. (This distance seems too far to me, but J.C. Taylor, President J.C. Nichols Company, Kansas City, recommends shopping centers be at least a mile apart.)¹⁵. In some of our shopping centers, as well as in our residential neighborhoods, we have installed objects of art, and believe it has given identity and appeal which is helpful to our merchants. These include such features as small pools, benches, sundials, wellheads, statues, fountains and vases, and in our second floor corridors we have spent considerable money on adornments such as tile plaques and pictures. We generally provide a flagpole on a building. In certain areas such expenditures might not be warranted, but it does increase pride of occupancy.¹⁶. In one or two of our purely local small shopping centers, we made the mistake of providing more shop rooms than were immediately needed. Outlying small shopping centers are a perilous adventure and must be planned and studied carefully. We have found just four or five retail shops do not create a prosperous center, but may be used as a starter. Also, in some of our small groups we made the mistake of putting in certain types of merchandising which can only succeed in larger centers. It takes at least fifteen to twenty shops to make a good center.¹⁷. We find flower boxes, iron grilles, or similar obstructions in front of a show window unwise. Allow customers to get close to show windows. Avoid grass strips or shrubbery between curb and walk.¹⁸. We have given no consideration to “air parks” adjoining our shopping centers. Under present conditions, many feel they are a nuisance and hazard to residential communities. Some even anticipate need of roof space for landing helicopters. We have few roofs where this could be possible. As civilian aviation trends are not yet clear, it is too early to make any definite recommendations. The Community Builders’ Council has this under consideration.¹⁹. We feel one-way traffic streets will damage suburban shopping centers and are unnecessary and injurious to merchants. To Avoid

20. Do not make the mistake of erecting gateways to shopping centers. The center can better be given identity by proper grouping of buildings with appropriate architectural accent.

21. We encouraged one merchant to put in a public comfort station for women in his basement. Later he had to abandon this because of abuse and vandalism. We doubt if comfort stations are practical unless of such a large size that a charge can be made to pay for attendants.²² We doubt the advisability of shops set back from the street with a grass plot or park between them and the street. We made some serious mistakes in such layouts. Shops recessed from main flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic are at a great disadvantage. If such setback is adopted, it is far better to use it for parking space. (In Washington, D.C., where I have served on the planning commission for nineteen years, these recessed layouts with front parking have been quite successful.) In many Texas cities, one or more rows of front parking have apparently been successful. The entrances and exits to such parking areas should be easy and ample and the stores always clearly visible from the street.²³ Hugh Prather in Dallas has made a great success of an excellent business center on ten acres, with some sixty tenants, where his stores face a large interior parking court and not the boundary streets. This again indicates that there can be no fixed rule.

24. Recreational types of business can bring a lot of desirable traffic to your center – such as theaters, bowling alleys, and dancing schools. But, avoid the blank walls

of such places on your streets. Bury them as much as possible in the interior of the blocks and leave space, if feasible, next to the entranceway for adjoining shops facing on the streets. We made the mistake of putting in a shooting gallery, and had to abandon it because of the noise.²⁵ You can temporarily use and secure income from vacant land held for later building uses by putting in pony riding rings, tennis courts, landscape nurseries, or miniature golf course. We doubt swimming pools, although some have been successful. However, don't make too long leases for any such temporary uses.

Size of Centers

26. We know of no safe ratio to use in arriving at the number of square feet of floor space in relation to population. Too many other factors are involved. The calculations we did use generally proved to be wrong. A great many formulas have been used and in most of them the amount of commercial space needed has been overestimated. It is better to start in a small way and add shops as needed. We all know that most of our cities have entirely too much frontage zoned for business. This is a very important matter and should be studied further by the Urban Land Institute. 27. Our experience seems to favor independent stores rather than branches of downtown stores. But we have had some notable exceptions to this, particularly chain stores which are generally an advantage to a shopping center. Judson Bradway of Detroit favors important chain stores in shopping centers. Guy Ellis of the splendid Lincoln Road Development in Miami Beach also favors strong branch stores. Lincoln Road shops are owned by several different landlords.

28. We have found that large office organizations do not bring a lot of additional trade to shops. Our surveys show that these employees bring very little patronage to the center, but give most of their business to some center near their homes. This is worth thinking about when considering buying habits. B. STREET IMPROVEMENTS AND UTILITIES

1. In developing our street in shopping centers, we made the mistake in a few cases of too narrow streets – 70-feet to curb is about the minimum width for diagonal parking at both curbs, and we prefer diagonal street parking. (In 20 years in the Plaza center no serious accident has ever occurred in any diagonal parking at our curbs.) Sixty feet is about the minimum width for parallel parking, or parallel parking on one side and diagonal on the other side in shopping centers. With such wide shopping street we recommend pedestrian isles of safety at street corners. These isles should not be more than five to six inches high and painted in colors to make them easily seen by motorists. If they are too high, pedestrians will walk around them. We made some isles too high. They should be kept clear of snow and trash so as to be easily visible. The experience with isles of safety varies. Hugh Potter of Houston thinks they are more of an obstacle to motorists than a protection to pedestrians. However, after years of experience, the merchants in our Plaza center are unanimously for them.² Twenty-foot alleys are about the right width. Wider alleys encourage customers and employees to park off-street in alleys. We have made some alleys too narrow and some too wide. Walter Schmidt, Cincinnati, thinks that 18-foot alley width is about right.

