The former Grand Rapids Press building at 155 Michigan St. NW was purchased by Michigan State University in 2012. MSU plans to demolish the building and erect a five-to-six-story, 145,000-square-foot biomedical research center. (Andrew Kuhn/MLive.com)

GRAND RAPIDS

MSU to build $88M biomedical research facility downtown

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Michigan State University will spend $88.1 million to build a 163,000 square-foot biomedical research center on the former site of The Grand Rapids Press in downtown Grand Rapids.

“The Grand Rapids Research Center will be designed to hold 44 principal investigator teams and will build on the infrastructure and research investments that have taken place in downtown Grand Rapids over the past century,” the East Lansing-based school said in its application for tax breaks at the new facility.

The new research center will retain about 80 current MSU College of Human Medicine employees and create up to 180 new jobs. Although wages will vary, the average wage will be about $90,000, according to the application, which will be considered by the city’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority on Thursday.

Although MSU is tax-exempt, university officials said part of the project could be made available for private, taxable development, making it eligible for tax reimbursements that would help absorb up to $29 million worth of cleanup and redevelopment costs.

The new facility will be designed by Ellenzweig, the Cambridge, Mass., architectural firm that also designed the medical school’s Secchia Center, located east of the building site.

MSU announced plans to demolish the former Grand Rapids Press site in April, saying the newspaper printing facility was not suitable as a high-level medical research facility. MSU bought the Press Building and five downtown parking lots for $12 million in 2012.

The 173,840-square-foot former Press headquarters opened in 1966 amid urban renewal construction on the north side of downtown. The Press has since moved its editorial and marketing staff to 169 Monroe Avenue NW in downtown Grand Rapids while printing is done at a printing facility in suburban Walker.

Demolition of the 48-year-old Press building is expected to begin in March.