



Arlington's Viridian development to be served by newest H-E-B elementary school

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BEDFORD -- Nestled among upscale homes, parks and a town center in Arlington's upcoming Viridian development will be the newest Hurst-Euless-Bedford elementary school.

H-E-B plans to purchase 7.5 acres from Dallas-based developer Huffines Communities to build the future school, although it is not known when it would open. That will depend on how quickly Viridian develops.

"Viridian is really unlike anything in the Dallas-Fort Worth area," H-E-B Superintendent Gene Buinger said. "It is certainly unlike anything in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford school district."

Residents will begin moving into Viridian this fall, but it will take 10 to 15 years to complete the 2,300-acre planned community, said Robert Kembel, president of Huffines Communities. Viridian will eventually have 3,600 single-family homes, most of which will be priced from \$250,000 to \$750,000. It will also have about 70 multimillion dollar custom homes, for-sale condominiums and high-end rentals.

Viridian will feature 1,100 acres of protected wetlands, trails and open spaces, including 450 acres of lakes, more than 20 miles of nature and jogging trails and a pedestrian-friendly design, Kembel said. In addition, he said, it will be Audubon International's only Gold certified community in Texas.

Viridian stretches from the Riverside Golf Club along Texas 360 on the east, to Collins Street on the west, and between Green Oaks Boulevard and the Trinity Railway Express line on the north.

The area is in north Arlington but is in the H-E-B school district.

H-E-B will use funds from its savings to purchase the 7.5 acres. The price tag is still being negotiated and should be settled soon, Buinger said. Viridian's elementary schools will eventually have 750 students.

Growth in the district is not restricted to Viridian.

Enrollment in H-E-B grew faster than expected this year. The district, which was adding roughly 200 new students each year, added about 550 this year, for a total of 21,500 students.

Buinger attributed the growth to affordable housing and award-winning schools.

"H-E-B is one of the best-kept secrets in the area," Buinger said. "We offer families a lot, and parents are taking notice."

That growth could move up a bond election, though. Voters in the district passed \$136.5 million in bonds last year, and the district plans to have another bond election in five or six years.

"If we continue to grow at this rate, it will push us into an earlier bond election," Buinger said. "We will be out of capacity."

In addition to Viridian, the district plans to build two more elementary schools, one on Texas 10, near Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth, and one on International Drive in Euless. It already owns those properties.

H-E-B also owns 50 acres along Harwood Road between Central and Forest Ridge for a future high school and is looking for a site to build a new junior high, Buinger said.

"This is a vibrant, growing community," he said. "People want to move here, and that's a good thing."

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