Sidewalks

3. We feel that on the main streets in a large center a 17-foot sidewalk is about the minimum width to provide for fire plugs, mail boxes, street signs, street lights, trash receptacles, street trees, awnings and ample free pedestrian movement and window shopping. On side streets you can use narrower walks. In small suburban centers, 12-foot to 15-foot sidewalks may be ample. With narrower sidewalks no street trees should be used. We certainly made some of our walks too narrow. (There were seven baby carriages parked recently in front of one drugstore in the Plaza which shows need for wide sidewalks.) Walter Schmidt, Cincinnati, feels 17-foot sidewalks are too wide. However, we do not agree with him on walk widths in major streets.

4. In streets with wide paving, we believe it is important to have sharp corners – about 15-foot radius to lessen the distance the pedestrian has to walk in crossing the street, and to slow down the speed of cars in going around corners, as well as provide as much curb parking space as possible. We made some of our radii too great.

5. We made the mistake of not protecting our concrete curb on street radii and alley entrances. We are now using an inserted iron band in such places.

6. We also now install bumpers on rear corners of buildings at alley entrances, to protect the buildings.

7. Don't use low branching street trees in shopping centers. They conceal shop signs and window fronts. Keep street trees trimmed high. We feel they should be at least 50-feet apart. We believe in street trees, particularly if the center is a part of a nearby residential area, but we made the mistake of planting them too close together. Experience with trees in shopping centers has varied in different parts of the country. Careful consideration should be given before a decision is made. The benefits of trees are that they provide shade, amenity, and beauty, and the drawbacks are difficulty of uniform growth, untidiness, and danger of obstructing window displays. However, in a recent survey of our Plaza shopping district, 19 out of 20 merchants were in favor of keeping the street trees.

8. Try to get all light and telephone poles off your main streets into the alleys. The expense of underground lines may be justified in larger centers. Placing the lines underground where they cross the streets adds greatly to the appearance and does not increase the cost tremendously.

Questionable Practice

9. We do not believe in divided roadways in suburban centers. (Harold Janss of Los Angeles thinks divided roadways in suburban centers are all right on important streets, though not on side streets. He feels divided roadways add beauty, if well developed and tended, and act as a safety measure for people crossing streets at points other than street intersections. However, Walter Schmidt of Cincinnati is strongly opposed to divided roadways.) The Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute will study this matter and analyze the good and bad features.

10. In some of our centers we made our curbs too high, creating a mental resistance. We feel six to seven inches is ample unless there is danger of street flooding.

11. We failed to use reinforcing steel in some of our sidewalks on filled land. Broken sidewalks in front of shops make a bad appearance and create a hazard to pedestrians.

C. ARCHITECTURE

1. In designing shop structures, we have frequently made the mistake of endeavoring to secure architectural perfection rather than serve practical needs in merchandising. You must be careful not to be led into too extravagant plans by your planner or architect who may sometimes fail to weigh costs with future returns, or may fail to recognize practical merchandising needs. However, we always employ and consult such technicians in all our projects.

2. We believe we have not made a mistake in giving harmonious architectural character to all buildings in any one center, using one distinctive type of architecture in each center. Dramatic effects can sometimes be secured, however, through the careful blending of several architectural styles. Then, too, certain merchants desire their own distinctive "fronts," but we think this should be controlled within reasonable limits.

3. We made the mistake of too much front masonry in some of our early shop fronts with too little show window space and too many jogs of a foot or so in fronts. It has cost a lot of money to correct this. Even a slightly recessed or hidden shop is at a great disadvantage. We have also spent a lot of money replacing divided show windowpanes with solid plastic glass fronts. We have no so-called "glass fronts" where an effort is made to make the whole store a show window. This treatment is highly recommended by those who have used it, providing the glass is amply braced and supported against high winds. (Judson Bradway, Detroit, favors distinctive fronts for each important merchant, but with architectural harmony preserved.)

4. We have spent a lot of money to give our buildings distinctive character and identity. We put as much as \$20,000 in one of our towers; \$5,000 on one of our domes; and large expenditures on second floor iron balconies. This may be a questionable cost, particularly in small centers, but we think it has paid to make our centers appealing.

5. Controlled mass color effects in building exteriors are important as accentuating devices and are worth considering.

6. We question second floor space in small shopping centers. It is doubtful if such space will pay its way. Land values must be high or area limited to justify second floor space in a small center. We have carried a lot of second floor space at a loss.

Basements

7. We built some shops without basements, and later regretted this. Many merchants can expand merchandising into basements; put their offices or rest rooms there; use such space for storing merchandise, or heating and cooling plants. The need for basement space varies in different parts of the country.

Where land is cheap and lots are deep, consideration can be given to elimination of basements. The need for basements will also vary with the type of store. Many super-markets, for instance, which have frequent deliveries from local storage warehouses,

want their storage space on the main floor and do not want to bother with basement ramps or elevators.

