

Sydney Morning Herald:

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/parramatta-eatery-earmarked-to-make-way-for-new-powerhouse-20200628-p55711.html>

Parramatta eatery earmarked to make way for new Powerhouse

By [Linda Morris](#)

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One of western Sydney's most famous restaurants has been earmarked for potential acquisition, joining two heritage buildings also slated to make way for the new Parramatta Powerhouse.

The owners of the El-Phoenician restaurant, which is at the heart of Parramatta's Eat Street, have been advised their business is in line to be compulsorily acquired, according to two sources close to the process but not authorised to comment.

Under terms of compulsory acquisition, the owners are eligible to receive market value plus premium, a buyout of any lease and relocation expenses, amounting to what would likely be a multimillion-dollar offer.

[The El-Phoenician on Church Street in Parramatta. *CREDIT: STEVEN SIEWERT*]

The fine-dining Lebanese restaurant, an institution on Church Street for 20 years, would make way for a pedestrian laneway to the new Parramatta Powerhouse.

Ratepayers would be liable for costs of the pedestrian access, with the matter likely to be raised at an extraordinary meeting of Parramatta City Council on Thursday night.

That meeting has been called to confirm the council's official support with reservations for the Powerhouse redevelopment.

A Parramatta City Council spokesperson said the El-Phoenician site had been identified for "potential acquisition" as far back as 2007 "with the possibility to turn the site into a mid-block laneway to improve pedestrian connectivity".

"No decisions have been made in relation to the acquisition of this property," the spokesperson said.

El-Phoenician owner John El-Bayeh declined to comment.

On Tuesday, the CFMEU NSW placed a green ban on works on two heritage buildings — Italianate villa Willow Grove and St George's Terrace — due to be demolished to make way for the new museum.

The Environment Impact Statement prepared for Infrastructure NSW recommended the demolition proceed as the public benefits of western Sydney's first major, world-class cultural institution outweighed heritage concerns and loss of the local community's sense of place.

[The new pedestrian access point for the Parramatta Powerhouse. *CREDIT: STEVEN SIEWERT*]

The EIS flagged new corridors of "enhanced connectivity". The winning museum design, by architects Moreau Kusunoki and Genton, also calls for multiple entry points "so that the site can be approached and connected from all sides and visitors and local communities will be encouraged to walk through the precinct".

Access to the new museum will be from the Parramatta River foreshore and from Philip Street via a centralised circulation corridor, aligning with the council's plans for a future line to funnelling pedestrians from the train station.

There was potential to enhance pedestrian connectivity in the future, the EIS said, through the provision of a laneway between the museum and Church Street, and by providing a pedestrian ramp to the Lennox Bridge.

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These identified improvements "would enhance the integration of the site to its surrounds, however, are not critical to or proposed as part of this development and would be subject to separate and future approvals by others", [the report by Ethos Urban](#) said.

In any compulsory acquisition, the Valuer-General makes an assessment of the property's worth, the final figure of which can be reviewed by an independent auditor. The acquisition process can take up to six months to complete unless accelerated.

Parramatta City Council Labor councillor Donna Davis raised questions about the pedestrian bridge and adequacy of evacuation exits with the Powerhouse's chief executive officer Lisa Havilah last month.

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The new museum will be built on a flood-prone site and Church Street is an important exit point in the event of an emergency. "The initial response I received was that consideration was being given to a walkway access along the neighbouring Meriton site," Cr Davis said.

"A week later when I made further inquiries to officers, I was advised that one of the options could be the El-Phoenician as it links directly from the Powerhouse to Church St."