



RETAIL EXPANSION

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Where Retail Is Headed Next: 2026 Edition

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where are retailers opening stores in 2026, and what does that activity suggest about the direction of the industry?

Store activity currently tracked in [RetailStat's Retail Openings and Closings \(ROC\)](#) database provides an early view into how retailers are adjusting their physical footprints. The data highlights several consistent patterns in expansion and contraction across the retail landscape:

- Retail growth is heavily concentrated in Sun Belt markets, particularly Texas, Florida, and the Southeast. These regions continue to attract new store development as population growth and migration shift retail demand toward southern and western markets.
- Expansion activity is also concentrated in several key sectors. Restaurants, grocery stores, auto parts, convenience retail, and value-oriented chains account for a large share of the new store openings currently tracked in the database. Many of these retailers are pursuing multi-year expansion strategies, adding dozens or even hundreds of locations nationwide.
- Store closures show a different pattern. Much of the closure activity recorded for 2026 is tied to a relatively small group of companies undergoing bankruptcy proceedings, restructuring efforts, or strategic reductions in store count. Retailers such as Francesca's, which is liquidating its remaining boutiques, and several locations within the Saks Fifth Avenue and Saks Off 5th networks account for a significant portion of the closures currently tracked.

Taken together, the activity recorded in the dataset suggests that retail contraction is concentrated among specific struggling chains. At the same time, many other retailers continue to expand their store networks in growing markets.

Note: The ROC database tracks store openings and closures as they are identified or announced. It does not represent a complete census of retail activity nationwide. Instead, the dataset provides a directional view of industry patterns and helps illustrate where retailers are expanding, where closures are occurring, and how store networks are evolving. The strength of the dataset lies in identifying patterns, revealing where expansion is occurring, which sectors are growing, and how retailers are adjusting their store portfolios in response to shifting market conditions.

STORE OPENINGS AND CLOSURES TRACKED FOR 2026

Store openings currently tracked for 2026 significantly outnumber closures within the retail activity recorded in RetailStat’s data. The Retail Openings and Closings (ROC) database currently includes approximately 6,729 store openings and 2,244 store closures scheduled across the United States during 2026. Within the activity captured in the dataset, this represents a net increase of roughly 4,500 stores.

These figures should not be interpreted as the total number of stores opening or closing nationally. Instead, they reflect the store activity currently tracked in the ROC database and provide a directional view of where retailers are expanding and where store networks are contracting. Even within this partial view of the market, several patterns are evident.

Store expansion remains widespread across several sectors tied to everyday consumer spending. Discount retailers, grocery chains, fast-casual restaurants, convenience stores, and automotive aftermarket retailers account for a significant share of the openings currently recorded in the dataset.

Many of these companies are pursuing multi-year expansion strategies that involve adding dozens, and in some cases hundreds, of new locations across the country.

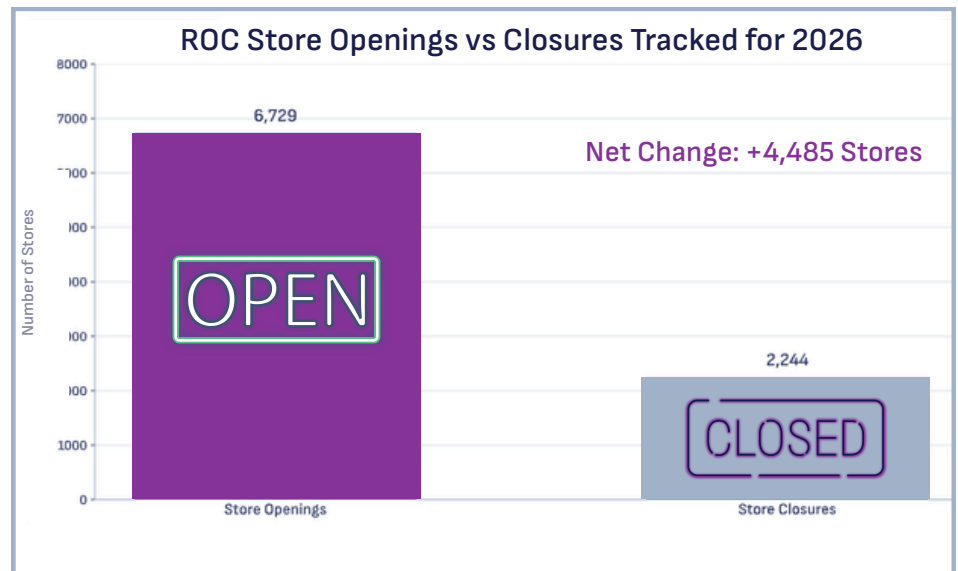
Several of the largest expansion programs are coming from companies operating in value-oriented or convenience-focused retail segments. Chains such as AutoZone, Burlington Stores, ALDI, and Dollar General, along with restaurant brands including Chipotle, McDonald’s, and Chick-fil-A, continue to expand their footprints as they compete for share in growing suburban and Sun Belt markets.

