



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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**Land Sub-Division for New, Outlying Shopping
Centers in American Cities**

Our downtown business centers were designed before our automobile congestion of today. Skyscraper buildings, piling up immense traffic needs and creating colossal problems in street widening and provision of new traffic arteries, exists in every large city today. In the last five years there has been an immense movement to outlying business centers and local shopping centers. There is still time, in many such instances, to design street and block layouts and establish building heights and other regulations to better serve business and the community.

No. 1. All such streets should be at least one hundred feet wide to give room for diagonal parking.

No. 2. At least fifty percent of the land should be dedicated for streets, creating smaller blocks and a greater percent of street area for parking.

No. 3. Interior loading courts or wide alleys (at least 24 feet wide) should be provided to take all deliveries from the front streets

No. 4. Building heights should be held to one and two stories in such shopping centers in order to reduce the amount of traffic needs – to permit of greater light, air and sunshine reaching the occupants of the buildings.

No. 5. Main arteries of traffic should by-pass such shopping centers thereby better serving through traffic and conserving the local streets for immediate needs.

No. 6. Encroachments on any sidewalks should be prevented from the beginning, avoiding dangerous and ill appearing overhead signs and the placing of popcorn stands, newsstands, and other stealing of street area.

No. 7. Such outlying shops and business enterprises should be massed together in contiguous blocks, radiating if possible from one center as against the “string” business street type of development, carrying shops for a mile or more on either side of the street, thereby creating unnecessary injurious encroachment through a large area of residential property.

No. 8. An effort should be made to get a greater harmony of design in building height in these shopping centers, to give a better appearance to cities as a whole.

No. 9. By zoning, such new shopping centers should be confined to definite areas and not be scattered “hit and miss” throughout the entire outlying region of a city, not only injuring adjoining property values but creating an oversupply of business properties. A distance of one-half mile should exist between every shopping center. Early

regulations for cleanliness and orderliness should be enforced in such new business centers in contrast with the hideous ugliness that usually develops in these new outlying shopping localities, setting up streets and conditions almost impossible, later, to overcome.

No. 10. An effort should be made, by zoning, to locate shopping centers convenient to main arteries and to give the best distribution of shopping needs to the city as a whole. Provision for private parking also should be arranged in the beginning, before all the area is covered by buildings, creating too great a cost to later remove, to provide for parking area.

No. 11. Diagonal parking should be enforced in these wide streets giving an increase of almost two and one half times street capacity for handling parked cars. The width should be sufficiently great for diagonal parking on each side, permitting three through lines of traffic between the rears of the two rows of parked cars, and permitting the safe passing in and out of the diagonal positions.

Surely, the traffic problems of American cities today warrant careful consideration, in an effort to avoid the mistakes of the past in our street and block layouts as they affect the creation of new outlying centers in our cities. In almost every American city of 15,000 population or more, there is springing up, almost over night, in some cases, a mushroom growth of outlying shopping centers far in excess of shopping needs and in most instances with no effort to serve the increased traffic needs and motor parking requirements that exist even today. Of course, the rapid increase in the number of automobiles will only further accentuate these problems. These shopping centers are scattered throughout the entire residential regions of the cities and if they are permitted to be developed in an unattractive manner as well as an inefficient manner, they will give an unpleasing character to the whole city and simply scatter our traffic problems rather than afford relief. This is an excellent sample of where prevention costs will be far less than later corrective costs. "Too late" are the saddest words in city planning and the "Institute News" can well afford to draw the attention of all students of city planning to the crying need in every city for better control and more forethought in the establishing and building of the so-called outlying business centers.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN082

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.