
MetroNational tops out on Memorial City office tower

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Houston-based MetroNational has topped out on a 190,000-square-foot, nine-story office building in Memorial City, marking a major milestone for a project that was initially put on hold as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The topping out ceremony, a tradition that celebrates the final beam being placed at the top of the building, for the office tower at 9753 Katy Freeway was held Aug. 15. The building is expected to be delivered in the second quarter of 2023.

MetroNational originally broke ground on the office building in early 2020 but paused construction as the pandemic took hold in Houston. However, MetroNational said the additional time allowed the developer to update its design of the building.

Houston-based Kirksey Architecture's design includes a modern two-story lobby with a 27-foot art wall setting off the patterned terrazzo tile floor.



JEFF JEFFREY/HBJ

MetroNational's new office building at 9753 Katy Freeway is expected to be delivered in the second quarter of 2023.

Each floor of the building will have floor plates offering 22,605 rentable square feet.

The building will also have a range of amenities, including a full-service tenant engagement app, easy access to the Memorial City Club fitness center and close proximity to a number of restaurants and Memorial City's new greenspace dubbed "The Lawn," which offers outdoor entertainment and community events.

MetroNational has not said whether any tenants have signed leases for space in the new office tower.

The Houston Business Journal has reached out to MetroNational for additional information.

However, the office building appears to be an effort by the company to capitalize on the ongoing "flight to quality" trend.

Despite Houston's office market struggling under a 25% vacancy rate, many of the city's most prominent developers continue to bring trophy office buildings to market.

Real estate experts say that the so-called tenant's market has given companies looking for office space a great deal of leverage in lease negotiations. The majority of tenants are seeking Class A offices that offer a range of modern amenities. While that is good news for newer buildings, those built decades ago often struggle to attract tenants without landlords investing millions in renovations.

MetroNational has already landed several high-profile tenants for its other office properties in Memorial City, which is essentially a 300-acre master-planned community in west Houston.

Most recently, Quanex Building Products Corp. (NYSE: NX) announced plans to move its headquarters into a 16,545-square-foot space at 945 Bunker Hill Road. Quanex is scheduled to make the move from its existing offices at 1800 W. Loop South in the Uptown/Galleria area in September 2023.

Meanwhile, 9753 Katy Freeway marks the second phase of a 4-acre mixed-use development MetroNational is in the process of building.

The development is anchored by The McKinley, a 25-story luxury apartment tower, which broke ground in 2019 and opened last year.

The 332,231-square-foot multifamily tower at 9757 Katy Freeway offers 278 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartment units. The building's top two floors are dedicated to deluxe penthouse units. The McKinley was a finalist for the HBJ's 2022 Landmark Awards in the Multifamily category.

Elsewhere in Memorial City, MetroNational announced plans in May to build a 27-acre urban infill development, dubbed Memorial Town Square, on the site of the former Sears store at Memorial City Mall.

Memorial Town Square eventually will feature a mix of retail, coworking, traditional office and multifamily spaces at the corner of Gessner Road and Barryknoll Lane.

The first phase of the development is scheduled to break ground next year with an anticipated completion date of 2025. It will focus on building 10 standalone retail buildings, which will total 190,000 square feet and will surround a new half-acre green space.

Once the retail portion of the project is finished, the company will start building the multifamily piece of the project, which will consist of a tower with 250-plus units and between 50,000 and 60,000 square feet of first-floor retail.

The final piece of the project will be a 375,000-square-foot office building.

The company has not yet set a timeline for the second and third phases of the project.

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