

# Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation

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## Fact Sheet: Design

May 2024



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## Acknowledgement of Country

Infrastructure NSW and the Powerhouse pay respects to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which Powerhouse Museum Ultimo stands.

We recognise their continuous connection to this place. We honour the clans, nations, families that have always been connected to this site, and respect the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that now call this place home.

We recognise Aboriginal connections to this place as a cultural continuum – resilient, resistant, and responsive to emerging and receding industries. This has always been a place of story, ceremony and gathering, it is our responsibility that this continues to be a place for the broader community and reflects their stories.

# Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is on Public Exhibition until 30 May 2024.

The EIS assesses the expected construction and operational impacts of the project, including a range of environmental and social factors, the management of potential impacts to local heritage and archaeology, and the proposed construction program.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the proposed design scheme for the revitalisation. Information about the heritage impacts and a summary of the EIS are available separately.

This fact sheet is a summary document and does not contain all detail within the EIS. You are encouraged to read the complete EIS documentation on the NSW Planning Portal for more detailed information:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/powerhouse-ultimo-revitalisation>

# Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation

The renewed Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo would deliver refurbished exhibition and public spaces, connecting the museum to the Sydney CBD and adjacent cultural precincts.

The museum would continue to deliver an applied arts and sciences program, presenting exhibitions that showcase the Powerhouse Collection, international exclusive exhibitions and programs that support the creative industries. It will be a precinct that contributes to the growing night-time and visitor economies.

## Design team

The design concept for the museum's revitalisation has been developed by Durbach Block Jagers Architects in partnership with Architectus, Youssofzay + Hart, and landscape architects Tyrell Studio. The design team is supported by Akira Isogawa, Yerrabingin, Finding Infinity and Arup. It responds to the NSW Government's project objectives, including the revised scope and retention of the Wran building.



Figure 1: Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation project site

# Design features of the revitalised museum

Powerhouse Museum Ultimo is proposed to undergo a revitalisation to reorientate the museum entrance, create new and improved exhibition spaces, provide a new public square and reveal the heritage facades of the Ultimo Power Station built in 1899.

## Museum exhibition spaces

The design scheme creates four flexible, international standard exhibition spaces that would enable the Powerhouse to create and present high quality, internationally leading museum exhibitions across the applied arts and sciences. Large-volume spaces would be created within the existing buildings through the removal of mezzanines (as shown in Figure 2), creating spaces suited to the scale of the Powerhouse Collection, particularly its very large objects.

## New public domain

A new public square would be created at the northern end of The Goods Line, welcoming visitors to a new museum entrance. This space would be publicly accessible and connect to The Goods Line and Macarthur Street.

The Post Office Courtyard on Harris Street would be transformed into a publicly accessible green space for community use and museum programs.

## Food and beverage

The design creates a dynamic, porous and connected frontage to The Goods Line which can function across many modes and includes food and beverage spaces with the ability for indoor and outdoor dining.

## Improved operations

Back-of-house operational spaces in the museum would be separated from visitor circulation and front-of-house spaces and improved to support museum operations. This includes a new internal loading dock located on the south-western corner of the site, accessed from Macarthur Street.

## Learning and community spaces

Dedicated spaces designed for the museum's learning programs would be provided, along with community spaces.

