

TO TURN OPEN LOTS INTO PLAYGROUNDS

Neighborhood Associations to Equip Many More Breath- ing Spots.

POLICE ANXIOUS TO HELP

Commissioner Woods Urges Closing of 100 Streets as Means of Safety to Children.

The city streets are already beginning to be filled with the many children who during the Summer season have no other playground. Unless more play streets and play centres are provided for them, police officers assert that the usual heavy Summer toll of accidents and loss of life may be expected.

Several neighborhood associations are now making plans for keeping as many children as possible off the streets. In some cases vacant lots are being turned into playgrounds. In Essex Market Place, in the shadow of Ludlow Street Jail, there is a play lot 100 feet square. It has a handball court built about the wall of the jail, swings are being placed in the lot, and the smaller children are to have sand boxes, pails, and shovels. The Little Mothers' Club of Public School 45, on the lower west side, has obtained the use of a good-sized backyard at 243 West Twenty-fourth Street for a play space. A manufacturer in the neighborhood has agreed to furnish sand, shovels, and pails for the children during the season.

A plan favored by many neighborhood associations is to turn the backyards of tenements into playgrounds. This may be done by clearing the yards of rubbish and tearing down partition fences. The idea is to have a backyard playground a block long. It has been difficult, however, to get landlords to consent to this plan. Another plan being considered by the associations is to build spaces on tenement house roofs.

Commissioner Woods has again advocated the closing of 100 streets at certain hours of the day this season for children.

"The children," he said, "have simply got to be taken care of. We can't dodge the responsibility, and the sooner we get them off the streets and out from under the wheels of vehicles just so soon will the street accidents begin to go down and not until then."

Last season there were only fifteen such play streets. Leroy Peterson, who is in charge of the Bureau of Unemployment of the Police Department and has made a study of the situation, says that on every play street it is necessary to have a competent Supervisor. These Supervisors must be paid \$2 a day for their work, and neighborhood associations at present are being hampered in their plans for safe playgrounds for children by lack of funds. The Parks and Playgrounds Association at 1,123 Broadway, which supervised most of the play streets last season, has sent out 3,000 appeals for funds to develop its work. The association wants to raise \$10,000 to carry out its plans.

In the city there are, between 5 and 15 years of age, 1,016,520 children. It is estimated that 682,941 of this number must play away from home, and of this number 345,069 are in Manhattan. It has further been found that the Park Department and the Board of Education have facilities for caring for 185,189; that private organization can care for 11,100, and that other organizations such as the Parks and Playgrounds Association and the Police Department could care for enough children to make this total number about 200,000, which shows that there are recreational facilities in the city for only about one-third of the children who need playground space. There is an urgent need, police officers assert, for more play spaces in the congested districts south of Fourteenth Street and in other sections of Manhattan and the Bronx.

"It has been proved," a police officer said, "that children must have a place to play near their homes. They will not walk a mile to go to a city park. Then the parks are hemmed about by so many restrictions that many children do not care to play in them. After all, in most of our parks the only place in which they can play is on the walks, and there they are in the way of passers-by. If they go on the grass they are chased out of the park by a policeman. It is only natural that children should want to play, and if the city refuses to provide playgrounds for them they are going to play in the streets. Many a poor little girl, while playing 'Ring around a Rosie' or some other childish game, on a traffic congested highway, has had her life crushed out by auto or truck."