Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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Whether our cities are physically good, or physically bad, is largely the responsibility of the realtors. Whether or not neighborhoods fit into the city plan as a whole, and may live through many years as desirable places in which to live, is their responsibility. Neighborhoods should live through generations.

Whether the realtors are constantly striving to build durable homes with low maintenance cost, is their responsibility.

Shall we look to our federal government to provide housing? Or, shall we build better homes and prove that private industry can do the job satisfactorily? We know realtors can build at far less cost than the government, but unless they take into consideration all the many factors involved – unless they provide playgrounds; shopping centers; schools; churches, and other similar elements of good communities, they are failing in their task.

If a realtor does not properly fit his streets into the main arteries of the city, he has failed in his responsibility. Unless he incorporates into the building of every home, every possible economy; prefabricated units; and every new type of equipment that has been proved practical, he is overlooking his opportunity.

Unless a realtor provides good open space around his homes to give charm, character, livability, and individuality that will last through the years, he fails to rise to the responsibility of a realtor.

Unless a realtor is liberal with planting of trees; shrubbery; and allows space for flowers to give individuality and distinctive setting to every home he builds, he is admitting that the realtors cannot do the job.

Perhaps wider lots of less depth to give more open space between homes is desirable; perhaps more individual color and design in every home to give the red-blooded American the feeling that his home is his own special castle, is a thing a realtor needs to consider.

Curving streets giving a constantly changing vista are far more pleasing than a checkerboard street plan.

Perhaps the emplacement of garden objects in little parks at street intersections can break an otherwise monotonous street scene. Perhaps the prospect of later adding a small pool, or placing a lovely garden ornament, or an interesting rock garden on his own home site will be an inspiration to permanent home ownership.
Above all, the responsibility rests upon the realtors of America to build durable homes that will serve through generations. The idea of short-lived home construction is contrary to the whole spirit of American home ownership. Upon the realtors of America rests the responsibility of erecting homes that will endure through fifty to a hundred years. Let us not be led astray by a lot of fantastic ideas that the home of tomorrow will be contrary to habitations developed over thousands of years. The floors, the roof, the walls, the number of rooms and sizes, the intimate relation of home uses and utilities will largely remain the same (all so well advocated by the *Architectural Record*.)

Yes, so designed as to be adaptable to the use of new equipment and new services that may come through the great research of our scientists, but based upon the traditional ideas of living happiness and serene family life.

New ideas may come, but they will not change the desire for fundamental, comfortable homes of beauty and charm.

We know that private industry can provide housing at far less cost than the federal government, and upon the shoulders of the realtors rests the responsibility of building the best houses possible without federal subsidy, and preserving the incentive for better homes for our nation – for greater home ownership – so important in perpetuating the American way of life and our cherished democracy.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN073

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.