

BUSINESS



Wells Fargo Place office tower is sold

Price likely surpasses \$100 million for St. Paul's tallest building

BY GITA SITARAMIAH
Pioneer Press

Wells Fargo Place, formerly known as the World Trade Center, has been sold.

Beyond that, not much more is being said.

The sale of the downtown building, St. Paul's tallest, closed

Oct. 26, said a spokeswoman for Eden Prairie's Northstar Partners, which represented seller Zeller Realty. The spokeswoman didn't divulge details, citing confidentiality agreements.

The talk in commercial real estate circles is that the buyers likely are Dan and Raymond Levy of Unilev Capital Corp. in

Beverly Hills, Calif. The selling price likely was more than \$100 million. Calls to Unilev Capital were not returned Wednesday.

Zeller Realty of Chicago is expected to continue managing and leasing the space, which that company owned for about six years. Tom Stella, a vice president of United Properties commercial real estate firm, suspects the tenant mix won't change. Zeller lured the building's namesake tenant, San Francisco-based

Wells Fargo & Co., away from nearby Fifth Street Center (formerly Norwest Center) five years ago.

"Every landlord in the country would want to have Wells Fargo as a tenant," said Bob Pounds, senior vice president at Welsh Cos., another real estate firm.

Despite a glut of vacant office space in downtown, a drive nationally by institutional investors such as pension funds

TOWER SOLD, 6C



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JOE ROSSI

The 37-story Wells Fargo Place is one of seven downtown office towers classified as Class A space.

Tower sold

(continued)

and real estate investment trusts to buy office towers is pushing sale prices higher.

Among the recent deals in downtown St. Paul, Plymouth-based Hempel Properties

The building is about 11 percent vacant, which is considered healthy.

agreed last month to purchase UBS Plaza, formerly known as the Piper Jaffray Tower, for an undisclosed price. The U.S. Bank Center sold earlier this year for \$53.2 million. Galtier Plaza's office portion changed

hands on June 13, when an affiliate of California-based National Exchange Advisors acquired it for \$15.9 million. And Lawson Commons sold last year for \$84.5 million.

"There's a lot of investment money all over America and all over the world going into American urban high-rises," said Dick Zehring, president of MSP Commercial Cos. in St. Paul. "And they're going at very high prices."

The 37-story Wells Fargo Place is one of seven downtown St. Paul office towers classified as Class A space, the type with the most amenities. It's the largest office building of its class in the city with 634,895 square feet. The building is about 11 percent vacant, which is considered healthy by industry standards.

Gita Sitaramiah can be reached at 651-228-5472 or gsitaramiah@pioneerpress.com.