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stores affect your sales, there's high overhead," she said. "That first month of not signing a rent cheque was pretty nice."

But leaving the mall isn't the Bergsma's first evolution. The original location opened on Mill St. in downtown Georgetown in 1968 and signed on as one of the first retailers at the Marketplace in the early 1980s.

"It was not a decision we took lightly to shut down the retail side of our business," she said, "but it was the necessary move for us."

However, in 2020, shifting consumer habits and increasing costs for brick and mortar stores have pressured small business owners like Bergsma to re-think the way they're doing business.

"Back in the day, paying a premium to be in the mall was justifiable because the traffic was

here," she said, "but it's not what it used to be."

The Marketplace isn't alone in its quest to secure retailers. In November, the Orangeville mall announced plans to renovate the existing mall to eliminate common areas, like indoor walkways and introduce new retailers to the mall.

In Brampton, Shopper's World also announced plans to redevelop the 781,000-square-foot mall into eight blocks of commercial and residential space.

"They're getting creative with how they fill the spaces," Bergsma said.

Though some malls are changing with the times, malls like the Georgetown Marketplace provide a so-

cial hub for segments of the community.

"As a community we have to say, 'how much do we value this mall?'" she said. "It's a hub, and it would be sad if the town lost it."

The mall isn't the only retail space affected.

"Things like the bowling alley and the movie theatre, people complain that we don't have that here. But we did," Bergsma said. "If it was a thriving business, they would not have closed."

This story is part of a series examining the changing face of retail in Georgetown. An upcoming story will look at a longtime tenant of the Georgetown Marketplace that has remained in the mall.

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