

KEYPOINTS

THE RETAIL NEWSLETTER

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ACCELERATING RETAIL

Ollie's Bargain Outlet will open 75 stores in 2026...**McAlister's Deli** signed agreements to develop 265 US restaurants by 2032...**El Pollo Loco** will open 18-20 stores. It finished 2025 with 503 restaurants...**The Buckle** will open 12-14 stores in fiscal 26. It ended the year with 440 stores in 42 states...**Five Below** will open 150 stores this year. It ended the quarter with 1,921 stores in 46 states...Saks Global will keep operating 2 **Saks Fifth Avenue** and 1 **Neiman Marcus** that it had planned to close. As of now, 15 Saks stores and 33 Neiman Marcus stores will remain open. The company has secured \$500 million in exit financing and expects to emerge from bankruptcy this summer...**Uniqlo** will open 3 US stores, in Boston, Chicago and NYC. It has 82 US stores...**Home Depot** will open 12 stores in 8 states by the end of the year...**Kroger** will open 2 stores in OH and 14 total stores in Q4. It operates 2,800 US stores under a variety of banners...**Aldi** will open 3 stores in metro Phoenix, and opened its



Aldi opened in ME, one of 180 stores planned for 2026

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1st store in ME. It has 180 stores planned for 2026...Private equity firm KKR signed a deal to acquire **Nothing Bundt Cakes** from Roark Capital...**CVS** has opened the 1st of 20 small-format pharmacy-only locations planned for this year. CVS will also open 60 regular stores this year...Fast-casual brand **NAYA** will open 17 locations this year. It currently has 43 sites and aims for 200 by 2030...**The Great Greek Mediterranean Grill** opened 20 restaurants in 2025. It plans 20+ openings by the end of the year...**Trader Joe's** plans to add 8 stores...**Bed Bath & Beyond Inc.** is acquiring **The Container Store** for \$150 million in stock and convertible notes. The

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RETAIL OBSERVATIONS

Chris Cardoni, Contributor

OBSERVATION: The Power of the Human Touch: In a world increasingly polarized and depersonalized (and increasingly AI-driven), we can forget how important simple human contact can be to our well-being - and to our businesses. I was reminded of this by a recent article in **Chain Store Age** which cites a survey by "retail CRM platform Endear conducted by Censuswide" (New Briefs, **CSA.com**, 4/1/2026: *Survey: Retail associate follow-ups help spur repeat visits, purchases*). The survey notes that "Nearly two-thirds (63%) of consumers are more likely to return to a store [and] shop again if a retail associate reaches out personally after their visit, with over a third saying they are very likely to return. More than half of respondents reported making an additional purchase because of an associate's follow-up, and nearly four-in-10 said they've done this multiple times. Six-in-10 consumers say outreach from a store associate, not automated marketing, plays an important role in their shopping decisions".



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A separate CSA piece (*Shoptalk 2026: Keeping humans in the AI loop*, **CSA.com Retail Insights**, Dan Berthiaume, 3/27/2026) about the Shoptalk 2026 conference in Las Vegas, the theme of which was "Retail in the Age of AI," underscores this idea: "the unofficial slogan...was "Keep humans in the loop," meaning the AI loop... By equipping associates with AI tools...retailers can ensure that associates are able to offer the level of customer service today's shoppers expect... And the human associate is still a crucial aspect of the brick-and-mortar shopping experience".

Even in the AI age, a little human goes a long way - for shoppers, at least.

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KPP NEWS

New Leasing: VPs of Retail Brokerage Don Mace and Rob Grady are leasing a 4,000 s/f space in a Walgreens-anchored center at **1 Hamilton Street, Framingham, MA**...**ICSC@Las Vegas:** Our team will attend ICSC@Las Vegas in May, representing our two nationally-expanding tenants.



acquisition includes The Container Store's **Elfa** and **Closet Works** subsidiaries. Most of The Container Store's roughly 100 US locations are expected to remain open but will be rebranded as "The Container Store/Bed Bath & Beyond"... **In-N-Out Burger** will open 4 stores in 4 states... **Edibles.com** will open its 1st retail store, in Atlanta... **Academy Sports** will open 125 new stores over 5 years.