We have frequently been able to expand certain merchants by enabling them to occupy unused basement space of an adjoining store. We use a lot of basement space for storage of our seasonal decorations.

In the north, particularly, where you have to go down 3-feet to 4-feet for a foundation footing because of frost or sloping ground, the basement will be found to be the cheapest space in the building. There are occasional types of business that can be wholly located in basement space. (Newton Farr of Chicago suggests possibility of use of space under sidewalk in high priced land areas).

If a basement is used for storage only, then perhaps 7 1/2 to 8-foot ceilings are ample. If such space is to be used for merchandising, then at least 8 1/2 to 9-foot ceilings are desirable. We made the mistake of not carefully studying our basement heights. If the basement is used for storage only, stairways can be as narrow as 3 to 4-feet, but for merchandising they should be not less than 4 to 5-feet, or even wider.

Sign Control

8. We believe we have not made a mistake in controlling all exterior signs in our shops built in recent years. We generally permit no projecting or roof signs – no garish signs of any character. We try to get uniformity in color and size of signs (particularly Neon signs) as well as size and design of lettering and height above sidewalks. This is hard to achieve and may be questionable. We feel 12-inch letters are large enough to be read easily a block away. If possible, buildings should be wired for inserted signs above the display windows.

(David Bohannon of San Francisco feels considerable latitude should be given to tenants in the use of their “trade mark” signs as an integral part of their store front.)

9. We made the mistake of building areaways in our street sidewalks to serve our basements. They cost a lot of money and quickly became trash collectors. We now omit them.

10. We have made many of our front bulkheads under show windows too shallow. Heights and depths of bulkheads vary for different merchants’ needs. If possible, delay their construction until type of tenant is known. This also, of course, involves the height above the sidewalk of display windows. We have spent an enormous amount of money changing bulkheads and show windows.

11. Don’t make the mistake of having your shop space all the same size. Varying widths and depths are desirable. You need some small shops as incubators for small businesses, but should always have space to expand them, both by doubling up rooms and adding depth, or shifting of tenants. Such changes are frequent if your center grows and prospers.

12. Get as many adjoining shops as possible on the same floor and ceiling levels so as to throw them together easily later for larger stores. Also, avoid as much as possible dividing partitions which cannot be removed. Keep everything flexible as possible. We have even built some of our floors in a building, where the street grade is

not too great, on a slant to fit street grade, and let the merchant adjust his fixtures to this slant. This enables us to throw rooms together without changing floor levels and permits street doors wherever desired.

Store Fronts

13. In designing store fronts, make them as fluid as possible so as to permit future changes in the location of front doors or shifting of display windows to suit changing tenants' needs. Not always doing this has cost us a lot of money.

14. Avoid, as far as possible, columns in the storefronts. Either use wide spacing or setback columns (some 4 to 6-feet back) with cantilever construction. Also space interior columns as far apart as possible consistent with cost.15. A step or steep ramp into a store front door is always bad. We made some serious mistakes in this.16. As far as possible, all store entrances should face the main flow of foot traffic. We moved a door in a corner store only some 20 feet from a side street onto the main street and increased the tenant's business fifty percent.

17. In some of our early buildings we did not provide ample electrical capacity to meet growing needs of electricity, and in one building we have replaced the electrical entrance conduit, wiring and main line switch three times to meet increased needs.

Heating and Cooling

18. Consideration should be given to future needs of space for cooling plants and ducts even if not to be provided in the beginning.19. In one-floor shops, we believe it is wise to have individual heating plants for each tenant, placing the responsibility of its operation entirely on that tenant.20. Whether you or the tenant is to provide cooling and heating, much consideration should be given to good insulation. In one-story structures, it is strongly recommended that the landlord avoid the responsibility of maintaining a central air conditioning and heating system. Small air conditioning and heating units are on the market of a size that can take care of individual needs better than a central unit. Tenants' needs vary so greatly that it is difficult for the landlord to give satisfaction with central plants. Where there are many second floor offices and the stores are closely grouped, Walter Schmidt prefers the central system. Newton Farr strongly recommends modern individual units.21. Good ventilation is a necessity if air conditioning is not to be provided. Frosting and condensation on street show windows are always a problem and deserve technical study by the Council and research groups.

New Materials

22. Consideration should be given to the new types of glass for window fronts which are said to prevent fading of merchandise by sunshine.23. E.R. Weidlein, director of Mellon Institute of Technical Research, was recently in Kansas City, and told of a new liquid that could be applied to show windows and showcases, which enables them to be kept clean for a period of three months by simply rubbing with a dry cloth. While this is now being used only in eyeglasses, etc., for the armed forces, he predicts that it will prove valuable for keeping show

windows and cases clean and giving good vision through the glass. Harold Vagtberg, president of the Midwest Research Institute in Kansas City, concurs with this.²⁴ Exterior lighting of a building is important, even if paid for by the landlord. In some cases we assess our tenants for such exterior lighting. Your buildings should not look dead at night. Night trade should be encouraged. "Night pedestrian traffic increases tomorrow's sales," says Lt. Comdr. Miller Nichols. Of course, a good continuous night and day flow of business is always desirable as well as proper street lighting.²⁵ Careful study should be given to the placing of radiators and cooling and heating ducts so as to interfere as little as possible with location of store fixtures. Don't merely leave this to your engineers and contractors. We have spent a small fortune in moving radiators, ducts, and thermostats.²⁶ We believe fluorescent lighting is coming more and more into use. Room Sizes²⁷. In the early days we made many mistakes of building all rooms 20, 25, or 50-feet wide, giving little thought to efficient use of this space by various types of merchants. Shop widths must be planned with great care. From our experience we recommend in general: a. If a small storeroom is to have cases and counters only on one side, the width should be about 10 to 11-feet.

