

Mall shops looking for new premises elsewhere

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Businesses who have called the Don Mills Centre home are packing up and laying out the welcome mats elsewhere.

The community shopping mall is slated for demolition starting at the end of this month, meaning retailers and service providers are being forced to either relocate or close their doors for good.

While several spots will remain open during the redevelopment, the majority of shops have moved out — with many of them are opting to

remain in the area.

Phillip Gallery, a shop that has been in the Don Mills Centre for 30 years, is one of the businesses that won't be going too far.

Phillip Gevik, owner of the art gallery, is relocating to The Donway.

"I have wonderful memories in the shopping centre," he said, "but sometimes change is good."

Gevik said while he wasn't thrilled about moving, he wasn't too upset about leaving the mall because he has had a loyal clientele over the years, including international customers who he hopes will continue

offering support at the new location.

Another business that has moved to the Donway is opening under the name Don Mills Optical, formerly Shoppers Optical in the Don Mills Centre.

Co-owner Bob Bassier has worked as an optician at the shop — known as Shorney's Optical before it became Shoppers Optical a year-and-a-half ago — for 25 years. He said he feels sorry for shop owners who were not able to find a spot to relocate too.

"Many of us cannot understand why the centre is getting torn down," he said. "Maybe modernizing it would be a better alternative, but it is very hard for shops that could not find new locations."

Bassier chose to relocate in the same area because he has come to know many of his customers over

the years, and he wanted to continue providing his services to them.

"A lot of them are seniors," he said. "Some of them have bought condos in the area because they were within walking distance to the mall. Now they're within walking distance to a mall that doesn't exist anymore."

The mall at York Mills and Leslie, dubbed "the Longo's mall" by locals, is another spot where familiar Don Mills Centre businesses will now call home.

Barclay's Store for Men, St. Honoré Boutique, and Joseph Flowers have all moved to the local strip plaza.

Collin Smith, owner of Joseph Flowers, said the last few months have been stressful ones, but he is optimistic about his shop's new

location.

"It was disappointing that we were led to believe the demolition would be done in stages, we didn't think we would have only three months notice to get out of the mall," he said.

"It's hard to stay positive when store after store is closing," he added. "But we are glad to be relocated, we needed a renovation."

Smith said he is lucky to have found his new location, since many of his customers shop at the York Mills and Leslie plaza. He hopes the long-standing. Good reputation of Joseph's will continue and expand with the shop's new home.

As for the Don Mills Centre, Cadillac Fairview Corporation Limited plans on completing the redevelopment of the mall into an outdoor shopping complex by August 2008.