

SELLING THE RESTRICTED SUBURB: HOW GREEN HILLS WAS MARKETED

VERSION 1.0 · 2026-06-11 · ALEX PEMBERTON

COMPANION TO "VENEERS OF HISTORY IN GREEN HILLS EAST", *NASHVILLE SCENE*

FINDING

Green Hills was advertised in 1927 with deed restrictions as a leading selling point and 'protection' recurring throughout. Neither ad named what the restrictions were. J.C. Nichols had used the same formula since 1908, and the 1924 NAREB code of ethics wrote it in as a professional duty.

SUPPORTS IN THE ARTICLE

- *the sort of people you'd like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow*
- *RESTRICTIONS—For Your Protection*
- *restriction and exclusivity were the explicit selling points*

ABSTRACT

Green Hills was advertised in 1927 with its deed restrictions as the second selling point, ahead of price, paired in display type with the word “protection.” A companion ad promised buyers “the sort of people you’d like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow” in the same breath as rising values. The two-word formula — “restricted” and “protection” — was already in national circulation: J.C. Nichols had used it in Kansas City by 1908, and the National Association of Real Estate Boards had written the underlying logic into its 1924 code of ethics as a professional duty. The Green Hills realtors were credentialed by that same body, and the deed they advertised barred sale or occupancy by persons of African descent. Neither ad named what the restrictions were; the recorded covenant carried the rest.

SOURCES

Primary documents

- *Nashville Tennessean*, April 6, 1927, p. 3, Green Hills display ad (“NEVER AGAIN ... RESTRICTIONS — For Your Protection”), placed by Benz Realty Co., Bolling & Hinrichs, G.A. Maddux & Co., and A.P. Martin & Son. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, doc. 1898671154.
- *Nashville Tennessean*, April 10, 1927, p. 68, Green Hills sales ad (“the sort of people you’d like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow”). ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- *Nashville Tennessean*, January 23, 1927, p. 9, Benz Realty Co. classified (“A HOME FOR THE DISCRIMINATING ... in a restricted location, where you have protection from inferior and poorly built homes”). ProQuest ID 1898671700.

- *Nashville American*, June 4, 1905, full-page Murphy Land Company advertisement (“high class restrictions”; “Don’t forget that the value of real estate is determined by the restrictions placed on it”). Reproduced in Pemberton, “The Last Single-Family House in the Murphy Addition.”
- National Association of Real Estate Boards, *Code of Ethics*, Article 34 (adopted 1924).
- J.C. Nichols Company advertisement, *Kansas City Sun*, c. 1908 (“1,000 Acres Restricted for Those Who Want Protection”).

Scholarship

- William S. Worley, *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City: Innovation in Planned Residential Communities* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990).
- Sara Stevens, “J.C. Nichols and the Country Club District: Suburban Aesthetics and Property Values,” *The Pendergast Years* (Kansas City Public Library digital history project), drawing on Stevens, *Developing Expertise: Architecture and Real Estate in Metropolitan America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
- Herman H. Long and Charles S. Johnson, *People vs. Property: Race Restrictive Covenants in Housing* (Nashville: Fisk University Press, 1947).

FINDINGS

THE GREEN HILLS SALES ARGUMENT LED WITH RESTRICTION, IN DISPLAY TYPE, PAIRED WITH THE WORD “PROTECTION”

The April 6, 1927 *Tennessean* ad reduced the subdivision to a four-point pitch, placed by all four of Calhoun’s authorized realtors: “LOCATION — The Best; RESTRICTIONS — For Your Protection; PRICE — Assures Unequaled Value; TERMS — To Suit You.” Restriction is a feature here, ranked above price. “Restrictions” names the legal instrument — the bundle of covenants recorded at Davidson County Book 770, pp. 40–42, which includes setback minimums, a cost floor, a livestock ban, and, as Covenant 4, the bar on occupancy by “persons of African blood or descent ... except in the capacity of servants.” “For Your Protection” names what the buyer is told he receives. The ad does not list what the restrictions are. It gives them a purpose and a beneficiary and leaves the recorded deed to carry the rest.