b. If the store is to have counter and wall cases on one side and center display table, then not less than 14 to 15-feet should be provided.

c. If the store is to have counters and wall cases on both sides and an ample customer aisle in center, about 16 to 17-feet should be provided.

d. If the room is to have cases and counters on both sides and one centerline of display tables, the width should be about 21 to 22-feet.

e. If the room is to have counters and wall cases on both sides and a center sales island without central vertical cases, the width should be from 26 to 28-feet.

f. If the room is to have cases and counters on both sides, and an island with vertical central cases as well as counters and with space for service between, then the width should be about 29 to 31-feet. (These calculations were prepared by E.W. Tanner, head of Architectural Department of J.C. Nichols Company, after 25 years experience in designing shop buildings.)

Of course, all of the above dimensions vary with the type of merchandising, and they are suggested merely as an item for careful consideration. Avoid the tendency to use only round numbers in room sizes.

Walter Schmidt, Cincinnati, says that 18-foot span units work out excellently both for first floor shops and second floor offices. The split unit of 9 feet can be further varied by placing the partition on either side of the column. He has found 60-foot depths adequate for small stores, but recognizes that greater depths are rapidly coming into use.

g. The same consideration should be given to providing shop space of varying depths. Some of our most successful merchants in the Plaza started in very small rooms. One of these began in a 11 x 22-foot room, has moved into larger space four times, and now we are planning space for him about twenty

times the size of his original area. We are now drawing plans for another merchant with about ten times his original space, and this will be his fourth expansion. Yet these merchants might have gone broke if we had made them start in larger rooms with higher rents.

Flexibility²⁸. We enlarged the space of eighteen merchants in just one of our centers in one year, and many of our merchants now occupy 3 to 5 times their original space. Even in smaller centers, we feel that every possible flexibility should be provided. Much of our postwar building program is for enlarged space for present tenants.

29. The whole question of designing store space for adjustability and shifting will receive most careful study by the Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute. Many a landlord has lost money by providing unneeded dead space, or failing to provide for expanding needs. Of course, these future needs are not easy to foresee, and a lot depends on growth of your center and success in picking good merchants. Then, too, you may occasionally wish to move weak merchants from larger to smaller rooms.³⁰ It is well known that a majority of customers walk to the right when they enter a store. Certainly, the interior arrangement should recognize this personal habit. Consequently, we suggest left-hand rear locations for the office, wrapping desk, toilet, or the basement stairs if basement is used for storage. However, if stairs to merchandising space in the basement are to be provided, then we suggest they be at the rear of the right-hand side. We failed to consider these matters in our early buildings.

Encourage your merchants to study their flow of traffic and arrange their merchandise for best sales appeal.³¹ Most students of merchandising believe the "hot merchandising spot" in a store is about one third of the way back from the front door on the right-hand side.

Foresight

32. Light panels are less likely to be in the way on rear walls than on sidewalls. Most changes of space affect inside partitions. Unless the landlord actually anticipates deepening the room, we would rather have light panels on the rear wall, but close to one side of the room. Generally too much attention is given to lighting the store rather than lighting the merchandise. We overlooked this in many of our buildings.

33. Wood floors seem still to be desirable for many types of merchandising, but for certain types of business more durable surfaces are economical in the long run. This is particularly true for drugstores, food stores, and eating-places. Guy Ellis, Miami Beach, uses a lot of terrazzo floors and when tenants cement carpets to these floors, such covering belongs to the building when the tenant vacates.

34. In larger buildings where heat is furnished from a central heating plant, we recommend some type of thermostatic radiator controls to conserve heat.

Tenants will open windows when too hot instead of turning off radiators when the cost is on you.

35. We have found skylights are a source of trouble. They are hot in summer, cold in winter, hard to keep clean, are subject to leaking in rainy weather, and easy for robbers to enter. (John Mowbray confirms this experience in Roland Park at Baltimore.

However, David Bohannon of San Francisco is strong for skylights in his shops. In the San Francisco area they need all the sunshine they can get.) To Be Considered

36. Where fuel oil is used for heating, storage tanks should be as close as possible to boiler room, particularly where heavy oil is used, and never under front walk of building. Some oil is often spilled in filling or cleaning tanks and this causes a messy, smelly condition.

