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## Get Gaines Going

By Lester Abberger  
CITIZEN EDITORIAL BOARD  
MY VIEW

A Chinese proverb has it that, "The future is not a place we are going, it is a place we are creating."

So it is with Gaines Street, and the logjam blocking its long-overdue revitalization is finally breaking apart. Gaines Street links Florida A&M, Florida State and downtown physically and symbolically, and it is an important gateway to our city. For too long, too much has been promised and too little has been accomplished; there has been too much talk and not enough action.

Now city officials, FSU, the Master Craftsman Studio, the Knight Creative Community Initiatives' Get Gaines Going Team, Railroad Square property owners, and many other concerned and committed citizens have at last joined hands to focus time, attention and resources on the Gaines Street challenge. Their synergy has generated meaningful momentum for progress along this significant urban corridor.

The city has committed specifically and emphatically to:

Demolishing derelict buildings it owns on Gaines Street, including the former Bill's Bookstore, the maintenance building fronting Railroad Avenue immediately south of Gaines, and the old Chevron filling station at Gaines Street and M.L. King Boulevard.

Renovating completely Doug Burnett Park, Boulevard Park, and the green space east of the Civic Center. Construction should begin by early spring 2008.

Relocating within 12 to 18 months electric utility lines to the rear property lines on Gaines Street between Railroad and Madison.

Landscaping city-owned property on Gaines and better maintaining sidewalks and rights of way to enhance street appeal.

Working with existing property owners to garner their approval of a planting plan for landscaping that has been developed by the city's landscape architect.

Realigning Lake Bradford Road at Stadium Drive to facilitate implementation of "new urbanist" traffic engineer Rick Hall's brilliant design plan for Gaines Street.

Other efforts are under way as well. The city will offer matching grants to property owners for facade improvements and painting. The city also intends to provide street trees to property owners along Gaines Street. After the Bill's Bookstore building is demolished, the city will partner with the FSU Master Craftsman Studio, Railroad Square artists and the Council on Culture and Arts to locate sculptures, benches and other outdoor public art in the area.

Moreover, city commissioners have selected business and civic leader Ed Murray to chair a newly reconstituted Gaines Street Revitalization Committee. Murray brings experience, credibility with private-sector investors, and a can-do attitude to the assignment. Mayor John Marks, Commissioner Mark Mustian and City Manager Anita Favors Thompson have taken strong interest and provided catalytic leadership in Gaines Street revitalization efforts. City staffers Michael Wright, Gabe Menendez, Roxanne Manning, Dan Donovan, Michael Parker and others are contributing their experience and expertise to transform Gaines Street dreams into reality.

According to Allan Jacobs, author of the urbanist classic "Great Streets," almost 30 percent of a city's developed land is likely to be in public rights of way, mostly in streets. Jacobs asserts that if we can develop and design streets so they are, "wonderful fulfilling places to be, community building places, attractive public space, then we will have successfully designed about a third of the city directly and will have an immense impact on the rest."

Gaines Street can and must be a model for making a "great street" and for the kind of creative, collaborative public-private partnerships that can transform our city.

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