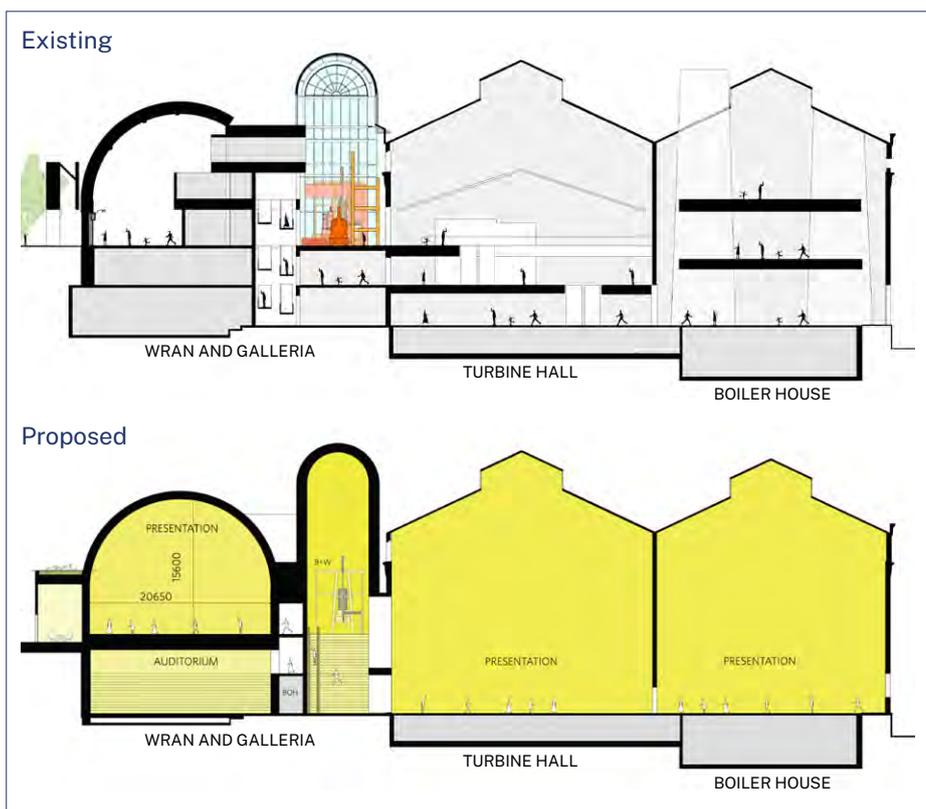


Figure 2: Cross sectional diagram showing existing and proposed exhibition spaces (source: Durbach Block Jagers & Architectus)

## Improved visitor circulation

The lack of separation between visitor circulation and back-of-house operations coupled with the legibility of spaces throughout the museum is addressed through the design scheme.

The scheme prioritises the visitor experience by:

- Reorientating the museum entrance to The Goods Line
- Providing additional entry points from Harris Street and Macarthur Street
- Establishing one central, intuitive, and accessible visitor circulation system to access exhibition, program, and learning spaces
- Separating front-of-house and back-of-house operations from exhibition and circulation spaces
- Providing direct and universal access between levels using escalators, stairs and lifts.

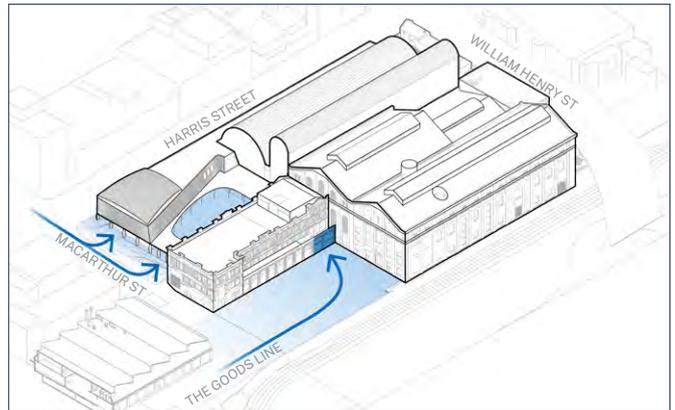


Figure 3: New entrance to museum at The Goods Line (source: Durbach Block Jagers & Architectus)

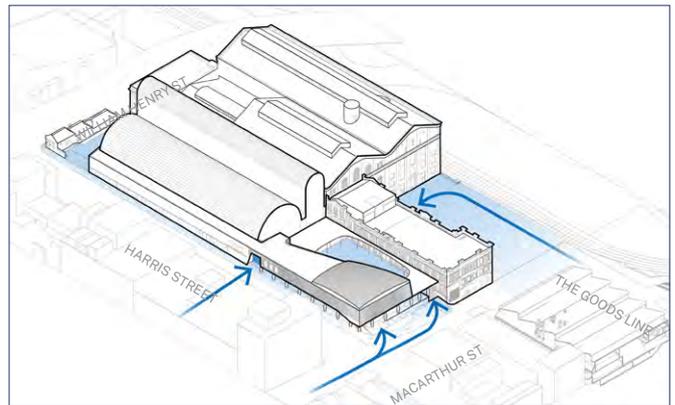
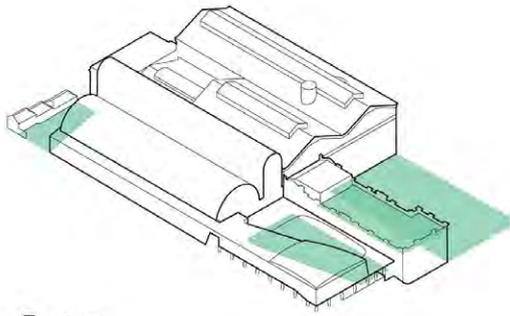
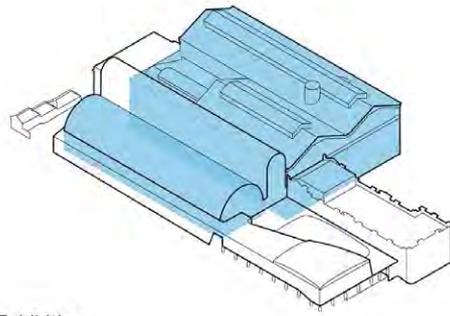


