I am glad to have the opportunity to tell employees, merchants, apartment managers about the Plaza.

The Plaza was located in the valley of Brush Creek and Mill Creek because of its splendid adaptation for a business center on flat ground and the converging of 11 highways and boulevards with the surrounding hills so admirably suited for the fine apartments, which the Plaza Association appreciates so much.

A strategic location of the gateway of the Country Club District with 125 miles of paved streets; 25,000 population; estimated future population 50,000, with the greatest average purchasing power in Kansas City, and a future population of 50,000 on the apartment lands nearby.

More than 100 houses were removed from the Plaza District. We demolished a brickyard for apartments south of the Plaza.

A greenhouse occupied the site of Villa Serena. Negro houses were on a 30-foot cliff on Main south of Ward Parkway. A frame grocery store was in the Burnap-Meyer location. A swamp 20 feet deep was at the present Wolferman store, Tower and the Suydam building. Little houses were along Central Street.

The Nichols building occupies what was formerly the bed of Brush Creek, at that time with an old iron bridge over Wornall Road, and along the North bank was one of the most unsightly dumps of rubbish in Kansas City.

A stone quarry was on the Anderson and Bartleston sites. 17 houses removed from Alameda, Pennsylvania, and Jefferson. 11 houses from White Hall, Melbourne, Park Castle, Rockhill Plaza and Brush Creek Plaza sites. 46th Street and Brush Creek Blvd. apartments East of Main and North of 47th are in an old cow pasture.

An old lumberyard and cement building occupied Mill Creek Parkway. 47th Street was a narrow, impassable dirt road. We built the first narrow 16-foot paving along Mill Creek because the city said it would never have any use. Today, 47th and Mill Creek is the second busiest corner in the city in a 24-hour automobile count.

No streets were here 10 years ago except a narrow Mill Creek paving, a narrow Main Street, Ward Parkway and a narrow Wornall Road. Little houses and shacks were torn down from St. Lukes to the Suydam building.

The shopping centers of America and Europe were studied for a scientific modern Plaza Development. Spanish architecture was selected on account of beauty of design, use of color, its pleasing adaptation to broken roof lines, its towered skyline and the fact
it is on the Santa Fe trail leading into that great Southwest, once controlled by the Spaniards.

46% of the Plaza is dedicated for streets; the balance of the City 25%.

Buildings are held to a two-story height to prevent traffic congestion.

Street paving 60 feet wide or more to permit diagonal parking. Two parking stations costing $30,000 the finest in America. Everyone should use them.

Overhead poles and wires put underground at cost of $28,000.

Buildings in the Plaza burn oil avoiding coal dust in the air.

Prevailing breeze comes from the Southwest over open lawns and golf courses making it 5 to 6 degrees cooler.

All our buildings are provided with incinerators for trash burning.

Trash receptacles are on every street to avoid litter. Please use them.

Moline Elms in sidewalks give shade to pedestrians and add charm to the street scene.

Sidewalks are buff tone in color with colorful tile inserts.

There are no billboards or any screaming or clashing signs; no overhead signs; no board signs on buildings or awnings, no disorderliness; no uncleanness. No unsightly trash dumps; no clashing colors; no refuse. All buildings in pleasing harmony of design and color.

The picturesque towers on the Tower, Theatre, Wolferman and Balcony buildings are designed to eventually sing in unison and gradually build up to a high dominating tower with chimes, some early day to be located at Alameda and Wornall Road, our future geographical center.

From here the towers will shade off westward to Jefferson Street. Every building accords with our ultimate vision of a district 5 times as large with its 200 institutions increased to 1000.

The filling stations in the Plaza are beautiful and clean, surpassing any group in America.

The Plaza is the meeting place of America’s most important national highways. Located on the main route from California to New York.

The exterior lanterns on the theatre building are exact replicas of the old candle light lanterns of Castilian days in Spain.

The gay colored tile above the doorways were made in Seville, illustrating the gay colors of Spanish structures.