Store closures, by contrast, are more concentrated among a smaller number of companies. A significant portion of the closures currently recorded for 2026 are associated with bankruptcy proceedings, restructuring programs, or portfolio optimization efforts, rather than widespread industry contraction.

For example, more than 400 closures in the dataset are tied to Francesca’s, which is liquidating its remaining boutique stores following bankruptcy proceedings. Additional closures are associated with Saks Fifth Avenue and Saks Off 5th, where dozens of locations are being closed as part of a broader restructuring of Saks Global’s retail operations.

Other closures recorded in the dataset involve companies consolidating store networks or closing underperforming locations. These actions are common when retailers reassess store portfolios and shift investment toward higher performing markets and formats.

Taken together, the activity currently recorded in the data suggests that retail contraction in 2026 is concentrated among a limited number of struggling chains, while many other retailers continue to expand their physical store networks in response to population growth, shifting consumer demand, and evolving retail formats.



Store openings currently recorded in the RetailStat ROC database significantly outnumber closures. The dataset currently includes approximately 6,729 openings and 2,244 closures scheduled for 2026. Totals represent activity tracked in the database and do not represent all store activity nationwide.

OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS BY MONTH

Retail activity currently scheduled for 2026 shows a clear seasonal pattern in the timing of store openings and closures.

