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## 9 Checkers fast food restaurants eyed for the Madison area

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Checkers, a fast-food, drive-through restaurant, could have nine locations in the Madison area as part of the company's expansion plans.

Checkers, a fast-food, drive-through restaurant known for its seasoned french fries, is looking to expand its Wisconsin footprint by bringing at least nine outlets to the Madison area.

While no deals have been finalized, the fast-food company is in talks with restaurant franchise owners in Madison that could result in stores opening in as soon as six to nine months, said Bruce Kim, Checkers' director of franchise development.

A common sight in the American Southeast and throughout parts of the Midwest, Checkers serves traditional fast-food fare, such as burgers, fries and milkshakes, and operates under the name Rally's in some states.

The brand is drive-through focused, generating 85 percent of its business, Kim said. Stores generally do not have indoor seating, but instead have walk-up windows and outdoor seating.

Madison is viewed as a good growth area since the restaurant would appeal to UW-Madison students and working-class families in the area, Kim said.

"We just haven't gotten around to doing stores there yet," he said.

Kim said the company frequently gets calls from Madison transplants, particularly from Chicago, asking why there are no locations in Wisconsin's capital city.

A market study of the Madison area indicates a capacity for at least nine Checkers locations, he said.

The Tampa, Florida-based company has 880 stores now and is planning to have 1,200 by 2020, Kim said. It was purchased by a private-equity firm last

year for about \$525 million, according to [a report from the Tampa Bay Times](#).

Since the restaurants don't have indoor seating, only about ⅓ acre is needed to build as opposed to a full acre for larger chains, Kim said. The initial start-up cost for a Checkers is under \$1 million, less than for some other fast-food restaurants, he said.

There are currently four Checkers locations in Wisconsin — three in Milwaukee and one in Wisconsin Rapids.

Once agreements are made with franchisees, Checkers can then start looking for locations, Kim said. Building a Checkers can go quickly, he said, as the small footprint of the restaurants means they can be built off-site in four pieces and transported and assembled on location.