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## *News*

### **The Country Club Plaza Backstory**

Kansas City's iconic cultural, shopping and entertainment center began inauspiciously as sub-marginal property located south of a prospering early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kansas City. J.C. Nichols, a visionary young developer, saw potential to develop bargain-priced land to house and entertain an increasingly affluent citizenry. Where others saw marshy dumping ground surrounded by rundown tracks, wooded hills and an unpaved wagon trail, he saw tree-lined paved boulevards, a Spanish-styled shopping village and lush estates with mansions befitting lumber barons and wealthy industrialists of the day.

The Country Club Plaza opened in 1922, reputedly as America's first suburban shopping district designed to accommodate the automobile. The Plaza grew in reputation and its enduring success helped transform the way America lives and shops. Nichols was succeeded by his son, Miller Nichols, who led the company from 1950 through his retirement in 1988. Highwoods Properties purchased the Country Club Plaza in 1998.

Today The Plaza remains a local treasure, revered for its charming Spanish-style architecture, dazzling fountains, wrought iron-encompassed courtyards, tree-lined boulevards, mosaics, statues and works of art. The 15-square block district is home to more than 150 shops and restaurants. It brings the city and visitors from throughout the region to annual cultural events such as The Plaza Art Fair, a tradition since 1932, and the annual Thanksgiving night Plaza Lighting Ceremony, a tradition since 1930, as well as newer events such as WaterFire, a multi-sensory experience of music, fire and water.

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