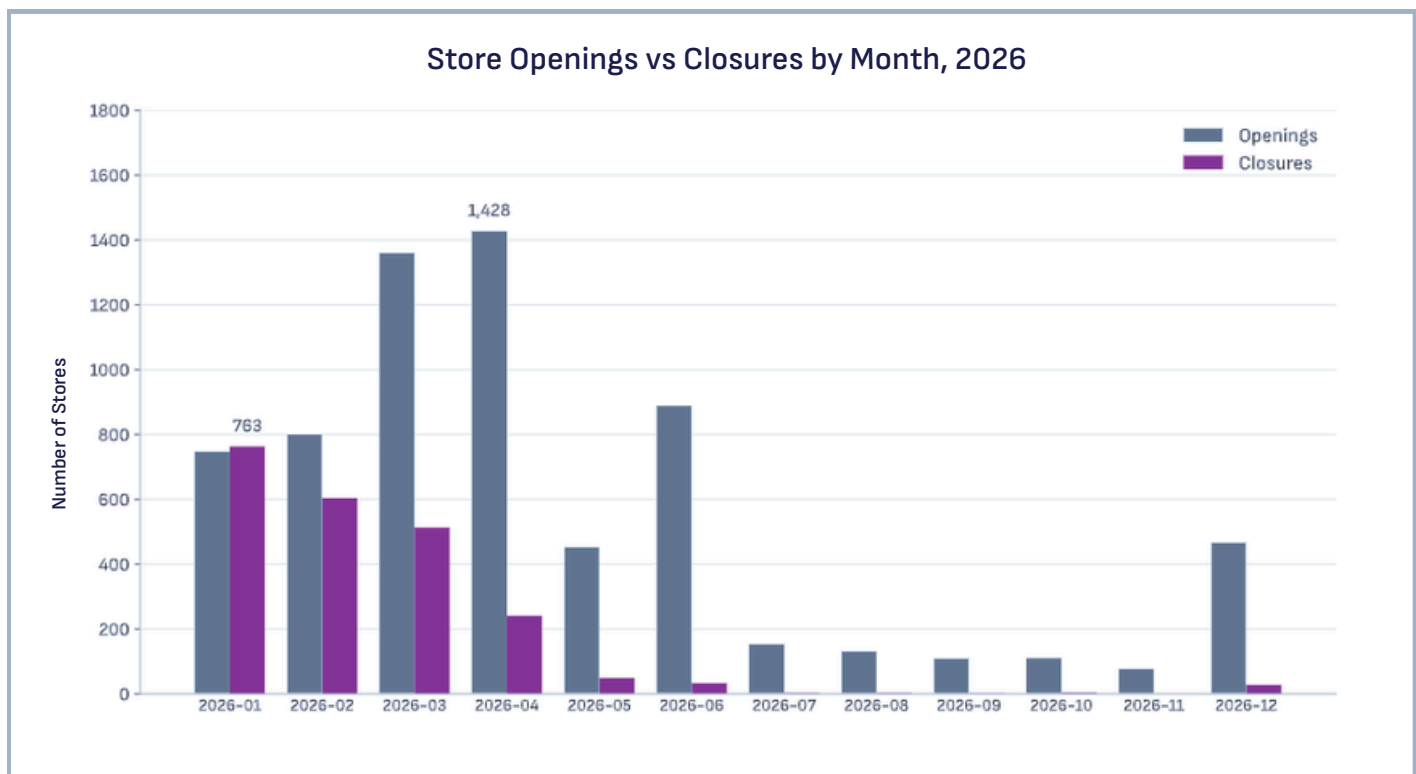
Within the ROC data, store openings are concentrated in the first half of the year, particularly during the spring months. March and April account for a large share of the planned openings currently tracked for 2026. Activity slows during the summer months before increasing modestly again toward the end of the year.

Store closures follow a different pattern. A majority of the closures currently scheduled in the dataset occur during the first quarter, with January through March representing the heaviest period for store shutdowns. After this initial wave, the pace of closures declines substantially through the remainder of the year.

This timing reflects common retail operating practices. Many companies implement store closures shortly after the holiday season, when sales volumes are typically lower and operational disruptions have less impact on peak selling periods. Several of the largest closure programs currently reflected in the data are scheduled early in the year. These include the liquidation of Francesca's boutique locations and restructuring related closures tied to Saks Fifth Avenue and Saks Off 5th, both occurring as part of broader corporate restructuring efforts.

New store openings tend to cluster in the spring and early summer months. Retailers often aim to have new locations operating before the busiest retail periods later in the year and during months when construction and store setup are easier to complete.

By mid-year, the number of closures currently scheduled in the dataset drops sharply, with relatively few shutdowns recorded for the second half of 2026. Because this analysis is being conducted early in the year, many store closures and openings for later months may not yet be publicly announced or finalized. As additional announcements occur, activity in the second half of the year will likely change.



