

# THE PLAIN DEALER

**Checkers opening 8 Rally's Drive-Ins with about 250 jobs as part of its Greater Cleveland expansion**



In a sign that Rally's Drive-In Restaurants are looking to eat up more of its competitors' market share, the Tampa restaurant chain this week opened the first of eight newly designed restaurants at 3040 Carnegie Ave., right next door to McDonald's and within walking distance of KFC, Burger King and China King. The other seven Northeast Ohio locations will open within the year. (*Checkers Drive-In Restaurants*)



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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Cleveland-area diners will soon have eight more places to get their late-night Rally's burger, fries and cola fix.

[Checkers Drive-In Restaurants](#), the parent company of Checkers and [Rally's](#), this week opened the first of eight newly designed Rally's drive-through and walk-up eateries at 3040 Carnegie Ave. The new restaurants will collectively employ about 250 people, including four or five managers at each location, said Jennifer Durham, Checkers' vice president of franchise development.

The Tampa restaurant chain sees Greater Cleveland as one of a handful of markets where it plans to expand its presence and woo customers away from its fast-food competitors. Rally's also sees growth potential in Columbus, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and Philadelphia.

The Carnegie Avenue Rally's opened next to a McDonald's, and a short walk from a KFC, a Burger King, and a China King.

Other Cleveland locations are scheduled to open within the year at: 6430 Broadway Ave., 11701 Superior Ave., 3506 Clark Ave., 6709 Harvard Ave., and 7406 Detroit Ave.

A sixth company-owned restaurant will be at Copley Road and Storer Avenue in Akron, and a franchised location is coming to 34001 Vine St. in Eastlake.

Checkers employs nearly 20,000 at 790 restaurants in 30 states, including 60 Rally's in Ohio. Of those, 18 company-owned and franchised restaurants are in Northeast Ohio, stretching from South Euclid to Barberton to Sandusky.

But that's still far less than rival quick-service chains. McDonald's, for example, has 34,000 restaurants worldwide, Burger King has 7,000, and Wendy's has more than 6,500.

Checkers bills itself as the nation's largest double drive-through restaurant chain, but its new prototype replaces the second drive-through lane with covered outdoor patio seating. None of its restaurants have indoor seating, because customers usually drive through or walk up and order straight from the front window.

Rally's is best known for its [made-to-order burgers, seasoned fries](#), "and pretty amazing cold creations ice cream," Durham said. It also sells chicken sandwiches and chicken wings in five flavors.

Durham said the small footprint of the restaurants makes them more affordable investments for franchisees. "We need about half the real estate as some of our competitors, because we can sit on lots that many of our competitors can't," she said.

Rally's also tends to stay open long after its competitors have drawn their shutters. The Carnegie Avenue restaurant stays open until 3 a.m. on weekdays and until 4 or 5 a.m. on weekends.