

The Armory Sites . . .

New York City badly needs more small parks and playgrounds. Such green oases are much more common in London and Paris than New York, and add greatly to the attractiveness of both. There is no reason why New York should be underprivileged in this respect.

In a program now projected by the City Planning Commission, the city may be on the way to establishing an official municipal policy on small parks, with a coordinated, planned program for their creation in areas of maximum need and feasibility.

There is one area that may soon become that greatest of New York rarities, a full block of open space. The Squadron A Armory, bounded by 94th and 95th Streets and Park and Madison Avenues, one of the four armories acquired by the city from the state for \$6 million, is being pressed as a site for immediate development. The Board of Education wants it for a \$5.5 million junior high school. Civic organizations have been urging that it be utilized for middle-income housing, or that the school and the housing project be combined.

These are laudable projects. But what is involved here is the larger question of land use in a city where changed or modified uses are critical not only in terms of the surrounding neighborhood but also as part of the involved and complex relationships of all of the city's construction and services. Perhaps this should be the site of the Park Department's recently announced pilot-block project for a new kind of playground, developed in response to criticism of the department's present standards of design.

Certainly the possibility of a park or playground should not be ruled out, in view of the city's desperate need for life-giving breathing spaces. Similar considerations apply to the 34th Street Armory, which occupies three-quarters of a square block between Park and Lexington.

Under no circumstances should local political or other pressures determine the use of such valuable sites, no matter how attractive any individual proposal may sound. This decision must be arrived at through proper consideration of a long-term view of the city's total land use requirements, including a small park policy.