

# LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

## COMPREHENSIVE & STRATEGIC CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

### APPENDIX H - Dining Study Findings



## Introduction

As part of LSU's Master Planning team, B&D was engaged to develop a dining evaluation framework to guide University decisions concerning location, type, and size of future dining venues in response to the master plan and anticipated enrollment growth. The two key components of the framework include:

1. Establishing a clear dining vision in alignment with LSU's broader institutional mission.
2. Developing a demand model to project future dining utilization that incorporates major population shifts due to campus development and enrollment growth.

The collaborative approach to this framework engaged key campus stakeholders through visioning sessions, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and several presentations to LSU's Auxiliary Services team and Master Planning steering committee.

B&D's research identified currently under-served areas of campus and identified future demand gaps, ripe to cultivate new dining venues.

## LSU Dining Program Background

LSU Dining is a robust campus dining program intended to serve the broad needs and preferences of residential students, commuter students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors. The program currently consists of two residential dining halls, conveniently situated in the center of the north and south residential communities; a main retail hub in the student center; and 11 other satellite dining platforms scattered throughout campus (see figure 1).

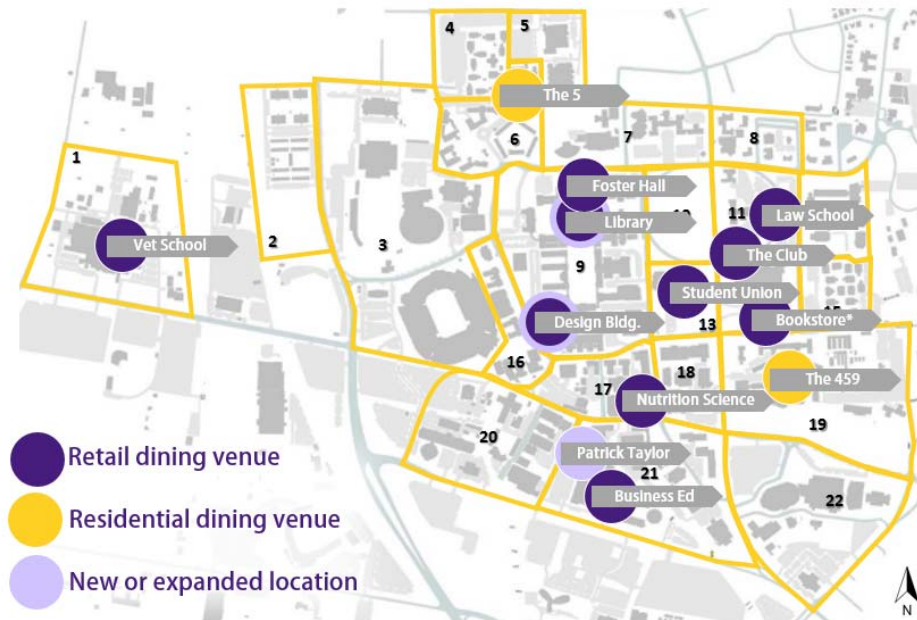


Figure 1: LSU dining locations and campus dining demand zones.

LSU Dining is operated by Chartwells Higher Education Dining Services (Chartwells). As one of the company's showcase accounts in the Southeastern region, Chartwells' has engaged corporate resources to conduct a dining concept planning process to modernize campus facilities and service models.

The findings and recommendations of B&D's work will identify future demand and capacity requirements (throughput), while LSU will collaborate with its dining partner to determine the appropriate concept and service type to meet campus preferences.

## Findings

The following summarizes B&D's critical findings that shaped and supported our demand projection and recommendations.

**Finding 1: LSU's current dining locations and concepts (menu and service styles) restrict LSU's ability to capture market demand during peak times, particularly lunch during the academic week.**

Five out of the satellite dining concepts primarily serve coffee, which does not meet the demand for nutritious meal options. Most of these coffee platforms are located in high-density areas of campus (e.g., design building, business education building, etc.) and outside of a three to five minute walk of other dining options, creating perceived food deserts on parts of campus.