37. Boiler rooms of central heating plants should be so located that plenty of outside air is available for proper combustion. We overlooked this in our early buildings.38. Basement partitions should be of concrete block or similar material for fire stops and rodent control, but easily shifted and wherever possible not a bearing wall. Firewalls that run from basement to the roof are a barrier to expansion in a small shopping center. We doubt if the saving on insurance justifies these additional firewall costs and the inflexibility caused by them. We have, however, built many of our shops fireproof. And some experienced operators such as Walter Schmidt favor them.39. Avoid second floor space that is deeper than needed. You can seldom get proper rent for extra depth office space.40. In store basements, all pipes and ducts should be kept on ceiling or walls. Where individual heating plants are used they should be so placed that they take up a minimum of floor space and headroom. Many basements are practically useless because of low hanging pipes and ducts and a heating plant placed in the middle of the basement space. Always keep in mind future merchandising and other uses for the basement. We could have saved a lot of money if we had considered this in the beginning.

Conservation41. Much valuable rentable floor space can be saved by using 2-inch or 3-inch partitions in second floor office arrangements where ceilings are low and particularly where space is divided into many small offices. We may soon have new materials for partitions which are thin, light, soundproof and fire resistant, which we can also use in our first floor space with their higher ceilings.42. We made the mistake of using brass and copper trim on our early show windows. Few tenants will keep them polished, and we are now using aluminum and find it far better.43. We have used all kinds of exterior materials below our front display windows; wood, terra cotta, cast stone, glass, and cement. Now we use only granite, which is more costly, but requires far less in maintenance cost. It can be procured in thin veneers.44. In our early days we painted many front doors white. We have long since gone to colors which do not require such frequent repainting.45. In many instances, we have put wooden steps to our basements, but they wore out quickly, and it would have saved money in the long run had we built them of concrete or steel for both interior and exterior use.46. Non-slip floors are desirable in halls and stairways and are a protection against damage suits.

Ceiling Heights

47. Ceiling heights in small stores can certainly be held to 11 or 12-feet unless a mezzanine is planned, and then about 16 to 17-feet is the minimum height. We question mezzanines in small centers where land is comparatively cheap, although they are useful for storage where no basements are built.48. Wide column spacing in a room, while more costly, adds greatly to appearance and changeability. Perhaps you can afford column spacing up to some 40 feet

apart in two story buildings. In some of our one-story buildings we are planning 90-foot rooms with no columns.⁴⁹ Avoid piping and ducts on the interior partitions which may later have to be moved to increase the space for a growing merchant. Keep pipes and ducts on or near to structural columns that won't be removed if partition is taken out. Questionable Practice⁵⁰. We question deep recessed doors with immense "stepped back" show window displays in ordinary suburban shopping centers unless there is an enormous volume of window-shopping.⁵¹ Stairs to second floors should be made easy to climb with an intermediate landing if possible. Lower ceiling heights on the first floor help to cut down the resistance to long, high stairs to the second floor and may permit higher second floor rents.⁵² For small second floor offices, we feel 8 1/2 to 9-foot ceilings are ample, and halls, if not too long, can be 5 to 6-feet in width. We have wasted a lot of money on unnecessarily high ceilings on second floors.⁵³ In suburban centers, elevators are not necessary for ordinary second floor shops and offices. Where you have large medical groups, then use automatic elevators, says Newton Farr.⁵⁴ Exterior switches for street floor shops should be provided so a night watchman can turn off and on the lights. In small centers where a watchman is not available, electric time clocks can be used to control window lights.⁵⁵ We built our first shopping center with a portico over the sidewalk. We feel this was a mistake, though in the south this plan seems to be favored, as it shields shoppers from sun and rain.⁵⁶ New ideas for store construction:
a. Lighting: Fluorescent – both exposed and indirect. Fluorescent ceiling fixtures in patterns both below ceiling and recessed into ceiling.
b. Acoustical ceilings (eliminating noise and confusion).
c. Air-conditioning: Cleaning air by means of mechanical filters or electrically by means of a "precipitron" may be worth consideration.
d. Floor coverings: Various types of new plastic floor coverings are coming on to the market. Some time and experience will be required to prove which are worthwhile.
e. Paints: The question of new types of wall paints, such as synthetic resins, is still in the experimental stage. Some experts today argue that the old type of flat wall paints is still the best from a maintenance standpoint, but we are all interested in keeping down enormous repainting costs. (Newton Farr suggests calcimine or coldwater paints can be used for short-term tenants.)

f. Store fronts: New kinds of glass, all glass doors, and new designs for the entire front are being fostered by all of the glass companies. It is still too early to predict just what features will become "musts," but it is certain that we will have more open shops, more glass, and many novel features.

g. We should give more attention to future "floor loads" in our buildings, particularly if we have second floors.

D. STORE GROUPING AND LOCATION

1. We made the mistake of locating too many large office organizations within one of our large shopping centers. This creates all-day parking of such employees, consuming valuable space needed for the customers of our shops. If you have ample area for them at all, it is better to put them on the edges of a center, and be sure to provide ample, space for their all-day parking, otherwise it is better not to have them, and, of course, they do not pay high retail rentals.

2. Grouping of merchants whose clientele helps one another is desirable. We made the mistake of unfortunate grouping of certain types of business. For instance, don't put a hardware store or a shoe repair shop or house equipment merchant next to a dress shop. Grouping of women's apparel stores fairly near to one another is always good. This same applies to service stores and five and ten cent stores. Florists, jewelers, apparel shops, camera shops, drug stores, candy stores, gift shops, and bookstores are good in 100 per cent areas. A furniture store seldom can pay the rent necessary in your 100 per cent area. Eating-places and cocktail bars help a block. Judson Broadway questions this in 100 per cent block.

