

U.S. retailer [Walmart](#) is strengthening its partnership with the on-demand drone delivery startup [DroneUp](#) in an effort to speed delivery and meet increasing consumer demand to have goods delivered to their doorstep.

Walmart first partnered with DroneUp — operator of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) — last year and launched a pilot program to deliver at-home COVID-19 self-collection kits.

“The trial demonstrated we could offer customers delivery in minutes versus hours. Now, after safely completing hundreds of drone deliveries from Walmart stores, we’re making an investment in DroneUp to continue our work toward developing a scalable last-mile delivery solution, [John Furner](#), CEO and president of Walmart U.S., said in a press release on Thursday.

Furner said Walmart is “uniquely positioned” to advance drone deliveries because of the retailer’s expansive footprint — over 4,700 stores nationwide — plus, 90 percent of the population lives within 10 miles of a Walmart location.

He said Walmart’s investment in DroneUp will apply to flying and ground delivery. The first official operation is being launched at a Walmart store in Bentonville, Arkansas.

“Conducting drone deliveries at scale is within reach. DroneUp’s expertise combined with our retail footprint and proven history of logistics innovation puts us right where we want to be for that day. Because when it comes to the future of drone delivery, we know the sky’s the limit,” Furner said in the post.

DroneUp was the first operator to use the FAA 107.39 waiver, which allows delivery flights to take place over people and moving vehicles. The Virginia startup is an authorized government drone services provider and operates commercially nationwide and for 11 states serving public sector agencies.

Walmart isn’t the only company looking for alternative means of handling [fast deliveries](#). Amazon is planning to launch its own unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) fleet and Google’s Wing UAV service recently piloted an operation during the pandemic lockdown and delivered books to school children.