

H-E-B brings new Plus store to Flour Bluff

Doors to open for shoppers on Wednesday

By Elvia Aguilar

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A new H-E-B plus! on Waldron Road in Flour Bluff will open at 5:30 a.m. Wednesday. It boasts 142,410 square feet. Photos by George Gongora/Caller-Times



People line up Monday to take advantage of sale items that won't be moved to the chain's new store. More items will go on sale today. George Gongora/Caller-Times



Lucie Rocha and Charlie Ramirez make tortillas to check and set up their machines on Monday at H-E-B plus!



Gloria Campbell prepares gift bags for an invitation-only party at the new H-E-B plus! in Flour Bluff. The store opens to the public on Wednesday.

CORPUS CHRISTI — The 142,410-square-foot H-E-B plus! in Flour Bluff on Waldron Road will open to shoppers at 5:30 a.m. Wednesday.

With its proximity to Padre Island, the store has a fishing and beach section with more than 2,200 products such as fishing poles and artificial bait. The current Flour Bluff H-E-B, 10241 S. Padre Island Drive, will close today. H-E-B officials expect a rush of customers who will visit the store one last time to take advantage of sales on items that will not be moved to the new location.

Similar to the Plus store on Saratoga Boulevard, the Flour Bluff store will have sushi, entertainment and beer and wine centers. Unlike the Saratoga store, the new one will not have a nursery but will have a gas station, said Shelley Parks, a regional spokeswoman for H-E-B. The Saratoga store, with about 178,000 square feet, opened in 2005 and was H-E-B's first Plus store.

The 69,000-square-foot H-E-B building that is being replaced was built in 1982 and was listed for sale at \$4.8 million, according to **Lynann Pinkham**, a broker with NAI Cravey Real Estate Services, Inc. Pinkham and Parks said the building has been sold. Pinkham identified the buyer as Chris Cox of Austin and said he plans to redevelop it but she didn't know what the redevelopment would be.

Attempts to reach Cox were unsuccessful.

The new store will employ about 450 people, some of whom were transferred from the other location. That's about 200 more employees at the new store, Parks said.

The new produce section will have more than 900 fruits and vegetables, including certified organics, and a wider selection of imported beers and wines compared with other H-E-B plus! locations.

"We have people from all over the state and world come visit the island and we wanted to be sure they could find products that they are used to getting in their area here in Flour Bluff," said Thomas Haegg, a manager for the new store.

The store also will open from 5:30 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Eileen Gaugusch, a long-time customer of the H-E-B in Flour Bluff, said she was excited about the new store's opening.

"I am looking forward to a larger organic section and the greater variety of choices," Gaugusch said. "I've been coming to this store for nine years and I can't always find the products that I can find at the H-E-B plus! stores."

H-E-B would not disclose how much it spent to build the new store, but building permits filed with the city show site preparation and construction costs exceeding \$12 million.

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