Places such as Gas Company, Post Office, Telephone Company, Light Company, and Telegraph Office where many people pay bills personally, bring a lot of trade, but should not occupy your "hot spots." It is good planning in a large center to get strong trade pullers pretty well distributed so as to avoid serious "dead spots." This subject is to be discussed further by the Institute's Community Builders' Council.

3. Certain service shops only able to pay low rentals are essential in any large center. Perhaps we made the mistake of not giving this enough consideration. Frequently this character of shop brings a lot of customers to your center. They can be put in "off locations" if easily accessible and are essential even if you lose money on their space. They even help get a small center started.

Filling Stations

4. Properly located and carefully controlled filling stations and "Drive-in" eating-places may be profitably included, but we recommend not too long leases so as to permit shifting of locations. Also, require them to keep areas clean and orderly, and if possible, place them on the edges of your center on main highways.

5. We doubt day nurseries for little children, as too much risk is involved. However, some very few may have proved successful.

6. Garages, filling stations and motor sales rooms should never be placed between retail shops. We made two such very serious mistakes.

7. A bank is very good in a center, but can well be placed in an "off location." Its closing hours are not good in an intensive location. We made the mistake of putting one bank on a "hot corner" with a long lease where today we could get almost double the rent from a good women's apparel shop. (Guy Ellis, Miami Beach, thinks a bank should be in a "hot spot" but on the second floor.)

8. We have studied arcade developments in Europe, South America, and the United States and have concluded they are not successful except in very rare circumstances where they get an immense pedestrian traffic. (Guy Ellis, Miami Beach, thinks the time will come when they can use rear first floor locations reached by arcades giving the merchants the benefit of the fine Lincoln Road address.)

9. If your center has second floor areas, then careful consideration should be given to all types of business which can go to second floors, so as to free the more valuable first floor space for "hot" merchandising. Beauty parlors, tailors, dressmakers, photographers, corset shops, gift shops, art shops, miscellaneous offices, physicians and dentists, and other shops and offices which do not depend on the display of their

merchandise can go on the second floor. Judson Bradway, Detroit, suggests the possible consideration of an escalator to serve a large group of second floor shops. We feel this would not pay its way.

Some merchants can use second floor space or basement space if provided some small first floor display space. (Lt. Comdr. Miller Nichols strongly advocates such use.)

F. LEASES

1. It is wise to have your lease provide that a tenant must keep his show windows lighted at night to some hour agreed upon by the majority of the merchants. Hugh Potter, Houston, strongly advocates this.

2. The landlord should have complete control of awning color and design and awning signs in order to avoid a variety of stripes, colors, etc. on the same building. But the maintenance should be a lease requirement to be paid by the tenant, and it should be obligatory that awnings be raised at night if shops are lighted. One "awning down" spoils the night effect of a whole block.

3. Where you have food stores, drugstores, candy stores, bakeries, and restaurants, which attract rats, your leases should provide strict measures to require every effort for rat prevention. We now require rat-proof receptacles in the rear of such shops for all refuse. Just one shop breeding rats will soon infest the whole building and surrounding areas.

Vary Rental Rate

4. Don't make the mistake of figuring the same rate of rental per square foot for all merchants. Rentals should be based on ability of merchants to pay; volume per square foot; profit they make on their merchandise; importance of the particular location for the type of business and similar factors. Even adjoining rooms may well have a great difference in rental. We overlooked this in our early developments. We are frank in telling our tenants that our rental rate varies for different merchants.5. Also, you should take into consideration the extent of protection you give a merchant as to limiting his competition in your center. We believe in giving reasonable protection to good merchants, although in many lines more than one merchant is frequently advisable. We find that several women's apparel shops in a center help all of them. Customers like competitive shops. If center is large it is certainly wise to have several eating-places.6. We feel it is wise to designate carefully the general types of merchandise a tenant is permitted to sell. Only in that way can you protect other merchants and create fields of opportunity for new merchants you wish to add as your center grows. Then, too, if you later permit a tenant to add new lines you may have a right to ask a higher rental.7. If possible your leases should require certain definite hours a store will be open and closed. It is important to have a uniform opening and closing hour for as many merchants as possible in a center.

