

I PEOPLE

# Goodbye, Xiao Fu Square

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On a late December day in Taipei, as the temperature dipped toward 10 degrees Celsius, the main campus of National Taiwan University should have felt hushed—emptied by the winter break, stilled by the cold.

Instead, the campus commons buzzed with activity from morning till night.

Graduates donning their chic black gowns lined up to have their photos taken against the ivy-adorned exterior of Xiao Fu Square-- its once lush walls now a tangle of bare winter vines. Inside the sole shop still open for business, students searched the half-empty shelves for parting souvenirs—anything to carry away. Some stood outside in the cold, eating Xiao Fu Square's famously incongruous ice cream-- melting faster than usual. Near the service counter, an elderly professor leaned casually against the desk, chatting with staff. Listening closely, one could hear stories untold in any official archive: vignettes of campus life from several decades ago, retold in vivid fragments.

December 24, 2025, was Xiao Fu Square's final day of operation.

Completed in 1981, the solid three-story building sits between NTU's general classrooms, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Boya Teaching Building—an unavoidable point of passage for generations of students rushing between classes. At lunchtime, bicycles and people flowed into the area in front of Xiao Fu Square and the nearby intersection. Inside, the building offered affordable meals, daily necessities, and a kind of quiet convenience that felt indispensable. For many if not most students, if there was something they needed, it could be found at Xiao Fu Square.

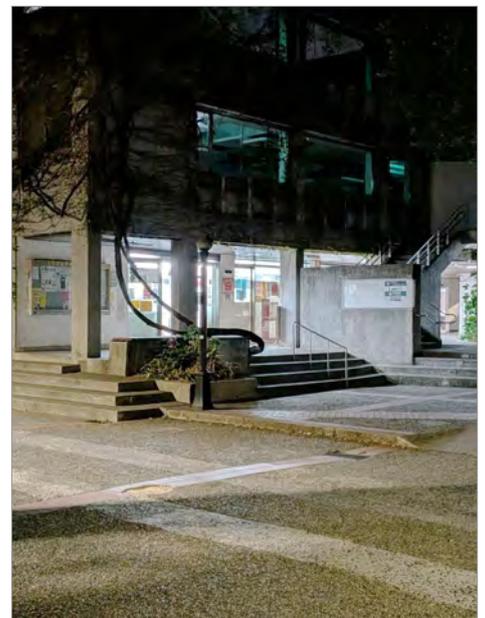
"I once forgot to buy a gift for my girlfriend," recalled Mark, an alumnus from the Department of History. "Xiao Fu Square saved me."

For Mark, whose student days unfolded mostly between lecture halls and the Liberal Arts buildings, Xiao Fu Square was never just a place to eat lunch. It was a constant—part of the rhythm of campus life itself.

Another alumnus, Tsai from the School of Pharmacy, spent much of his undergraduate life there as well. Laughing, he recalled eating at Xiao Fu Square more than ten times in a single week at one point. He also remembers joining rallies and short talks held on the campus commons. Later, as his studies shifted to the College of Medicine, his daily connection to Xiao Fu Square gradually faded.



On Xiao Fu Square's final day, only a handful of items remain on the shelves. (Photo courtesy of the interviewee)



A final photograph before the lights go out at Xiao Fu Square. (Photo courtesy of the interviewee)

Earlier in 2025, NTU announced that Xiao Fu Square, long overdue for major repairs, would close at year's end and be demolished. The news triggered a wave of nostalgia online, as alumni and students shared photos, memories, and farewells.

Even years after graduation, Mark felt a quiet sense of loss when he heard the announcement. During long stretches of thesis writing, Xiao Fu Square had been his refuge—"a place that felt safe," he confessed. To him, it symbolized something stable in campus life. As that symbol vanishes, the campus feels unfamiliar. "It's as if Xiao Fu Square graduated with me," he said.

Tsai, determined to say goodbye, made a rare trip back to campus this semester. Arriving too late, he found the shelves already bare. All he could do was take out his phone and photograph what remained. Still, he views the demolition pragmatically: the building had grown old, and while there is sadness, he anticipates what the campus might build next.

By seven o'clock in the evening, the posted closing time, darkness had already settled. Visitors slowly drifted away. Only the lights of Xiao Fu Square remained on.

At 7:30, a staff member stepped outside, switched off the lights, and pulled down the metal shutter for the last time.

With that, Xiao Fu Square's 44-year chapter in NTU's campus life came to an end.



Once covered in lush greenery, the exterior walls now stand adorned winter branches. (Photo by Yu-Chun Huang)



The new image of the Xiao Fu Square.