

is worth the loss to the next generation of a major middle-income residential development and of an orderly urban environment.

There is more than one way to destroy a city, but this kind of near-sighted civic sabotage seems to be about the surest in terms of short-term gain and long-range damage. The committee now studying the problem should come up with a coordinated public land policy. Selling off New York's future is no way to balance the budget.

Destroying a City

In 1954 the city owned 165 acres of vacant land in the Paerdegat Basin section of Brooklyn, which it proceeded to plan as a model development for about 2,000 families.

In 1964 private interests own 115 acres of that land, purchased for as little as 15 and 20 cents a square foot. To carry out the plan now, the city would have to pay about \$2.25 a square foot to buy the land back, a "windfall" profit for the present owners.

How did the city lose the land and the opportunity to create an ordered, balanced community of badly needed middle- and low-income housing? It sold it. It sold for quick cash, always attractive to an administration pressed for funds. With the necessary approval of department heads and the Board of Estimate, which had to certify that the land would not be needed for schools, parks, housing or other public use, it disposed of all but 50 acres.

The same heedless course of action is being contemplated for the "land bank" established by Mayor Wagner in 1961 to meet some of the city's future land needs. In Staten Island, the future of city-owned land that the new Verrazano Bridge will make available for development is an increasingly tempting dish for bargain-happy speculators.

Who wants the sell-off? City Controller Abraham D. Beame and the Department of Real Estate seem to think that a dollar in the hand