

## BJC HEALTHCARE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

St. Louis, Missouri



BJC Healthcare’s new Plaza West Tower at Washington University Medical Center represents a transformative investment in patient-centered care and operational efficiency. Replacing the former Queeny Tower, the new patient tower was envisioned to enhance the overall patient experience while supporting the hospital’s long-term growth strategy.

Rippe Associates partnered with CannonDesign and the broader project team to create a forward-looking foodservice operation capable of serving not only the new 188-bed tower—with future expansion to 252 beds—but also supporting patient meal delivery across a campus totaling approximately 950 beds. The 31,879-square-foot department was carefully planned to balance high-volume patient services with an inviting retail dining environment overlooking Forest Park.

Designed to accommodate approximately 2,700 peak meal volumes, the operation incorporates a sophisticated hybrid meal delivery model that combines scheduled tray service with room service functionality.

### Details

Opening Date: Sept 2025

Equipment Cost: \$4,950,000

Project Size: 31,879 SF

### Scope

Design of a high-capacity healthcare foodservice operation supporting patient meal delivery, roomservice, and retail dining. The program featured multiple traylines, exhibition cooking stations, and strategically planned support spaces designed to improve efficiency, flexibility, and patient experience.

To support this flexibility, the kitchen was designed with three dedicated traylines—one serving scheduled patient meals and two dedicated to roomservice production—allowing the operation to efficiently respond to varying patient demands while maintaining food quality and service standards. Strategic adjacencies were critical to operational success, with tray assembly and dishwashing positioned near patient elevators to streamline circulation and minimize transport times. The department itself was designed as a split operation, with the primary production kitchen located on the lower level and the retail dining environment positioned on the street level, connected internally through a dedicated service elevator.

One of the project’s most significant design challenges involved the building’s low floor-to-floor heights, which required extensive coordination between foodservice, architectural, and MEP systems to maintain alignment with surrounding campus structures while minimizing ramps and elevation changes. Through close collaboration with CannonDesign, BR+A Engineers, and the broader consultant team, Rippe Associates developed highly coordinated layouts that preserved operational efficiency despite the spatial constraints. Additional retail back-of-house support spaces, including a dedicated dishroom and hot food production area, were integrated to support multiple foodservice concepts positioned along the perimeter of the retail space. These concepts included soup and made-to-order salads and bowls, deli, entrée, pizza, grill, bakery, and beverage stations, along with two exhibition cooking stations that create an engaging culinary experience for staff and visitors alike.

Operational efficiency and safety were key drivers throughout the project. The foodservice program incorporated an RTI total oil management system, including an exterior fill box to improve employee safety and streamline oil handling procedures. Equipment and workflow strategies were selected to support labor efficiency while maintaining flexibility for future operational growth. Rippe Associates’ longstanding relationship with the CannonDesign team and extensive healthcare experience positioned the firm to successfully guide the project through its complex planning and coordination process. The completed Plaza West Tower foodservice operation reflects BJC Healthcare’s commitment to patient experience, operational excellence, and future-ready healthcare environments, resulting in a highly successful project for both the client and design team.