The soft tone tiles of weathered appearance in the roofs recall an old Spanish market place.
The unsymmetrical size and random placement of windows; the broken, receding roof lines, the old world ornamental iron grills, balconies, beautiful tile, carved stone, are true to Spanish precedent.

It is our ambition to have grass, flowers, trees and shrubbery meet the eye of every visitor. Sunny Spain will always live in the Plaza.

Fresh air will abound for its employees and customers.

We believe beauty in commercial structures can be made to pay. Beauty breeds happiness and contentment and has a direct value in attracting trade.

Some time note the exterior antique iron grills on the dominating theatre stage loft. They are hand wrought, 300 to 500 years old, from various cities in Spain, and listed as works of art by the Spanish government.

The Plaza Theatre and Shop building, designed by Ed Tanner, was awarded the Prize in 1928 for the city’s most beautiful business structure.

No sidewalk display of merchandise is permitted.

The footbridge at Central and Ward Parkway was given the city by our company.

We plan to provide stoplights at 47th and Mill Creek to expedite Pedestrian traffic and also at Ward Parkway and Wornall. The widening of Wornall Bridge, the opening of Wornall hill, the widening of Main Street Bridge are all helpful to the Plaza.

The building of Brush Creek Parkway, extending from the E.C. White School across Oak and Troost to the Paseo will add greatly to our accessibility.

The curving streets throughout the Country Club District lead into the Plaza as the branches of a tree lead into its trunk.

The Plaza merchants advocate the boosting of our city as a whole and the urging of the doctrine “Buy in Kansas City.”

The Plaza project was conceived in absolute faith in Kansas City destined to be the third greatest city in America.

We regard it as one great department store with every component part helping every other part.

Many an enterprising employee in the Plaza should sometime become a Plaza merchant. The employees in the Plaza shops today with their service to patrons control its destiny.

Learn to love and enjoy its picturesque towers; its changing beauty from the sunny skies to the clouded days, its softened tones in the twilight hours and its romantic beauty in the moonlight.

Look on the Plaza as a friendly place to trade where everyone knows the name of the customer; be imbued with desire to serve and cooperate; breathe enthusiasm and joy.

We all have an equal part in making it a greater asset to our city. A major point of interest to every out-of-town visitor.
No enterprising, ambitious merchant or professional man should ever miss a Plaza meeting or weekly luncheon. Employees should join in Plaza activities.

Every merchant is concerned in helping the apartment managers. The apartment managers have a direct interest in helping the Plaza and contributing to its growth.

Hundreds of Plaza employees and merchants today live in adjoining apartments.

Personality, courage, daring and unremitting willingness to work are all needed in carving the future destiny and the future success, in building this great business and apartment district.

The prowess of the Fox Company in changing its policy to first run is indicative of progress.

The remarkable manner in which the Plaza and the Plaza apartments have gone through the recent extremely trying times demonstrates our fundamental soundness.

With the continued present improvement of business, great opportunities lie before us.

It is not a time for pessimism or discouragement but truly it is a time that tries men’s’ souls and it is a time that the strong, courageous and energetic will succeed while the weak and unwilling will fail.

Let our inspiration out of this great and wonderful meeting be one of greater service than ever before.

Our company stands willing to cooperate in every way.

We are living and working in one of the finest cities in the world; a city of wonderful men and women.

A city with a great downtown business district; a city of wide and varied industries; a city located at the cross roads of America; the air center of the United States. The greatest railroad center; a concentration point of transcontinental highways.

Soon we will have the benefits of cheaper water transportation.

We have no impassable mountains or forbidding deserts. We are the greatest agricultural center; close to the biggest oil field and the largest lead and zinc areas. Our commercial growth, with any return to normal conditions, will go forward by leaps and bounds.

Let us, I say, get a real inspiration as to our possibilities if we all work together, help each other, make friends, and build the greatest section known to any city, and, without lowering the standards of our Plaza shopping and apartment district, have the daring to follow the policy conceived ten years ago for its future, and really in our lifetime create and build a great prosperous district unparalleled in any country in the entire world.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN081
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.