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NEW COLLEGE, Sarasota, Fla.

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

A cluster of tall, royal palms, planted in a geometric pattern, will form the heart of a plaza linking the three new residence halls of New College.

Construction already is underway on the foundations for the plaza, which was designed by Architect I. M. Pei to give a common access to the residence halls and also to tie them to the new multi purpose building, the Carl and Marjorie Hamilton Court, for which working drawings now are being made.

Pei traveled extensively around Florida viewing various types of landscaping before he decided on the massed royal palms for the central court. He wanted to find something truly distinctive and representative of the Florida area that would complement the East Campus structures which he considers one of his finest projects.

His idea, according to Planning Officer Captain Ralph E. Styles, is to have 24 of the palms clustered in the center of the plaza, each in its own eight-foot square planter, with walkways around each tree.

Since each tree is to be 35-40 feet tall, Captain Styles noted, they will form a solid pattern at the top, taller than either of the surrounding buildings.

"Pei sees the massed trunks projecting skyward as a complement to the buildings themselves," said Capt. Styles. "Towering over the halls will be the green roof provided by the tops of the 24 palms, which will add color to the nearly single tone of tree trunk and building brick."

Capt. Styles said that both night and day the plaza would be an attractive area for student and visitor.

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New College is now looking for people who have royal palms they would like to give to the college for this project.

"It is quite a job finding 24 trees of this type," said Capt. Styles. "We already have been offered several trees by people in the area but we are hoping to find more. We will pay all costs of transplanting."

The surface of the plaza will be of tile matching that in the center court of each of the residence halls.

Around the edge of the plaza will be a brick wall which also will serve as a seating area for students and visitors.

Capt. Styles said that the lighting of the plaza will both provide illumination for walking and special effects among the palm trees.

Completion of the project is scheduled for late summer although the tree planing may not be accomplished by then. Capt. Styles said that unless the trees can be put in during their growing season it will be some time before they can be brought in.

Landscaping of the courts in each of the residence halls also is being completed along with seeding of the grass on the entire campus surrounding the halls.

By opening of the second academic year in late September, said Capt. Styles, the southern half of the East Campus should be nearly complete, including landscaping.

James A. Knowles, Inc., of St. Petersburg is the contractor on the central plaza. Landscaping was conceived by consultant Lane Marshall, working with architect Pei and his staff. First stage plantings were done by Reasoner's Nursery.