DECELERATING RETAIL

Signet Jewelers will close 100 stores this coming fiscal year... **Zumiez** will close 25 stores in fiscal 2026. As of Feb.



Signet will close 100 stores across its brands

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Zumiez operated 716 stores... **Nordstrom** will close 2 full-line department stores this spring... **H&M** plans to close app. 160 stores; it will open around 80... **Starbucks** is closing 5 Seattle stores... **Dollar Tree** closed 13 stores in March... **Apple** will close 3 retail stores in 3 states in June. All are located in struggling malls... **7-Eleven** will close 600+ stores in 2026.

NEW ENGLAND RETAIL

MilkShake Factory is opening its 1st MA location, in Walpole... **Comella's** in Melrose has closed. The company operates 10 other MA sites... **LoveShackFancy** will open at The Street Chestnut Hill (MA)... The Shops at Blackstone Valley, Millbury, MA will add 35,000 s/f of space. Planned tenants include **Yard House**, **Shake Shack**, and **Sweetgreen**.

MONTHLY RETAIL SALES: COMMERCE DEPT.

Retail sales, excluding automobiles and gas stations, were up 0.41% in March.

Source: National Retail Federation: CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index® edged up by 0.8 points in March to 91.8.

Source: The Conference Board - www.conference-board.org

For the first time in four years, CVS will open more stores than it closes

OBSERVATION: CVS Bets Big On Small: For some time now, all has not been *well* in the world of *wellness* retail. Traditional drugstores have tried to be convenience, grocery, toy, electronics, and everything-else stores without really being able to compete with dollar, discount, and other retailers in any of those areas. Ike Swetitz, writing for **Bloomberg**, notes: "Large American chain drugstores have struggled in recent years as health insurers cut drug reimbursements and consumers turned to discount chains or online retailers for household goods. These dynamics pushed **Rite Aid Corp.** into bankruptcy and led to **Walgreens** being purchased by private equity last year (*CVS to Open More Stores in 2026 Than It Shuts in Retail Turnaround*, Ike Swetitz, **Bloomberg.com**, 3/30/26)."



Photo@jovanmandic@123RF.COM

And that's not all. Online competition for not only pricing but wellness expertise has taken off exponentially. The Bloomberg article also notes that "**Amazon Pharmacy** will expand same-day prescription delivery to 4,500 cities and towns across the U.S. by the end of 2026 — adding nearly 2,000 new communities... Amazon Pharmacy achieved faster delivery speeds in 2025 across all 50 states and... will continue expanding in-person kiosk access to additional locations in 2026".

In light of all this, CVS is taking a big swing at a smaller concept. A recent **Chain Store Age** article (*CVS opens first of nearly 20 pharmacy-only stores planned for 2026*, Zachary Russell CSA.com, 3/30/2026) reports that "CVS Health has opened the first of nearly 20 pharmacy-only, "apothecary-style" CVS Pharmacy locations it plans to open this year... the concept aims to help bridge gaps in care and make it easier for community members to access medications, immunizations, and other health care services... Averaging around 3,000 s/f the pharmacy-only sites will help ensure patients have access to prescription medications and the advice and counsel of a CVS pharmacist. Each site will feature a full-service pharmacy with a customized selection of over-the-counter products available for purchase".

CVS plans additional pharmacy-only locations in four states. However, it will continue to expand other concepts, adding traditional stores and pharmacies inside Target. According to the previously-quoted Bloomberg piece, "CVS will open about 60 stores this year, [including the pharmacy-only sites] and will also close a few dozen locations... [It] will open more pharmacies than it closes... marking the end of a four-year contraction... Since 2022, CVS has closed more than 1,100 locations and opened nearly 200... **Walgreens** is also slowing its store closings. The company plans to shut fewer than 100 locations in 2026, less than previously planned... As of Dec. 31, 2025, CVS Health operated app. 9,000 locations".

Sources: Bloomberg.com; Chain Store Age.com



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Comments or questions: KP@KeyPointPartners.com