

# Checkers wants 24 Pittsburgh sites within five years

By [Patty Tascarella](#) – Senior Reporter, Pittsburgh Business Times  
Dec 15, 2017, 10:23am

One of the biggest drive-in fast food chains in the U.S. has yet to enter Pittsburgh but wants that to change in a big way in 2018.

Checkers & Rally's Restaurants Inc. wants to put 24 Checkers eateries within a 30 mile radius of downtown within the next five years.

“At minimum,” said [Bruce Kim](#), director of franchise development at the Tampa, Fla.-based chain.

The majority will be franchises, Kim said, and candidate applications for restaurants in the region are currently being evaluated.

“We don't rush,” he said. “It has to be the right combination of location and franchisee. Once those two come together, we do our magic.”

The plan is to have at least one local restaurant open by the end of 2018.

The expansion effort is national. At present, Checkers & Rally's have 872 restaurants, and the goal is to reach 1,200 by 2020 by entering new metros and growing in the 37 states where it now operates.

Checkers acquired the Rally's chain in 1999; Rally's once had restaurants in southwestern Pennsylvania but closed several years ago. Checkers & Rally's was acquired in March by the private equity firm Oak Hill Capital Partners.

There are a couple of drivers behind the company's interest in Pittsburgh.

“It's a great market for us,” Kim said. “We've done extensive studies and our core customers are value-conscious folks who want a big bang for their bucks and eat fast food three or four times a week. Pittsburgh fits our profile.”

The company has also heard from transplants to southwestern Pennsylvania.

“We’ve had a lot of requests from consumers in Pittsburgh who have relocated from Ohio, New Jersey or New York who know our brand and ask why we’re not in the market,” Kim said.

Something that may speed market penetration is what the company calls its “modular 4.0 model” or “giant Lego set,” according to Kim.

“The restaurant is built off site, shipped to the location in several pieces and put together by manpower and cranes,” he said. “It’s more cost-effective, saves time and is easier for a franchiser to put up a store.”