A judge has turned down an attempt by Walgreens to obtain an emergency injunction to stop San Francisco's ban on tobacco in retail pharmacies, which took effect Oct. 1. Walgreens, which operates 52 stores in the city, has said it is exploring options to appeal. Tobacco giant Phillip Morris has sued in federal court to try and stop the ban, alleging that it violates its First Amendment right to advertise its products.

With a big void at the front, two of the biggest chains in the area have come up with new ideas to fill the space.

"We did remove tobacco from our San Francisco stores with pharmacies, and we have a couple of different things we did depending on the type of area and customer that the store serves," Walgreens spokesman Michael Polzin said.

Stores in residential neighborhoods have placed promotional products that are advertised on television. Stores in commercial and tourist areas have placed travel-sized and trial-sized products. All of the stores also will stock reusable shopping bags in the space.

Meanwhile, Rite Aid, which operates seven stores in the city, has varied the solution depending on stores' sizes. It refit all of the stores by Oct. 2 and filled the new space with smoking-cessation products, batteries, and such entertainment items as DVDs and liquor.

Despite their adapting to the change, both chains remained disappointed with the ban, which affects retail pharmacies but not supermarkets or big-box stores with pharmacies.

"By the city's own admission, the ordinance will do nothing to reduce cigarette sales," Polzin said. "We're confident that it will ultimately be struck down."

Rite Aid, which was not part of Walgreens' suit, echoed the sentiment.

"We're just supporting their appeal because we do think it's unfair," Rite Aid spokeswoman Cheryl Slavinsky said.

Dr. Mitchell Katz, San Francisco's director of public health who formally argued in favor of the ban during the initial hearing, disputed the chains' view that banning tobacco sales at their stores would be counterproductive because they also offer smoking-cessation products and information.

"I think it's absurd," he said. "If I were battling nicotine addiction, I would not want to be choosing my tobacco-cessation products while staring at tobacco products."

Supporters of the ordinance, including Katz, argued that pharmacies' selling tobacco products reinforced the social acceptability of smoking despite their role as health-promoting businesses, though Katz was unaware of any data to support this view. "I don't know how you would design that study," he said.

Neighboring Marin County, Calif., and Boston are mulling similar bans.