Final girders of old Press building fall their own way

And the walls came down

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In the end, the steel girders of the old Grand Rapids Press building fell their own way. Carefully crafted plans to take down the building's final steel columns hit a snag Friday when two of the four steel columns that were supposed to fall away from Michigan Street instead fell toward the street when their connecting girders split apart.

No one was injured. A pair of cranes then pushed the final two 40-foot-high columns onto the stubborn girders that stood askew atop the rubble of the site that will become the future home of Michigan State University's new $85.1 million Grand Rapids Research Center.

"This was one tough building," said Louis Pitsch, vice president of Pitsch Wrecking Co. "All of the steel beams were encased in concrete. We had to break the concrete away to cut the beams."

The building was used as headquarters for The Grand Rapids Press from 1966 until 2012, when the building was sold to Michigan State University for $12 million.

The Press' editorial and marketing staff now are located at 169 Monroe Ave. NW, while the newspaper is printed in Walker.

Demolition workers who knocked down the four-story building in four weeks will

The final beams crash to the ground Friday after four weeks of structure demolition at the site of the old Grand Rapids Press building on Michigan Street NW. (Chris Clark/MLive.com)

Bystanders watch as Pitsch Wrecking Co. crews prepare to tear down the final girders and beams of the former Grand Rapids Press building at the intersection of Monroe Avenue and Michigan Street NW. Crews now will begin crushing the rubble and carting away the debris from the site. Officials said 90 percent of the old building materials will be recycled for the new structure going on the site. (Chris Clark/MLive.com)
Building
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spend the next two weeks remove all of the building’s structural steel and other debris, Pitsch said.

A concrete crushing machine will be brought on site to pulverize the bricks and concrete into gravel that will be used to make for concrete for the new building, Pitsch said. The site will be ready for MSU’s contractors by June.

More than 90 percent of the old Press building will be recycled for the new building, including some of the copper cladding that lined the roof area of the old building.

Pitsch said the building’s 2,000 tons of steel beams will be stored at one of the company’s yards until this fall, when they hope steel prices will improve. Other rubble, such as drywall, plaster and ceiling tiles, will be sent to the company’s landfill near Belding.

MSU’s new research center will be built at the northeast corner of Michigan Street and Monroe Avenue NW. Two other building sites on the 4.3-acre site will be developed in the future.

When completed in late 2017, the new building will house 44 principal investigator teams affiliated with MSU’s College of Human Medicine. The new research center will retain about 80 current MSU employees and create up to 180 new jobs.

Equipment shoves down the remaining parts of the former Press building Friday.

(Chris Clark/MLive.com)