TOP STATES BY STORE OPENINGS AND CLOSURES

OPENINGS

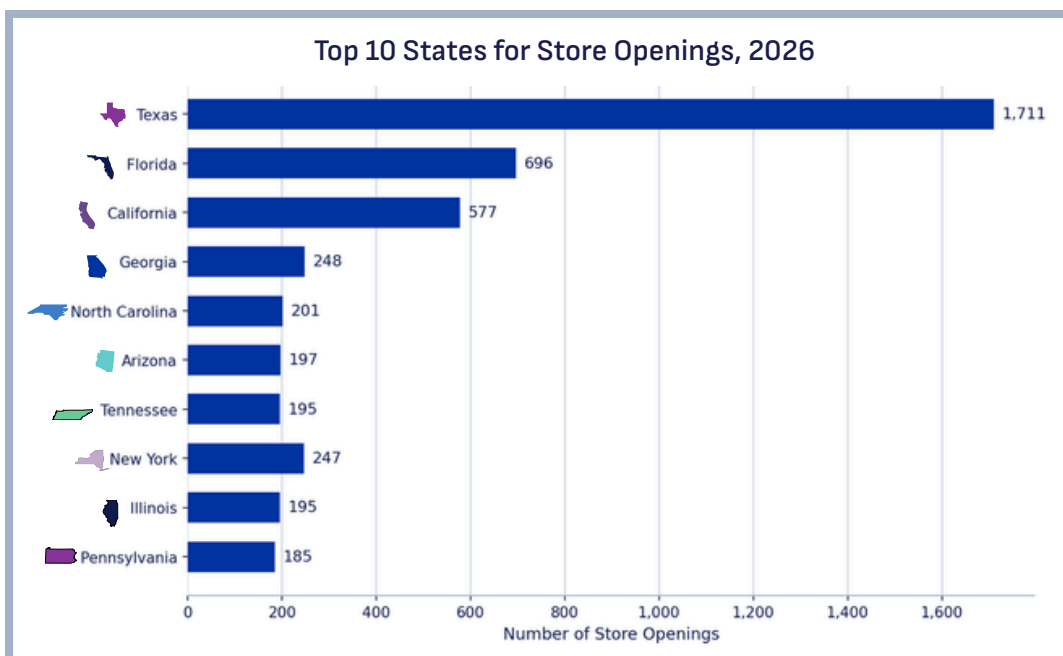
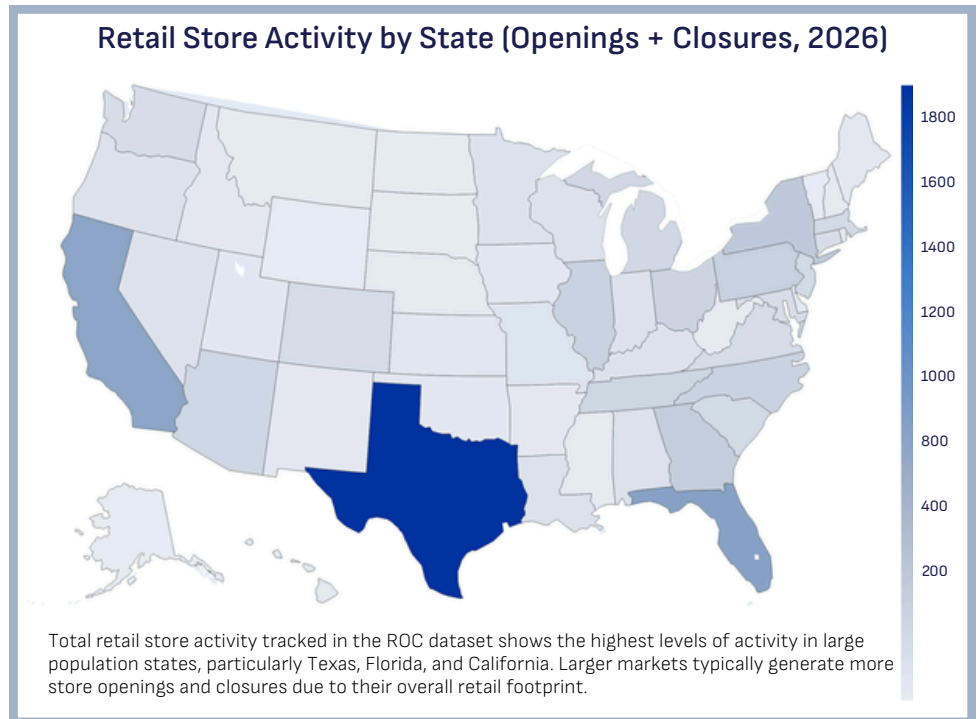
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Texas leads the country by a wide margin in store openings currently tracked in the dataset, with more than 1,700 new locations expected to open during 2026. Florida ranks second with approximately 700 openings, followed by California with roughly 580 new stores.

