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Burger Chain Checkers Plans to Sprinkle 30 New Drive-Thrus Across D.C.

The Tampa, Fla.-based eatery wants dozens more locations here



Get ready for a surge of seasoned fries across the D.C. area: chain burger shop **Checkers** is determined to open 30 new locations throughout the DMV over the next decade.

It's the latest quick-service company to announce massive expansion plans in the District. Last week, hoagie-slinger Wawa mapped out plans to establish a whopping 30 to 50 new locations here over the long term.

The driver behind Checkers' latest growth spurt: a newly updated modular format which makes it 20 percent cheaper to erect a new location, and much faster to build, than its previous construction operation.

The first spot to feature the next-generation design will sit at 3780 Minnesota Avenue NE. It's projected to open in early 2018.

Each 1,000-square-foot site, retaining the brand's iconic red, black, and white checkered look, will be erected by Valiant Modular in Florida, shipped out, and assembled on-site like a set of Legos.

"It allows us not to have a 'dead rent' period since they are built in warehouses and inside controlled environments, free of building in weather and elements," says director of development John Palumbo.

The compact design also enables Checkers to invade more high-rent areas like D.C., he adds. Each site is expected to feature a single drive-through lane, with a walk-up window and patio seating.

Of the 840 restaurants under the Checkers/Rally's umbrella, 300 are owned and the rest are franchised. All the new locations in the D.C. area will be the latter.

Palumbo declined to disclose what other neighborhoods might land a new Checkers, with negotiations now under way. He says the team is hot on the Mid-Atlantic but is being strategic about the areas in which they wish to grow.

"We are sensitive to impacting other restaurants — mostly because we own so many ourselves," he says. "We understand what it's like to be an operator."