Furthermore, B&D gathered anecdotal evidence through focus groups and observations that full-service venues providing meal options are undersized to serve LSU's peak lunch demand. This creates extended wait times and deters students from utilizing on-campus dining facilities during peak time.

**Finding 2: LSU only captures 6.5% of the campus community during peak demand—weekday lunch between noon and 1:00 p.m. LSU has the opportunity to double capture rates by placing appealing and efficient concepts in high-density areas.**

B&D developed a dining demand model driven by LSU's academic population density throughout the day and filtered by the University's dining vision. Based on the number of students released from class prior to peak lunch time, as well as other students, faculty, and staff who are on campus during peak time, LSU could capture approximately 4,750 lunch customers within a one-hour period. However, LSU's current dining facilities operate at maximum capacity and could not serve additional customers without significant infrastructure changes.

Convenience (location and speed of service) is the primary factor when LSU students choose where to eat, particularly during the busy academic day. B&D utilized a campus zone framework to project dining demand across campus. Currently, 50% of all academic activity takes place within the academic core (see zone 9 in figure 2). Based on master plan developments, 20% of overall academic activity—currently concentrated in the academic core—will shift to new academic buildings on the south end of campus. Factoring in convenience and a southern density shift, B&D ran a sensitivity analysis to understand the impact of enrollment growth. The mapped model in figure 2 illustrates throughput by zone during peak hour based on a campus population of 33,000<sup>1</sup>. This model demonstrates there is an opportunity to better serve campus demand by developing appealing and efficient concepts that serve

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<sup>1</sup> Additional sensitivity analysis for enrollment of 35,000 and 37,000 can be found in attachment three.

the students in the academic core and future students on the south side of campus (zone 16, 17, 20 and 21).