Several other states also show significant expansion activity, including Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Arizona, Tennessee, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

Many of these markets have experienced strong population growth, housing development, and job creation in recent years. Sun Belt states such as Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Tennessee have attracted significant in migration since 2020, which has increased demand for retail services and supported continued store development. Retailers often follow these demographic trends when deciding where to open new locations, particularly in suburban areas where new residential growth is occurring.



CLOSURES

Store closures show a somewhat different geographic distribution. California currently has the highest number of closures recorded in the dataset, with just over 200 locations, followed by Texas and Florida. Other states with elevated closure counts include Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois.

In many cases these closures are tied to large national chains undergoing restructuring or bankruptcy driven liquidations rather than widespread local retail decline. Several of the companies responsible for the largest closure programs operate significant numbers of stores in these states, which naturally increases their representation in closure totals.

It is also important to note that many of the states appearing at the top of the closure rankings also rank among the leaders in new store openings. Larger states with extensive retail footprints typically generate more overall store activity, both openings and closures. As a result, states such as Texas and Florida still show strong net store growth despite having some closures recorded in the data.

Taken together, the geographic pattern highlights the continued shift of retail expansion toward high growth population markets in the South and Southwest. Retailers are prioritizing expansion in regions where population growth, household formation, and economic development are creating new opportunities for store development.

STORE OPENINGS AND CLOSURES BY INDUSTRY CATEGORY

OPENINGS

Food-related retail formats account for the largest share of store expansion currently tracked for 2026.

Restaurants represent more than half of all store openings recorded in the dataset, reflecting continued growth among quick service and fast casual dining chains. Many of the brands expanding most aggressively operate smaller format restaurants or drive-through concepts that can be developed quickly and in a wide range of locations. Coffee chains, chicken restaurants, and other quick service formats appear frequently in the expansion pipeline.

Outside of restaurants, several other sectors are contributing significant numbers of new stores. Based on the activity currently recorded in the dataset, the largest categories include:

- Grocery (approximately 440 openings)
- Specialty retail and services (about 399 openings, including entertainment, fitness, and other concepts)
- Auto parts retailers (about 394 openings)
- Convenience stores and distributors (roughly 330 openings)
- Mass merchandisers and discount retailers (around 245 openings)

Growth in the auto parts category is being driven largely by chains expanding their national store networks to support ongoing demand for vehicle maintenance and repair. The average age of vehicles in the United States continues to rise, which has supported steady growth for retailers specializing in automotive parts and services.

Discount and value-oriented retailers also remain active in the expansion pipeline. Chains such as off price apparel retailers and dollar store operators continue to add locations, often targeting suburban areas and secondary markets where demand for lower-priced goods remains strong.

Additional openings are occurring in sectors such as fitness centers, health and beauty retailers, and select apparel brands, although these categories represent a smaller share of the total expansion activity.



CLOSURES

The industry mix for closures shows a different pattern. Apparel retailers and department stores account for a large share of store shutdowns currently recorded for 2026. Several apparel chains are reducing their store counts as part of bankruptcy proceedings or long term restructuring plans, while department store operators continue to consolidate locations in response to shifting consumer shopping patterns.

Closures are also recorded in other sectors, including grocery stores, housewares retailers, financial service branches, and gaming stores, though these generally occur in smaller numbers compared with apparel and department store closures.

Taken together, the industry breakdown highlights a continuing shift in retail real estate toward food, convenience, and value oriented retail formats. At the same time, traditional mall based categories such as apparel and department stores continue to reduce their physical footprints as companies adjust to changing consumer behavior and evolving retail formats.

RETAILERS WITH THE MOST CLOSURES

Store closures currently tracked for 2026 are concentrated among a relatively small group of companies.

The largest closure program in the dataset comes from Francesca's, the women's apparel boutique chain, which is liquidating more than 400 stores nationwide following bankruptcy proceedings. This accounts for a significant share of the closures currently recorded in the dataset.

