

H-E-B ventures into the North Texas market

BY BRANDI SMITH



“The DFW Metroplex is among the most competitive markets in the nation, and our H-E-B Partners are committed to work hard every day to earn the trust of our customers”

The line started building at 6 p.m., about 12 hours before the doors of H-E-B's first Metroplex store were slated to open. Jennifer Burnison knew she was going to have to stake out a spot early.

"As soon as they announced the release date, I was talking with my daughter and we said, 'Alright, we're going to be there,'" she shared. "We were trying to figure out how early was too early. Black Friday we're used to 4 a.m., but we kind of had a feeling we had to get here even earlier for this."

Burnison was right. By the time 5 a.m. rolled around, the line of eager customers was up to about 1,500 deep, a testament to the excitement surrounding the opening of the 118,000-square-foot Frisco store.

"I was in line with a lady who drove an hour just to get here from Sherman," said shopper Kaleesa Johnson.

Burnison got to be the first person through the doors, greeted with a gift

basket, confetti and a marching band. The customers who followed behind her also got free samples and giveaways.

"We are so happy H-E-B is finally here," said Millie Stussy. "There are so many things on my shopping list!"

The San Antonio-based company operates a handful of its Central Market stores in North Texas, but Frisco is its first H-E-B location.

"Opening our flagship H-E-B format in the DFW area has been an aspirational goal of ours for many years, and the company has a long-term commitment to serve a broad range of customers and communities across North Texas," Stephen Butt, H-E-B board member, said in a statement.

The company's plans don't stop there. It announced plans for several more stores in North Texas communities such as Allen, McKinney, Plano and Mansfield. While shoppers are clearly excited about the news, it's a big change

to a commercial landscape that has multiple grocery chain contenders. "The DFW Metroplex is among the most competitive markets in the nation, and our H-E-B Partners are committed to work hard every day to earn the trust of our customers," Butt said.

H-E-B boasts more than 420 stores, 145,000 employees in Texas and Mexico, \$34 billion in annual sales and the title of the largest food retailer and private employer in Texas. It also has an impressive real estate portfolio, one of the tools it has consistently used to keep a competitive edge. For example, it recently acquired properties in Prosper and Rockwall, neither of which are currently on the list of new store locations.

There's also been will-they-won't-they speculation about H-E-B-owned property in Fort Worth. In June, real estate development company Hillwood announced a number of new businesses coming to its Parkside at Alliance Town Center, including H-E-B. H-E-B, however, pushed back, saying in a statement that it hadn't announced plans for the site "at this time."

On top of that, H-E-B has a commercial real estate development team tasked with constructing, leasing and managing H-E-B-anchored shopping centers. "The development of retail space adjacent to H-E-B retail stores has been a key strategy of H-E-B for over 50 years," the company said.



For residents in other parts of Texas, particularly central, southeast and south Texas, H-E-B has been a grocery staple for decades. Now consumers (and competitors) in North Texas get to experience the grocery giant's presence.



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