Remember—

LOCATION—The Best
RESTRICTIONS—For Your Protection
PRICE—Assures Unequaled Value
TERMS—To Suit You.

Someone At the Field Office On the Grounds
Every Afternoon—Always Glad to Show You.
Or Call Any of the Following “Realtors”

BENZ REALTY CO.

Phone 6-2671

BOLLING & HINRICHS

Phone 6-6931

G. A. MADDUX & CO.

Phone 6-1927

A. P. MARTIN & SON

Phone 6-1049

Green Hills display advertisement, *The Nashville Tennessean*, April 6, 1927, p. 3 – the four-point pitch, “RESTRICTIONS – For Your Protection” ranked above price, over the four authorized realtors. (Public domain.)

“THE SORT OF PEOPLE YOU’D LIKE AS NEIGHBORS” DID THE RACIAL WORK THE AD COULD NOT PRINT

The April 10, 1927 ad promised that “Green Hills is attracting the sort of people you’d like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow,” in the same breath as “Values here will rise quickly. That’s certain.” The two promises were one: the ad sold the right neighbors as the reason the value would rise. Long and Johnson, writing from Fisk University in 1947, argued that under the cover of

protecting “the physical aspects of housing,” the period’s real-estate selling had made “the protection of property values through maintenance of Caucasian-pure residence areas ... a dominant purpose.”

GREEN HILLS

Nashville's Fastest Selling Subdivision Offers Opportunity To The Investors

THE opportunity to make money is here now! The expertly planned Green Hills subdivision is now being offered to you at prices far below what you'll have to pay later on.

The location of Green Hills is ideal for investing, situated right in the path of the city's expansion. Values here will rise quickly. That's certain.

And it's environment is ideal for home-building. Advantages of living in the city and country are combined here. And Green Hills is attracting the sort of people you'd like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow.

Convenient terms of extended payments make it easy for you.

A representative will be on the grounds at the field office every afternoon.

How to Get There

Drive out Belmont Boulevard to the end of it's new extension and you're right at the property.

GREEN HILLS, "The Plateau Over-looking The Knobs"

CONSULT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING "REALTORS"

BENZ REALTY CO. 309 Church St. Phone 6-2671	G. A. MADDUX & CO. 241 Fourth Ave., N. Phone 6-1687
BOLLING & HINRICHS 520 Union St. Phone 6-6931	A. P. MARTIN & SON 628-630 Stahman Bldg. Phone 6-1049

Green Hills sales advertisement, *The Nashville Tennessean*, April 10, 1927, p. 68 - "Nashville's Fastest Selling Subdivision ... the sort of people you'd like as neighbors today as well as tomorrow." (Public domain.)

THE CONSTRUCTION WAS J.C. NICHOLS'S, AND IT WAS NATIONAL BEFORE IT WAS LOCAL

Nichols's Country Club District in Kansas City was the canonical model of the restricted suburb, and the phrase the Green Hills realtors used was his. By 1908, having assembled over a thousand acres,

Nichols advertised in the *Kansas City Sun*: “Have You Seen the Country Club District? 1,000 Acres Restricted for Those Who Want Protection.” A company brochure carried the same logic — “In the Country Club District you are given the protection that goes with ‘a thousand acres restricted.’” The pairing of “restricted” with “protection” that appears in the 1927 Green Hills ad is the 1908 Nichols formula, word for word in its essential terms. Nichols’s innovation, as Worley documents, was to sell deed restrictions as a guarantee of what a buyer would receive: paved streets, sewers, landscaped commons, and, by self-perpetuating covenant enforced through the homeowners’ association he is credited with inventing, the permanence of all of it. Stevens summarizes the pitch: Nichols treated real estate as “unstable merchandise” and advertised restrictions as “protection against market instability.” The racial-exclusion clause rode inside that promise of stability, sold as one more guarantee against loss.