Important Considerations

8. If possible, require that one or two nights a week all stores in the center remain open. The lease should set this forth. It is difficult to get merchants to agree on the same nights, but it is worth the effort. Of course, it does not pay some types of stores to keep open at night, but such shops should be somewhat segregated. We overlooked this in our

first centers.9. We believe sidewalk displays should be prohibited by lease, and “open lot vegetable markets,” paying very low taxes, in your center are not fair to regular grocers.10. We made the mistake in many of our early leases of not controlling window advertising. Gaudy posters and a mass of sales placards in show windows cheapen a whole center.11. Don’t make the mistake of too long-term leases so as not to be able to add space to your more successful merchants by shifting other shops. (Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, particularly where your tenant makes large expenditures on fixtures, etc.) This also affects the later adding of desirable new merchants into an intelligent grouping of related types.12. The replacement of broken plate glass should be a tenant’s responsibility, except when caused by faulty building construction, fire, tornado, or explosion covered by the landlord’s insurance. This should be set out in your leases.Advertising13. If possible, require your tenants to use the name of your center in advertising, letterheads, statements, prescription blanks, merchandise boxes, etc. Of course, give your center a good appealing, attractive, identifying name. In a larger center it is well to give each important building a good “catchy” name. We failed to require many of our tenants to use the name of the center and are now trying to get all of them to do so.14. Many developers require their tenants to expend a certain percentage of their total sales on advertising, and this is well worth consideration.Percentage Leases15. We believe percentage rentals are fair to landlord and tenant and encourage cooperation. Minimum guarantees help get larger building loans; make your tenant work harder; and give you some protection. It is wise to have the constant right to check a tenant’s books where you have percentage leases.16. Percentage leases with minimums should be placed on a monthly accounting basis, if possible. We made many early mistakes in not doing this. We do not feel there should be maximums in such leases, particularly where you as a landlord are spending money to promote the center.17. Where you have a tenant on a percentage basis, and he operates similar stores in outside locations, it sometimes presents a serious problem to prevent such tenant from running sales (even innocently) through the other stores. This is particularly true if he has fixed rentals, or lower percentage rates in the other locations. Many developers limit a tenant to only one store, or at least specify distance the tenant can put in a similar store in another center not controlled by them.

(See excellent March 15, 1945, booklet on percentage leases by National Institute of Real Estate Brokers of National Association of Real Estate Boards, 22 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois.)

Many of the above suggestions came from George W. Tourtellot after thirty years experience as head of the Business Properties Department of the J.C. Nichols Company.

F. PARKING

1. We have made the mistake in nearly all of our centers of not providing enough parking space, and since have paid enormous prices to expand our parking areas – even buying back land and improvements which we had sold. At least one and a half or two square feet of curb and off-street parking space should be provided for each square foot of floor space. Many developers and city planners feel this is not enough. In California where a large part of trade comes by automobile, two to three feet of total parking per one square foot of floor space is advocated. (David D. Bohannon says three to one ratio is advisable.) If you want good, successful tenants, you must give them generous parking

space for their customers. The Janss Brothers in their splendid Westwood Village shopping center in Los Angeles have found they are already short of parking space. Of course, where you have good bus and streetcar service to your center, and a large amount of nearby multiple housing, a relatively smaller proportionate amount of parking space is required. Perhaps after the war the demand for parking space will be far greater.

2. We believe we are right in requiring, through our leases, parking of employees' and employers' cars at places designated by us in order to give nearby parking space to customers' cars. We failed to do this in our early leases, and even some good merchants will often park their cars all day at the curb in front of another shop.

Parking Stations

3. We believe parking stations should be given an attractive appearance. We expended \$30,000 in improving and beautifying two free parking stations in the Country Club Plaza with trees, shrubbery, flowers, ornamental walls, statuary, fountains, and attractive entrances. We think it has paid in this large center.⁴ We have parking stations in all kinds of locations. Some are completely surrounded by streets, some at the side of the shops, some in front, and some in the rear of the buildings. Needs and customs vary, and there is no sure answer as to best locations. This is a very large question and needs thorough study by the Community Builders' Council. In our centers we dislike rear parking, but if it is used the entrance to it should be wide and attractive, and quickly visible. Large stores can handle rear entrances from rear parking stations, but it is difficult for small shops to control front and rear customer entrances. Some of our tenants have had bad experiences as a result of thefts when using a rear and a front entrance. Eight feet of parking space is the minimum width per car, and 8 1/2 to 9 feet is better. Hugh Potter in his excellently planned River Oaks shopping center in Houston, Texas, has found his front parking space widely used, but has met resistance in the use of his rear parking space. However, Mr. Potter feels it is best to provide both front and rear parking space. Accessibility and convenience are "musts" in locating parking areas.⁵ The question of whether or not parking space should be provided free is largely a local problem. So far we have made our stations free and try to get sufficiently higher store rentals to repay us. (J.C. Taylor, President of the J.C. Nichols Company, strongly advocates such free parking for customers of our centers.)

Certainly the municipality should make a lower assessment for tax purposes on free parking areas. Many cities are proposing municipal stations operated on a charge basis.

6. We have definitely found that when we can use right angle parking in parking stations, where we have dead-end lanes, we get a greater capacity than we do with diagonal parking. Of course, this depends on inlets and outlets to the station and many other factors. Right angle parking requires a greater turning area than does diagonal parking, about 65-feet overall for two lines of cars, in order to hit the space squarely. Diagonal parking should have exits in the direction the car is parked and entrances in opposite directions. For 45-degree diagonal parking, 50-feet overall will take care of two lines of cars although this is certainly the minimum width required.

7. In a large shopping center, we favor more than one large parking station. It is better to have them well distributed so as to serve conveniently the greatest number of

merchants. Customers resent a long walk to a parking station, and it is even difficult to make employees and employers walk very far. This seems to be more true in suburban centers than in central business districts.