Several other retailers also show notable closure activity. These include:

- Eddie Bauer, which is closing a substantial number of locations as part of a restructuring effort affecting the retailer's store network.
- Saks Global Enterprises, including closures of both Saks Fifth Avenue and Saks Off 5th locations as part of broader portfolio adjustments following recent corporate restructuring.
- Amazon, which continues to scale back certain physical retail concepts, including Amazon Books and other experimental store formats introduced earlier in the decade.
- American Signature / Value City Furniture, which is consolidating parts of its showroom network.
- GameStop, which continues to reduce its physical footprint as the company adapts to the ongoing shift toward digital game distribution.

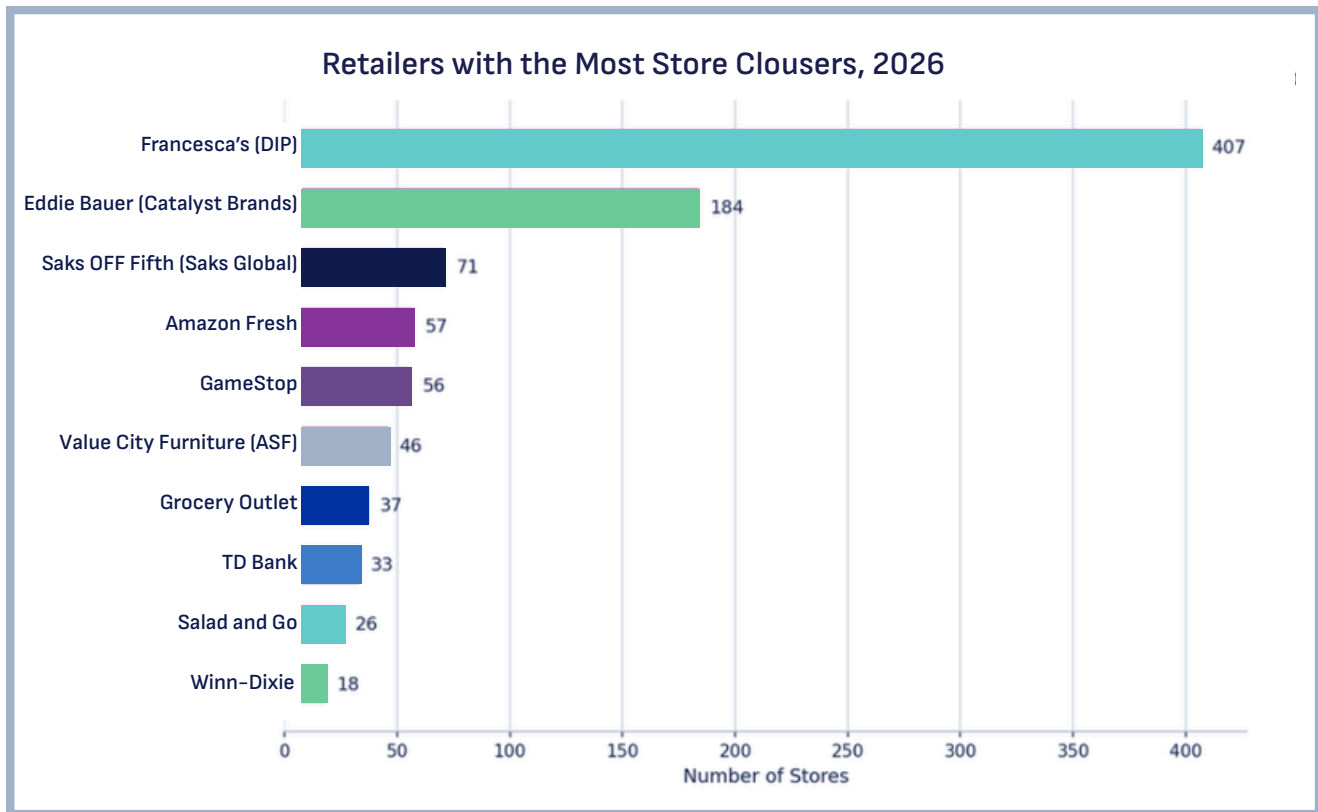
Additional closures are recorded among companies such as Grocery Outlet, TD Bank, Allbirds, and Salad and Go, though these represent smaller numbers of locations compared with the largest closure programs.

