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Checkers burger chain coming to Boston

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By Daniel B. Kline, Globe Staff

Retro-style fast food chain Checkers, known for its double drive-thrus, plans to bring its brand of fast food to the the Greater Boston area in 2014.

The Tampa-based chain, which has 783 stores across the country, said it plans to open up five stores in Greater Boston over the next 18 months. After that, they plan to add five to seven stores in the area annually over the next couple of years. The company has just one New England location currently, in Bristol, Conn.

Jennifer Durham, Checkers' executive vice president of franchise development, acknowledged that her company does not have high brand awareness in Massachusetts, but, she said the chain has done extensive research and believes that the market offers big opportunities.

"Boston is a challenging market for any restaurant chain. There is more loyalty to existing brands and more of a mom and pop culture in Boston," said Durham. "It's a huge growth market for us, but, we wanted to have everything lined up before we came here."

To prepare for the company's entrance into the market, Durham is in Boston this week speaking with potential lending partners for franchisees. Durham said Checkers hopes to work with experienced multi-unit franchise owners who are looking to add a burger concept to their portfolio. It generally takes 12 months from when the franchise agreement is signed to open a new location.

"We are targeting the Boston TV market, which may or may not mean Boston proper," Durham said. "We need a flagship location first that is prominently placed."

Traditionally, Checkers uses a double drive-thru design, but, the company does not plan to be limited in its location choice by that concept.

“We have traditional single drive-through designs, end cap designs, and other concepts for non-traditional locations,” Durham said.

Checkers has not yet signed a deal with a franchisee in Massachusetts, but has a number of prospects, according to Durham.

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