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The revitalization of downtown Belleville has suffered another setback with the news that its only drug store will be leaving The Village.

Shoppers Drug Mart will be closing its 240 Front St. location and moving into a new and much larger store on a six-acre parcel of property at 405 Dundas St. E., across from Dewe's Your Independent Grocer.

Buildings on the former Sills Lumber and Warkworth Lumber site, and more recently occupied by Bayview Bait and Tackle and Bayview Flea Market, were levelled last week to pave the way for construction of the new drug superstore.

The move from the downtown store into the new Shoppers location is expected to occur either late this year or early in 2005.

While downtown residents and shoppers are lamenting the impending loss of the downtown's only drug store, the Belleville Business Improvement Area has swung into action by lobbying other drug stores to open a downtown location.

Paul Dinkel, BBIA chairman, said he remains confident the downtown won't be without a drug store for too long.

Arthur Konviser, Shoppers senior vice-president of corporate affairs, told The Intelligencer it was a "business decision" to close the leased 6,000-square-foot downtown store and open a new 16,000-square-foot operation in the east end of the city by the end of this year or early next year.

"We will be able to deliver in that new store what our mission is and that is the delivery of health, beauty and convenience," he said from his Toronto office. "We really can't do that in a small 6,000-square-foot store."

"We can't really make a bold statement and offer consumers the selection of

items. The only solution was a larger store format."

The new "prototype" store will feature much larger reading, snack food and seasonal product sections as well as expanded cosmetic and health departments.

Konviser said people can still use the free delivery service for prescriptions or pay a nominal fee for delivery of other store products.

"Unfortunately, you can't be all

things to all people," he said. "We won't be downtown but we will be on Dundas Street."

"All those people inconvenienced by the removal of the store from Front Street to the Dun-

das Street location still have the opportunity to take advantage of our free delivery service," he said.

He said Shoppers has successfully closed some downtown drug stores in other cities and moved

them to new locations.

"We live in a mobile society. If you can't travel to the store, we deliver," he said.

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