

It must be equally evident that the restoration plan has the highest priority—every inch of it, in fact, is emergency work on the reclamation of a priceless urban amenity that has been literally going down the drain through erosion.

What is involved is the essential rehabilitation of Central Park's substructure of civil engineering, on which its artful and artificial landscape depends; this is a manmade and highly vulnerable masterpiece. The real concerns are drainage, erosion, ground cover, trees and plantings as well as ornamental landmarks and Frederick Law Olmsted's grand design.

The basic mandate is to stay as close as possible to that grand design. The history of the park is a litany of tinkering and sabotage. It is a bucolic battleground littered with things that shouldn't be there—although it must be added that in recent months the park has been kept cleaner than it has in many years.

There will be difficult and necessary compromises between appropriate twentieth-century uses and the nineteenth-century design. Philosophical, programatic and practical questions will have to be resolved with sensitivity and skill. But the job can only be begun with the Board of Estimate's immediate approval. We say full speed backward toward Olmsted's art and intentions; the rescue operation is fifty years overdue.

Reviving Central Park

The city has announced the first step in the desperately needed rehabilitation plan for Central Park, for which initial contracts are to be acted on by the Board of Estimate this week. At the same time, the board will consider the controversial Bloomingdale gift for redesign of the Mall, which, it is hoped and even expected, will quietly get laid over.

The abortive Mall project and the master rehabilitation plan are not mutually exclusive. It is simply a case of priorities. Nor should Bloomingdale's be blamed for a scheme it never conceived but only funded in good faith, without realizing how misconceived the proposal was.