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Rallying into to Santa Clara: New Fast Food Concept Arriving Next Year

By Melissa McKenzie | June 13, 2018



The Checkers and Rally's brand is headed to Santa Clara and residents can expect to dine at its drive-thru sometime in early 2019.

The franchise, which operates as Rally's on the West Coast and is based in Tampa, Fla., is looking at potential locations around the City and working with future franchise owners to finalize plans to enter the Santa Clara scene.

"Right now we're in the validation stage of who we're going to choose to go ahead and get started in that market with the first location and then ultimately after that, the second big stone that you've got to get unturned is finding the right location. And that's one of the really, I guess, call it challenging but opportunistic things about Santa Clara," said Checkers and Rally's Director of Franchise Development Robert Bhagwandat.

Bhagwandat said the brand already has a handful of spots in mind, and noted that tiny spaces are optimal for the restaurant, which operates in 28 states with the closest current locations in Los Banos and Sacramento. He also said the Checkers and Rally's model is to maintain a drive-thru, walk up window and some outdoor seating, but eliminate interior dining, which greatly cuts down on the amount of space needed per restaurant from an acre or more to less than half of an acre.

"It's structured to fit the need, as far as the way that people do business around Santa Clara, which is always on-the-go," said Bhagwandat. "Our model is a drive-thru model only or a walk up window where you can grab your food and go. Our whole objective is about quality and speed to give people what they want."

The franchise has also moved away from long build-outs and construction times and has instead opted for a modular building model where sections of the restaurant are shipped up from Los Angeles and pieced together on site. Not only does this model reduce build times from months to eight weeks from final permit approval to grand opening, but if the franchise were to close or relocate, the building is disassembled and removed, leaving no empty eyesores around the City.

"Sometimes you'll have a business that closes its doors and they open up a brand new location where the consumers are shifted, but you still have this closed building over here that nobody is using. [Our method] gives us an advantage where I don't have to build a whole other building," said Bhagwandat. "I can pick up and take it someplace else. It keeps places clean so that you don't have these eyesores around town and that's something our franchise partners are very, very much involved with and thankful for because it helps keep their investment for possible reinvestment into another location at a lower threshold than any of our competitors."

Bhagwandat said between the interested franchisees, the brand hopes to eventually open up to 34 restaurants throughout the South Bay. However, the goal is to expand responsibly throughout the area once the first location in Santa Clara is confirmed.

“We want to do this the right where I don’t want to have closures,” he said. “I want to make sure that all of my restaurants are open and they’re doing successfully.”

Although the brand’s major market share is late night dining, Bhagwandat said Checkers and Rally’s is focused on quality.

“If you go to a Checkers or Rally’s restaurant, what you’ll notice is that we actually season our hamburgers on the grill,” he said. “Everything that goes through our drive through windows has seasoning on them. That’s what a lot of people don’t realize and that’s what we really believe in. That’s our philosophy. It’s bold flavor at an affordable price.”