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## Library Partnership relocating to new digs

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The Library Partnership Neighborhood Resource Center is moving from rented space in a once-vibrant shopping area on Northeast 16th Avenue to new digs right down the street.

The Alachua County Library District paid \$225,000 for property at 912 NE 16th Ave. that once housed one of several locations of Gresham's Drugs and also an internet cafe. The existing structure will be demolished to make way for the new 10,000-square-foot Library Partnership.

Nickie Kortus, spokesperson for the Library District, said via email that construction on the new library is set to start this August or September and will be completed in spring 2018. The total budget is \$1,925,000 and architectural and engineering services are being provided by Paul Stresing Associates Inc., which is based in the city of Alachua. The contractor will be selected in August.

Kortus said the Library District will own the new facility and Partnership for Strong Families will rent space for the Neighborhood Resource Center.

The Library District wanted to remain in the same area because the location has worked well for the partnership with Partnership for Strong Families to have a Neighborhood Resource Center within a library. She said services provided there have made a difference in the neighborhoods served by Library Partnership.

Reached by phone, Stephen Pennypacker, president and CEO of Partnership for Strong Families, said the Library Partnership Resource Center has seen a significant decrease in the number of verified children abuse reports in the

neighborhoods it serves. He said Partnership for Strong Families operates three Resource Centers in Gainesville – Library Partnership, Cone Park Branch Library and Southwest Advocacy Group, or SWAG Family Resource Center.

Pennypacker said via email that data from 2009-2015 show a 44 percent to 58 percent decrease in verified child maltreatment counts in the communities each Gainesville Resource Center serves.

“The Alachua County Library District has worked hand in hand with Partnership for Strong Families to provide a center for families to access services in a friendly, welcoming environment,” Pennypacker wrote in an email. “We look forward to continuing our relationship in a new setting.”

Library Partnership Neighborhood Resource Center opened its doors in 2009 in a 7,096-square-foot rented space at 1130 NE 16th Ave. In 2014, the facility was expanded next door into the former Dollar Store location, gaining a total of 14,196 square feet of space.

Although the new library will be smaller, at 10,000-square-feet, Kortus said the square footage is identical to Cone Park Branch Library and able to conform to the needs of Partnership for Strong Families and the library. She said the library space will include the same existing features, such as a teen space, a quiet reading room, a study room and a meeting room.

She said Partnership for Strong Families has had input on the design of their portion of the building, which has specific space use similar to the existing space.

Although there will be a little less space, Pennypacker said, Partnership for Strong Families will continue to offer the same services and continue to work to impact and serve the community. He said the new facility will be “literally half a block” from the existing facility.

Kortus said usage at Library Partnership for the fiscal year ending in Sept. 30, 2016, resulted in 49,428 total check-outs, 84,857 visits, and 513 total programs, with 8,112 visitors.

“The opportunity to purchase a building rather than lease made it the right time for this decision to own instead of lease,” Kortus wrote. “In order to operate efficiently, plan and make the changes that best suit the communities we serve,

the Library District prefers to own library properties and we (can have) control over operating expenses, maintenance, etc.”