Toys R Us accelerates comeback with 120 new stores

Brand expands beyond Macy's partnership as it ramps up brick-and-mortar growth



Shoppers gathered for the debut of a Toys R Us store in San Marcos, Texas, last year. (Toys R Us)

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Toys R Us plans a big brick-and-mortar push this holiday season, opening 120 new standalone stores nationwide.

The additions will expand the retailer's existing U.S. footprint, which includes 40 standalone stores and Toys R Us shops inside Macy's locations. The expansion will bring its standalone store count to 160 ahead of the holiday shopping season.

After several failed attempts at a comeback, Toys R Us appears to have found a way to survive and thrive in the wake of the company's bankruptcy and liquidation in 2018. New York-based WHP Global acquired the brand in March 2021 and set about reviving it by striking the shop-in-shop deal with Macy's and carefully rolling out a small number of standalone stores. The first one, at the American Dream megamall in East Rutherford, New Jersey, opened in December 2021.

WHP then partnered with Austin, Texas-based Go! Retail Group to step up and execute the broader store expansion.

Of course, Toys R Us — known for its Geoffrey the Giraffe mascot — faces fierce competition in the toy sector after other retailers expanded their assortment of merchandise in response to the demise of the toy chain. Online seller Amazon, Walmart, Target, Five Below and the dollar stores are among those vying for shoppers' dollars for toys during the holidays. Even the parent of Spirit Halloween is in the fray. It will once again open Christmas Spirit pop-up stores — featuring holiday decor, apparel, gifts and stocking stuffers — this year.

The new standalone Toys R Us stores will feature a curated assortment of the season's latest toys, collectibles and potential gifts from brands such as Lego, Barbie, Hot Wheels, Pokémon and KPop Demon Hunters. The retailer said it aims to create a "destination for kids, gift-givers, collectors and fans of all ages" to find sought-after products in one place.

Select locations will introduce experiential or immersive offerings including "Creator Studios," dedicated spaces where influencers, creators and toy brands can create content, unveil new products and host toy reveals, launches and special events. In addition, some stores will also feature candy shops and cafes.

Toys R Us' growth strategy has also included expanding into airport retail. The retailer is launching new airport shop-in-shops at Orlando International Airport in partnership with WHSmith North America. The first opened last month, and the second is scheduled to open next summer.

"The new locations bring Toys R Us to one of the country's largest family travel markets, giving travelers to and from Orlando and the greater Central Florida region another way to experience the brand along their journey," Toys R Us said.

The holiday store rollout "is a major moment for Toys R Us as we significantly expand our presence across the United States," Jamie Uitdenhowen, executive vice president of Toys R Us at WHP Global, said in a statement.

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