

Checkers aims for 30 metro Milwaukee locations in next five years

The fast food chain currently has three franchise locations in area

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The black-white-and-red-checkered drive-thrus of Checkers restaurants could soon become more familiar to Milwaukee as the Tampa, Fla.-based [Checkers Drive-In Restaurants Inc.](#) has its sights set on opening 30 area locations in the next five years.

That number is a jump from the company's three local Checkers franchises that opened in 2004 at 1205 W. North Ave., 3431 W. Fond Du Lac Ave., and 7525 W Capitol Drive in Milwaukee. Checkers' fourth Wisconsin location is in Wisconsin Rapids.



Photo courtesy of Checkers' Corporate

The company operates 880 drive-through restaurants, mostly franchises, in 25 states and Washington D.C., under two brand names depending on the region, Checkers and Rally's. The restaurants are best known for their hamburgers, hot dogs, french fries, and milkshakes.

Milwaukee has proven to be a successful market for Checkers, said Bruce Kim, the company's director of franchise development. The city's middle-working class population is the restaurant's ideal target market, and with 23 Checkers restaurants in Chicago, many customers are already familiar with the brand, he said.

But the Milwaukee area expansion won't be limited to the city proper as the chain wants to reach as far north as Port Washington, as far south as Racine, and as far west Waukesha, Kim said.

"When we first started as a company, we got our start in urban areas in major metropolitan cities," Kim said. "But as we evolved, we've expanded into suburban areas."

The push for local growth is part of the company's effort to expand its Midwest footprint, targeting other cities like St. Louis, Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Columbus, Ohio. On a national scale, it aims to open 1,200 restaurants by 2020, and with 880 locations— and 30 more in the works for the end of this year— the chain is well on its way.

The company is currently searching for franchisees to make this happen for Milwaukee, but the interested buyer must have a "general idea" of where they'd like to open the new store, he said. The company would then analyze the suggested area, researching consumer patterns to find a site with the highest traffic and visibility.

"We want to be where people congregate," Kim said.