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TOP STORY

## Spencer's Coffee, Lost River Pizza headline new dining options in WKU Commons project

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com)

Mar 16, 2021



Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni speaks during a Tuesday, March 16, 2021. Caboni announced the food venues available in Southwest Grill, Rising Roll gourmet café, Spencer's Coffee, Lost River Pi

Tavolino Italian dining, Ever Grains wellness food and Barbecue District  
Grace Ramey

## MORE INFORMATION



SLIDE SHOW:  
WKU  
Commons at  
Helm Library  
on track to  
open in fall

Western Kentucky University's new WKU Commons project – a \$35 million investment to revamp the old Helm Library into a study and dining venue – will highlight local eateries like Spencer's Coffee and Lost River Pizza Co. when it opens for students this fall.

WKU President Timothy Caboni announced the WKU Commons' restaurant offerings during a news conference Tuesday. As he spoke, work on the project to overhaul the 86-year-old building unfolded as welders toiled and other workmen hauled steel beams into place.

“This is another way in which we’re building a community in such a way that it supports retention efforts,” Caboni said. “We know that students are more likely to succeed when they have a deep, personal relationship with faculty and staff ...

“One of the reasons we built this at the top of the Hill is so it has ease of use for those who are studying and taking courses at the top of the Hill, but also for those faculty and staff who also can make their way over to student meetings and have student office hours right here at the top of the Hill.”

The hybrid work and social space is WKU’s latest project to modernize its facilities in an era when dwindling numbers of college-bound students have spurred the university to go farther afield for recruitment and entice out-of-state students with state-of-the-art amenities.

Designs for the WKU Commons project show the west facade of the current building replaced with a more open-faced glass wall that makes the inviting interior of the building visible from the outside. A large stairway between the first and second floors features seating areas that branch out from the stairway, and a wide opening on the third floor also makes parts of the second and first floors visible.

The first floor will be devoted to dining mixed with seating and group space, while the second floor features a coffee bar and has a large opening to the third floor, which is for academic space.

Other dining options Caboni announced include Panda Express, Moe's Southwest Grill and Rising Rolls, a fast casual eatery in the mold of Panera Bread.

In addition, Caboni said the WKU Commons will also feature a rotating offering of dining venues that change out every six weeks or so. The first batch includes Tavolino's Fresh Italian Fare, Ever Grains' Food for Wellness and Barbecue District's Fire It Up Grill.

Eventually, the adjacent Garrett Conference Center, which acts as the campus dining venue at the top of WKU's hill, will be razed and converted into a greenspace.

The new WKU Commons project seeks to blend the old and the new: the building's 1930s-era steel superstructure is visible inside and

the jump circle from the old  
basketball court that the library was  
built on top of will remain visible  
when the project is finished.

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## **Aaron Mudd**

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