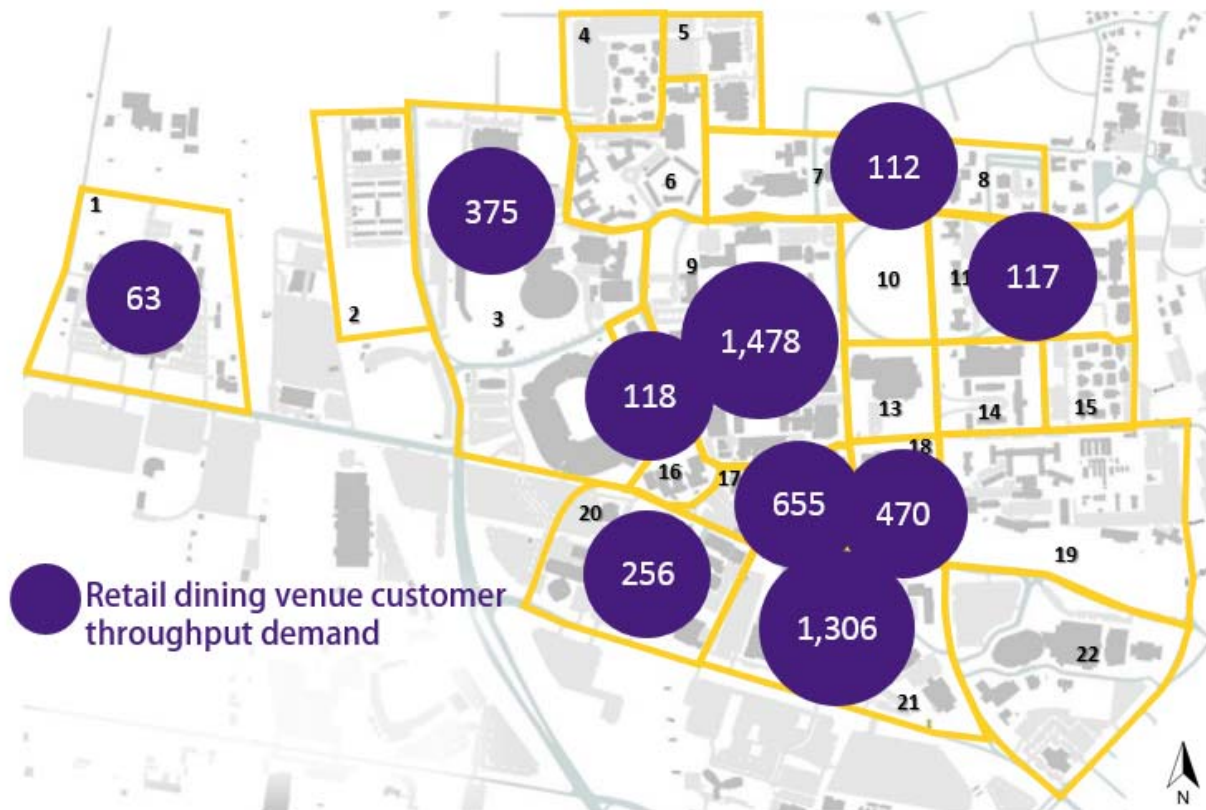


Figure 2: LSU dining retail demand (throughput) between noon and 1:00 p.m. based on southern density shift and 33,000 enrollment.

**Finding 3:** LSU captures 12% of the total residential population between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (peak dinner hour). To sustain high residential student satisfaction, LSU should incrementally grow market capture of residential students at dinner.

To support the residential experience, LSU requires all first and second-year students who live on campus to purchase a residential meal plan. This ensures residential students have access to nutritious meals and fosters a sense of community. On average, LSU captures 30% of the residential mandatory meal plan students for dinner across the two residential facilities (the five and the 459), and 12% dine during the peak dinner hour. This is low given LSU’s residential meal plan population, however there is no data to track if students are purchasing dinner at other on-campus retail venues. To support the residential experience, LSU has the opportunity to enhance its residential dining experience and double the amount of residential students utilizing the facility. This would equate to 60% of residential students eating dinner on campus and approximately 20% during the peak hour.

This demand analysis coupled with LSU’s housing plan to develop new beds on campus for first and second-year students (non-kitchen units with required residential meal plan) projects an increase in peak-hour demand in both the north and south residential neighborhoods (see figure 3).

Residential Community	Zone	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
South (The 5)	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	6	303	385	411	487	687	684
North (The 459)	19	308	389	415	467	314	470

Figure 3: LSU’s projected residential dining demand by academic year during peak hour (5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.).

**Recommendations**

**Short Term**

- Work with LSU’s auxiliary staff and dining partner to evaluate demand gaps and integrate on-going concept planning efforts to meet the needs of underserved areas of campus.
  - Consider creative service styles to meet high customer demand (throughput) in the academic core.
  - Likely locations to consider future dining based on demand gaps include:
    - Future development on the south end (library building, academic buildings, etc.).
    - Potential expansion, renovation, or replacement of the 459, particularly considering traffic generated by URec activity. However, the dining venue should remain proximate to the primary users in the residential area.
- Monitor the impact of the dining expansion in the library and design building and the new dining platform in Patrick Taylor hall and recalibrate demand if necessary.

**Long Term**

- As LSU plans new buildings, particularly on the southern end of campus, revisit the demand projections and integrate dining to address demand gaps to better serve campus needs.
- Continue to work closely with LSU’s dining partner to ensure the appropriate back and front-of-house planning for new facilities. Early planning and collaboration allows the necessary space, menu, service style, and overall adaptability and flexibility for dining platforms to evolve with student preferences.

**Design guidelines for any new dining facility (for EDR)**

- First floor location and/or direct access along high-traffic pathways.
- Clear wayfinding inside and outside the building.

- Where applicable, interior and exterior access to the dining concept so the building can close, but the dining venue can still be utilized.
- Flexible stations and platforms to meet variable demand and evolving cuisine preferences.
  - Ability to close one or more stations in a multi-concept area.
- Gadget friendly – wifi, electrical outlets, etc.
- Appealing lighting for ambiance and food presentation.

### **Attachments**

1. Dining Vision Document
2. Phase I Presentation
3. Phase I Refined Presentation