

Amazon is advancing a plan to open a chain of U.S. grocery stores with early outposts in Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia, according to a news report.

Citing people familiar with the matter, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported the company has signed more than a dozen leases in the Los Angeles area of California.

The first few stores are likely to be in the dense suburban locations of Woodland Hills and Studio City, while another grocer is slated for the city of Irvine, in nearby Orange County, the sources said.

These stores could open as early as the end of the year.

Amazon is planning to operate dozens of grocery stores in cities across the country as part of its increasing focus on a bricks-and-mortar presence to find more ways to reach consumers.

In March, [The Wall Street Journal reported](#) that Amazon's new grocery chain isn't intended to compete directly with the company's upscale Whole Foods Market chain.

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