THE REALTORS’ OWN 1924 CODE MADE RESTRICTION A PROFESSIONAL DUTY

Article 34 of the National Association of Real Estate Boards’ 1924 Code of Ethics instructed that “a Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.” This was the governing norm of the trade, in force from 1924 to 1950. It converted exclusion from a developer’s preference into the ethical standard of the profession: a Realtor who sold across the color line risked sanction. The word “Realtor” was itself NAREB’s trademark, and the Green Hills ad places it in quotation marks beside each broker — “Or Call Any of the Following ‘Realtors.’” The men selling Green Hills were credentialed by the same body whose code made racial restriction a duty. W.H. Maddux, of G.A. Maddux & Co., one of the four firms on the ad, was president of the Nashville Real Estate Board, the local NAREB chapter, and attended the Model Home groundbreaking in December 1926. The code’s authors and the ad’s signatories belonged to the same professional network.

NASHVILLE HAD BEEN SPEAKING THIS LANGUAGE SINCE 1905, AND THE TRADE PRESS KEPT TEACHING IT

The Murphy Land Company’s full-page *Nashville American* ad of June 4, 1905 touted the subdivision’s “high class restrictions” and instructed readers: “Don’t forget that the value of real estate is determined by the restrictions placed on it and the character of improvements that surround it.” The Murphy Addition was marketed as a “suburban park” — a precursor to Nichols’s “residential park” framing — with deed restrictions banning Black residence sold as part of its appeal. Twenty-two years later the same firms refined the pitch: Benz Realty Co., one of the four Green Hills realtors, ran a January 23, 1927 classified headlined “A HOME FOR THE DISCRIMINATING,” promising a home “in a restricted location, where you have protection from inferior and poorly built homes.” The headline does the class-and-race signaling; the body narrows the named threat to “poorly built homes.” The Green Hills display ad performs the same substitution at larger scale: name a

respectable threat (instability, inferior construction), let “restricted” and “protection” gesture at the rest. The vocabulary was reinforced continuously through the trade and federal channels the *Tennessean’s* real-estate pages carried — the Department of Commerce’s Better Homes homebuying checklist pairing “protection offered to homes” with “private restrictions, zoning ordinances,” and NAREB’s 1925 convention agenda item on “the zoning of cities as a protection of real estate values.”

THE AD SOLD THE RESTRICTION TO THE BUYER AS A BENEFIT

A deed restriction limits what the buyer himself may do with his land. It also limits what his neighbors may do with theirs, because the same covenants run with every lot in the subdivision. The Green Hills ad pointed to the second effect. “RESTRICTIONS — For Your Protection” told the buyer that the rules binding him would bind everyone around him, and offered that as the thing he was paying for. The racial covenant was one of those rules, and the buyer would be on its protected side.

The advertisements show how the property was pitched, not which restriction an individual buyer was answering — the racial clause, the cost minimum, or the setback line. The verbatim overlap between the 1908 Nichols slogan and the 1927 Green Hills copy is structural and strong, yet no document ties Calhoun or his realtors to Nichols’s published materials directly; the formula traveled through the saturated national trade culture — NAREB, the *National Real Estate Journal*, the Better Homes movement — and the transmission reads as diffuse, with no single documented channel from Nichols’s office to Calhoun’s. The “residential park” framing is documented for Nichols and for the Murphy Addition’s “suburban park,” but whether Green Hills’ own copy reached for comparable park language beyond “The Plateau Overlooking the Knolls” remains unsettled across the fuller 1927 ad run. The restricted suburb as a recognizable type — its places, its peer network, its self-image — is treated in [The Restricted Suburb: Nashville and Its National Peers](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Nashville American. “Murphy Addition” advertisement. June 4, 1905.

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Nashville Tennessean. Green Hills display advertisement, “Never Again ... Restrictions — For Your Protection.” April 6, 1927, p. 3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, doc. 1898671154.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Pemberton, Alex. “Selling the Restricted Suburb: How Green Hills Was Marketed.” Research Brief E8, *Veneers of History in Green Hills East*. alexaustinpemberton.com/journalism/veneers-of-history/#marketing-the-restricted-suburb. Accessed [date].