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Friday, August 4, 2006

## Sprouts set to branch out in D-FW

Grocery chain plans up to 30 more stores

Dallas Business Journal - by [Holly L. Estridge](#) Staff Writer
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As the **Albertsons** and SuperSaver grocery chains exit more than 1 million square feet of space in North Texas, an Arizona grocer is preparing to ramp up its presence in the Dallas-Fort Worth market.

**Sprouts**, a Scottsdale-based farmers market-style grocery store, plans ultimately to have up to 30 stores throughout Dallas-Fort Worth.



David Pellem  
STOCKING UP: Laura Uselton from Hurst shops with her niece Lauren Abers, 10, and, in the cart, her son, Reid, 2.  
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The retailer, sometimes referred to as "Whole Foods Lite" because of its smaller organic produce selection and lower price point, currently operates three stores in Flower Mound, Dallas and Plano.

Sprouts already has build-to-suit sites in Frisco and Southlake under contract and offers out on seven more sites throughout the D-FW area.

"It's all been a matter of finding the right locations," said Sprouts owner Kevin Easler. "We've been in Texas for about a year now, and the stores are doing fantastic -- above all of our expectations right now."

### Good niche

John Zikos, partner in Dallas-based **Venture Commercial**, said the Sprouts concept has been well-received.

"They've done well in Phoenix, and they're doing even better in this market," Zikos said. "Sprouts has established a good niche among some of the other grocery concepts, offering comparable produce at a competitive price level."

Sprouts' target shopper, Easler said, is in line with conventional grocery customers, though its stores carry many specialty grocery items similar to those that can be found in Whole Foods or Central Market. The stores, which average 35,000 square feet, have large vitamin and supplement areas, organic and nonorganic produce, a bakery, bulk foods and a fresh meats section.

In Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz., Sprouts has continued to expand near giant specialty grocers like Trader Joe's, Wild Oats Markets and Austin-based **Whole Foods Market**, which is also in the Dallas-Fort Worth market.

In Southlake, Sprouts is locating 12 miles from a Central Market store scheduled to open later this year.

"We don't see specialty markets as our competition," Easler said. "We really don't compete with them. We are not gourmet. We're more in line with the conventional shopper who is looking to adopt a healthier lifestyle."

Easler said the stores' price point is such that Sprouts can win over a general consumer who normally would shop at a conventional grocery store like Kroger or Albertsons.

Lorrie Griffith, editor of the Shelby Report, which covers the food and grocery industries

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in the Southeast, Southwest and the Sunbelt, said stores carrying items that address health issues are gaining increasing attention from consumers.

"There is a group of consumers that are increasingly visiting these stores in an attempt to address health issues," Griffith said.

Sprouts now has about 0.11% of the D-FW grocery market, according to the Shelby Report.

**Ground up**

With expansion in mind, Easler said the company is continuing to look at vacant Albertsons space along with other real estate options.

But with its build-to-suit plans in Southlake and Frisco, the company has already started to move away from second- and third-generation space.

"When you look at everything, it's so much easier to build from the ground up than to take over somebody else's problems and redo a building," Easler said.

Sprouts currently has 13 stores in Arizona and two in California. The company's only Texas stores are in the D-FW area.

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