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Eye Center Contract Awarded

Sight has been called the most important of man's five senses. More than 80 per cent of the sensory input to the brain comes from the eyes. Because of man's dependence on vision, treatment of eye diseases has long been one of the major tasks of medicine.

Duke University has just taken a major step toward more comprehensive treatment of eye disease and research into the causes of blindness with the award of contracts for a Duke University Eye Center to be built on the medical campus.

The Robert H. Pinnix Co. of Gastonia has been named general contractor for the Eye Center. The company submitted the low bid of \$2,546,950. Construction of the three-story, 67,000-square-foot facility is slated to start during the summer and is scheduled for completion in 18 to 24 months.

The Eye Center, to be located across Erwin Road from the Veterans Administration Hospital, will include a 43-bed inpatient unit, operating rooms, a 22,000-square-foot outpatient clinic and one complete floor of research laboratories.

"The Eye Center will be primarily a referral center for the entire Southeast," Dr. Joseph A. C. Wadsworth, chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology, explained.

"There is no comparable eye institute between the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore and the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami," he said.

Planners estimate that the total project will cost \$3.7 million, all of which will come from private sources.

Designed by the Six Associates of Asheville, the structure will be step-shaped, made of Duke's traditional Hillsborough stone in aggregate panels with precast concrete and steel reinforcement.

The ground floor will contain over 20,000 square feet of research



DUKE'S NEW EYE CENTER—Here is an architect's drawing of the \$3.7 million Eye Center Duke will build near the VA Hospital. The Center, which will serve both inpatients and outpatients, should be completed in 18 to 24 months. (photo courtesy of the Planning Office) (See additional photo, page 3)

laboratories and support facilities including an electron microscope, an ophthalmologic X-ray department, a laser operating room, a photography department, conference rooms, and animal care facilities. Research carried out in this area will include investigation of the management of cancer of the eye, studies on corneal transplantation and research on diseases that affect the retina, such as diabetes and macular degeneration.

The first floor will contain the outpatient clinic including examination and treatment rooms and offices for the seven staff ophthalmologists and nine residents in training, as well as additional space for medical students in training and postdoctoral fellows.

A Children's Clinic will be located on this floor and will provide facilities for the examination and treatment of congenital eye defects, infantile glaucoma and inherited eye tumors. The Eye Center Children's Clinic will permit a doubling of the number of patients currently being seen in the children's eye department at Duke.

The first floor also will contain a tumor clinic in which malignant tumors in adults will be studied. A glaucoma clinic will provide patients with the latest methods of diagnosis and treatment of this serious eye disease.

A retina clinic will be available for the management of retinal detachment, congenital retinal disease and other retinal problems, such as diabetic retinopathy. Also located on the first floor will be areas for contact lenses and glasses fitting.

The top floor of the Eye Center will be entirely devoted to inpatient care with 43 hospital rooms and two complete operating room suites. The operating rooms will be immediately adjacent to the patient rooms, facilitating the movement of patients to and from surgery.

Each patient room will have a second bed available which can be used for parents who wish to remain with the young patients overnight or for relatives of adult patients. Several of the larger rooms will be converted to double rooms for pediatric patients when necessary.