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MetWest, in Tampa's Westshore business district, gears up for the next phase of development

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The developer of MetWest International, a mixed-use development in Tampa's Westshore business district, appears to be gearing up for a new phase of construction.

MetWest's vacant 2.5-acre parcel at North Lois Avenue and West Boy Scout Boulevard was moved between corporations controlled by MetLife in late December, according to Hillsborough County property records. At the same time, MetLife also secured a \$143 million loan from [Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.](#)



AERIAL INNOVATIONS

MetWest's vacant 2.5-acre parcel at North Lois Avenue and West Boy Scout Boulevard, far right

That type of paperwork — intra-company deed transfers and large loans — typically foreshadow new construction. Neither MetLife's corporate spokesman nor its local leasing representatives would answer questions about the deed transfer, loan or potential new development.

One possibility for that prime corner: A new apartment tower.

In early 2019, MetLife sought approval from the city to modify its original plans for that property and increase the number of apartments from 254 units to 424 units and increase the building height from 10 stories to 12 stories. The justification for

the change, MetLife told the city, was that the 175-room AC Hotel within MetWest is 90 rooms smaller than the plan originally approved. Under the city's equivalency matrix, that left room to add 170 apartments to the property.

This phase of development will also include a 12-story, 746-parking garage. The city signed off on MetLife's plans in May 2019. If this iteration moves forward, MetLife is to construct an interim, 75-space parking lot for use during construction, according to the city's approval letter.

A high-rise apartment tower would be a big endorsement of Westshore as a residential market. Though the business district has seen an influx of multifamily development in the last real estate cycle, the vast majority of those units are in stick-frame, midrise buildings. Developing a 12-story high rise means that MetLife is confident that it can attract top-of-market rents in Westshore.



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