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## Gaines Street project gets going

### Hundreds attend groundbreaking ceremony

*By Gerald Ensley*  
*Democrat senior writer*

More than 150 people — including two dozen protesting bicyclists — turned out for Tuesday's groundbreaking on the Gaines Street revitalization project.

The ceremony was the official kickoff to an 18-month, \$15 million project intended to reshape the longtime industrial corridor and traffic thoroughfare into a district of shops, cafes and gathering places.

The city will install new underground utilities and remodel the road from four lanes to two from Woodward Avenue to Monroe Street. The project should be completed by late 2010.

Private developers and businesses will then be expected to create new economic and cultural enterprises along Gaines Street.

First proposed in 1994, the project lifted off Tuesday morning with speeches by a dozen local officials at Doug Burnette Park on Gaines Street at MLK Boulevard. Officials placed items in a time capsule that will be buried in Burnette Park. Residents and schoolchildren signed a sewer pipe that will be installed as part of the project.

"This project places the emphasis on people," said Roxanne Manning, director of the city Community Redevelopment Agency. "We did not want this to be just a pass-through. We wanted it to be a place people can gather."

Shortly after the event started, about 20 to 30 bicyclists rode up to protest the project's lack of bike lanes. They carried signs ("Bikes are green") and broke into chants of "Bike lanes on Gaines!"

Justin Pogge, speaking for the group, brandished the seat of a "ghost bike" tribute to Trey Hayworth, who was struck and killed by a truck at the intersection of Gaines and Railroad Avenue in 2008.

"The original plan had bike lanes and they were a critical part of the project," Pogge said. "(Not having bike lanes) is not just important to this group but should be important to the city."

City officials said they eliminated bike lanes from the project because they do not contribute to the lower car speeds. Instead, they said, specially designed pedestrian crosswalks, wide sidewalks and on-street parking, plus extension of St. Francis Street to reduce trucks on Gaines, will slow traffic and allow bicyclists to drive with traffic.

"I think bicyclists' concerns have totally been folded into this project," City Commissioner Debbie Lightsey said. "All the data shows when you slow cars, bikes can totally safely mingle with cars."

## Additional Facts

### Gaines Street remodeling

The city has begun underground utility construction on Gaines Street and portions of the street will be

closed between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m., Monday through Friday. Access to local businesses will be maintained and all four lanes will remain open during weekdays from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. To follow construction progress, visit [talgov.com/Gaines](http://talgov.com/Gaines).

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