

Growing Pains



Canadian supercenters sport the "Your Fresh Market" tag line as part of the banner.



In Plano, Texas, Wal-Mart tested upscale merchandising in certain grocery departments.

markets where its 195,000-square-foot prototype would seem to be called for. The company has also tested some very small supercenters — a 98,000-square-foot store in Tampa, Fla., for example.

Still, recent store openings, even in densely populated areas, have tended to be close to the traditional range of 200,000-plus square feet, which includes about 56,000 square feet of supermarket selling space, observers said.

"Most of their new

stores still appear to be in the 200,000- to 220,000-square-foot range," said Bob Gorland, vice president, Matthew P. Casey & Associates, a site-selection and consulting firm based on Clark, N.J.

He said the company also is building some supercenters as small as 158,000 square feet, but the tendency has been to build larger stores than the area might appear to be able to support.

"I've seen places where

Continued on Page 26

include more attractive labeling on store-brand products, she said.

Going Upscale

The organics offering that Gorland has seen in new supercenters has been

fairly meager, he said.

"I have been in some stores in middle-income areas, and they have very little," he said, noting that the offerings are limited to a few categories, such as cereal and baby food. "It's not like the organics section you would find in an 80,000-square-foot Kroger."

Although some have cited the move to offer more organic and natural selections as a bid to capture more upscale customers, some see it as just the opposite — a reflection on the more mainstream acceptance of such products.

"Even poor people are more concerned about what they eat, in terms of added chemicals and

Continued on Page 30