Many of the largest closure counts are tied to bankruptcy proceedings, corporate restructuring, or targeted portfolio reductions, rather than broad contraction across the retail industry. In several cases, companies are exiting entire store fleets or significantly reducing their physical presence after prolonged financial challenges.

Other closures reflect ongoing efforts by retailers to refine store networks. For example, Macy's has been gradually reducing its department store footprint as part of a multi-year strategy to close underperforming locations, while some restaurant operators have indicated plans to close weaker units as they reinvest in stronger markets or newer formats.

Overall, the closure activity currently recorded for 2026 appears highly concentrated among a limited number of retailers rather than evenly distributed across the industry. This pattern suggests that much of the contraction in physical retail is tied to specific companies undergoing restructuring or strategic repositioning, while many other retailers continue to maintain or expand their store networks.





KEY RETAIL TRENDS EMERGING IN 2026

Several clear patterns emerge when reviewing the store activity currently tracked for 2026:



Retail Expansion Continues To Follow Population Growth

New store development is concentrated in states such as Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Arizona. These markets continue to benefit from strong population growth, housing development, and job creation. Retailers are prioritizing these regions as new demand forms in suburban and high-growth metro areas.



Food, Convenience, & Value-Oriented Formats Are Driving New Store Growth

Restaurants represent the largest share of store openings in the dataset, with continued expansion from quick-service and fast-casual chains. Grocery, auto parts, convenience stores, and discount retailers also account for a significant portion of new locations.



Auto Parts & Service-Based Retail Remain Steady Growth Categories

Automotive aftermarket retailers continue to expand as demand for maintenance and repair remains stable. Service-oriented retail, such as fitness, beauty, and specialty services, is also growing, often in smaller format spaces that can be developed quickly.



Store Closures Are Concentrated Among A Limited Number Of Retailers

Most closures currently tracked for 2026 are tied to a small group of companies undergoing bankruptcy proceedings, restructuring, or portfolio reductions. This includes apparel retailers and certain department store operators.



Retail Portfolios Continue To Evolve, Not Disappear

The data reflect ongoing adjustment rather than a broad decline. Retailers are closing underperforming locations while continuing to open stores in stronger markets.

METHODOLOGY

This analysis is based on store openings and closures currently tracked in RetailStat's Retail Openings and Closings (ROC) database.

The ROC database captures publicly announced and internally identified store openings and closures across the United States and is continuously updated as new information becomes available.

The figures presented in this report reflect activity currently recorded for 2026 as of mid-March 2026. Because store openings and closures are announced throughout the year, the dataset does not represent a complete count of all retail activity nationwide. Instead, it provides a directional view of where retailers are expanding, where closures are occurring, and how store networks are evolving.

All counts and trends in this report are based on activity currently captured in the ROC database and should be interpreted as indicative of broader market patterns rather than total national figures.

CONCLUSION

Store activity currently tracked for 2026 indicates that retail expansion continues to outpace closures within the dataset.

Growth is concentrated in high population and high-growth markets, particularly across the South and Southwest, where retailers are responding to shifting demographics and continued residential development. Expansion is being driven by sectors tied to everyday consumer demand, including restaurants, grocery, convenience retail, and value-oriented formats.

Closures remain present but are concentrated among a limited number of retailers undergoing restructuring or financial challenges. Rather than signaling broad industry decline, the current pattern reflects ongoing adjustment in how retailers structure their physical store networks.

Overall, the data suggests that physical retail remains active and evolving. Retailers continue to invest in new locations while refining existing portfolios to better align with changing consumer behavior and market conditions.

Stay ahead of retail expansion and closure trends with RetailStat's Retail Openings and Closings (ROC) platform. Track store activity, monitor competitors, and identify emerging opportunities across markets. Request a demo at contact@retailstat.com to see how ROC can support your decision-making.

SOURCES

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⁶ Francesca's. (2025–2026). Bankruptcy filings and store closure announcements.

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⁸ Macy's, Inc. (2025–2026). Earnings reports and store optimization strategy updates.