

Officials call for review of Annenberg arts plan

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City officials say Walter H. Annenberg's proposed Fine Arts Center should be subjected to public scrutiny.

They took that stance despite the apparent threat by Annenberg, 68-year-old publisher and former Ambassador to Britain, to "drop the project."

He said he'd scrap it if he didn't have "overwhelming approval by the trustees of

the Metropolitan Museum of Art and those responsible in civic affairs in New York City."

"I personally will see to it that it comes before the Board of Estimate," Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton said, even though there is some legal question as to whether the museum proposal has to be reviewed by any public body.

The museum addition in

which the Annenberg center would be located was approved in 1971 by the Board of Estimate as part of a master plan.

Museum officials argue that incorporating the Fine Arts Center of the Annenberg School of Communications in that approved wing is not a change in the master plan requiring new approval.

"Any member of the Board

of Estimate can place the matter on the agenda by a resolution," Sutton said.

Sutton made his remarks last night following the disclosure of the Annenberg letter "to the citizens of New York City" by Met director Thomas Hoving at a public hearing on the issue held by the Manhattan Borough Board.

Several city officials, led

by Councilman Carter Burden (D-Man.) argued that because the museum is on city-owned park land and is generously subsidized by public funds that the Annenberg proposal should be subject to review and approval of several city agencies, including the Board of Estimate and the Planning Commission.

"It is not clear if Annenberg is threatening to

pull his proposal out of the city altogether or just out of the Metropolitan," Burden said.

Asked if Annenberg meant out of the city, Hoving said "definitely." But he would not assist The Post in reaching Annenberg directly.

"I have just discussed it at length with him," Hoving said late last night, "and I know his intent. I helped write the letter."