Customer Parking Time

8. We find average “customer parking time” in our parking stations is one and a half to two hours. At the curb we frequently get a 15 to 30 minute turnover.

9. An excellent way to mark individual parking spaces is to use oval shaped reinforced concrete or steel parking buttons about 5 inches high and 8 inches wide. We find these are much better than trying to control parking with painted lines, and require less maintenance. However, they should be so constructed as not to injure tires.

10. On high priced land where there is limited space for parking, roof parking should be considered. The Sears Roebuck Company in the District of Columbia, and many others have used this method.

11. Large offices and organizations using “all day parking” should be placed at the edges of your center with a separate parking space.

12. Again I say, do not underestimate the value of ample parking space. Always have an available space for the next customer.

13. Where sidewalks are located in parking stations, 4-feet is the minimum width to allow for bumper overhang and pedestrian traffic.

G. MAINTENANCE

1. Don't underestimate remodeling and maintenance costs, as well as obsolescence. Some developers believe this should be figured at ten percent of the rental income. We certainly underestimated these costs in our first centers. C.S. Pitrat, after 25 years as head of maintenance of shop buildings for the J.C. Nichols Company, says, “It does not make any difference what you figure maintenance and remodeling costs over the years, it is always too low,” and he is the “guy” who has had to battle these recurring underestimated costs. (Judson Bradway hopes prefabrication may help solve some of the expense in changing storefronts.)

2. Many of our trash incinerators proved a nuisance and difficult to control. We now largely depend upon community “trash pickup” and find the merchants are willing to pay for this service.

3. A tenant, on the first floor at least, should be on his own water and electric meter, though in large buildings it is wise to have a master electric meter and bill merchants at the regular price for light. This should pay your exterior and hall lighting expense, and may return you some profit.

Consider Maintenance Costs

4. In providing space for the medical profession, don't underestimate their greatly increased use of electricity, water, heat, janitor service, constant maintenance, and other unusual demands for very meticulous services which run into high costs for the landlord. Space for just one physician may involve many small rooms, greatly increasing construction costs, maintenance, plumbing, repainting, janitor, and other similar items.

We made very grievous mistakes in renting to physicians and dentists at far below our costs.

5. Physicians and dentists are inclined through use of new types of equipment to wish more frequent changes than ordinary tenants. However, good professional men do bring a lot of desirable customers to your center. They need a lot of nearby parking. When there is a second floor, an elevator is generally desirable, but not justifiable unless you have a fairly large number of medical offices. We have fifty physicians and dentists on the second floor of one building in our Plaza center. We supply a self-operating elevator and a receptionist on first floor in the lobby. We have some fifty other similar professional men in other buildings in this same center without elevator service. In our other centers we do not supply elevator service.

6. It is well to have electric, gas and water meters, and sewer connections in basement space that is accessible at all times, particularly in large buildings. When not accessible, the delay in getting in at night may be serious in case of fire, water trouble, or other emergencies.

7. Where your property is to be held as an investment, use top grade hardware, electrical switches and fixtures, and plumbing fixtures. One repair bill is often more than the original saving between mediocre fixtures and good heavy-duty type.

8. Provide ample storage for janitor supplies on second floor or in basement. We underestimated this in our first centers.

9. Even in a small center it is well to have a central general maintenance and supply quarters for your own staff. You can use some basement area or rear of a deep first floor shop. We soon found ourselves short of such space even in our small centers. Even though you employ outside contractors for maintenance, you will need some such space, particularly for storage.

H. MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATIONS

1. In larger centers, it is reasonable to require in your lease that all tenants contribute to an active merchants' association. This can be very effective in promoting cooperation among merchants; better municipal service; better transportation; show window contests; joint advertising; seasonal decorations; providing night watchman service; trash collection; and in keeping sidewalks, alleys, parking stations and streets in a clean, attractive condition. (Hugh Prather of Dallas includes window washing in his association activities). The benefits of a merchants' association are so great both to the tenants and the community as a whole, that membership can well be required and the dues collected as a separate item along with the rent. This does away with the danger of having a few recalcitrants who will not join. 2. In our Country Club Plaza center, our merchants' association has four full-time employees, and this takes a great burden off of our company. They have two men for cleaning of streets, walks, parking stations, etc., one young lady who calls personally on newcomers, and a full time secretary. We contribute 25 percent of the costs of this association.

Developer Should Contribute

3. We believe that the developer can well afford to contribute liberally to the maintenance of such an association. It will go a long way toward developing good cooperative feeling between merchants, encouraging greater sales efforts, referring of trade one to another, and in the long run creating more rent income for the landlord.

4. Even in a small center where you cannot afford to have a paid secretary, the merchants themselves by working together in an organization can run an association successfully.

5. We feel the landlord and the merchants' association should constantly encourage attractive window displays. An untidy, poor window front can hurt a whole group of shops. We have suffered from this in several instances. Frequently the association can do more in such instances than the landlord.

6. In promoting your shopping centers, we believe seasonal displays at Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, etc. can attract a lot of attention and trade, and this is another place where the merchants' association can be very helpful.

7. Getting your tenants to pull and work together to help one another is a great asset and should be encouraged even in the smallest center.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN078

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.