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Buildings come down to make way for Gaines Street revitalization

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A page of Tallahassee history is turning this week.

Wrecking crews are taking down old landmarks on Gaines Street — Bill's Bookstore and the Late Night Library at Gay Street and the Chevron gas station at Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. — to make way for future developments. The city of Tallahassee bought the sites in 2004 and 2005 for \$9.4 million, as part of its redevelopment plans for the corridor.

"We're looking at properties that are in bad shape," said Michael Parker, the city's director of economic development. "It doesn't make sense to maintain them when we all know that they're going to be demolished when we redevelop the properties."

Parker said the demolition wasn't timed with any specific proposals for Gaines Street, but made sense now because the city is having to pay for maintenance such as repairing broken windows.

Recent Tallahassee college grads might fondly remember the bookstore and the library-in-name-only (it was really a nightclub), but older residents have a different recollection of the Gay Street site.

From 1974 to 1989, it was home to the Leon County Food Co-Op, New Leaf Market's predecessor, before the co-op moved to the Parkway Shopping Center. But some of the co-op's current members said Tuesday that they won't miss their old digs.

"I do think the spirit came over here (to the new location)," said Barry Courtney, who was a cashier at the co-op in the late 1970s.