## **Church buys Straight Inc. site**

[CITY Edition]

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## **Document Text**

Pinellas Park Wesleyan Church has purchased the former headquarters site of Straight Inc., a controversial drug-treatment operation that recently pulled out of St. Petersburg.

The church said it paid \$895,000 for the 6-acre site, which it will use as a second campus. The property is at 3001 Gandy Blvd., west of Interstate 275.

The site includes two major buildings totaling about 21,000 square feet, said Mel Smith, a church member and spokesman on the purchase.

A 16,500-square-foot building will be known as the Wesleyan Family Life Center. It will house the expansion of the church's Chi Alpha (teen-age), Disciples of Christ (young adult) and Sampson (singles adult) ministries, as well as future ministry expansion and community activities, such as exercise classes, Smith said.

A smaller building will accommodate counseling services and centralized offices for the church, he said.

The church's current sanctuary and education building, built in 1986 at 4400 70th Ave. in Pinellas Park, will continue to serve as its principal worship site, Senior Pastor Larry Freeman said in a news release.

The church will occupy the newly acquired site gradually as renovation and refurbishing, including a new roof, painting and landscaping, are completed, Smith said.

Church trustees became aware of the property's availability in early June, and the transaction was completed July 29, according to the release.

The congregation voted in June by more than 95 percent in favor of the purchase, and a special offering for an earnest payment of \$21,400 was received on the same Sunday, Smith said.

The mortgage is secured principally by the Wesleyan Investment Foundation, a denominational agency based in Indianapolis, Smith said.

Straight was formed in St. Petersburg and attained nationwide publicity in the 1980s. But the organization recently pulled out of St. Petersburg and closed several drug-treatment centers around the country.

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## Abstract (Document Summary)

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