Figure 4: Museum entry points at Harris Street and Macarthur Street (source: Durbach Block Jagers & Architectus)

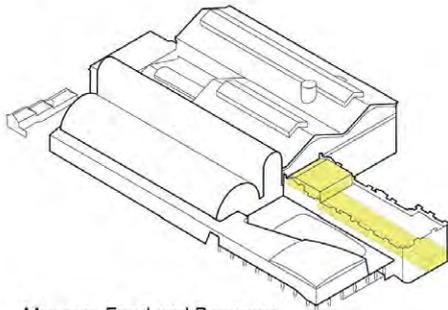
# Museum spaces



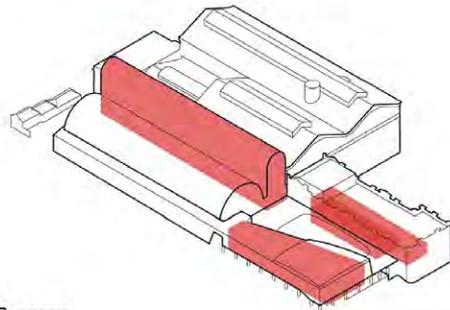
Terraces



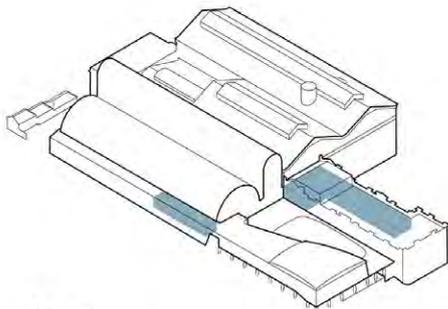
Exhibition



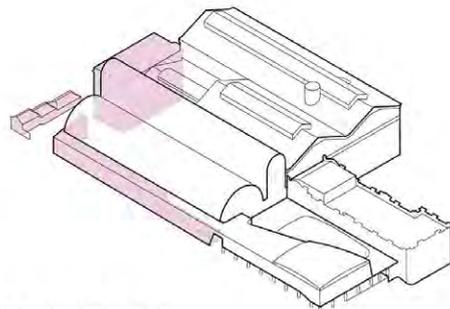
Museum Food and Beverage



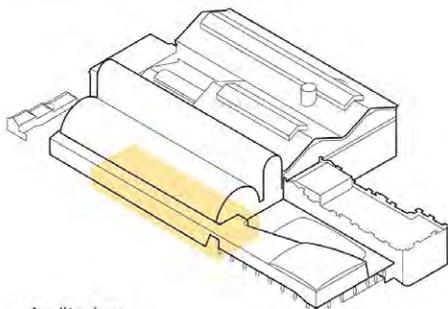
Program



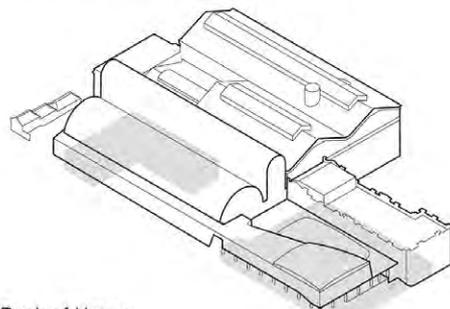
Education



Creative Industries



Auditorium



Back of House

Legend

 Terraces	 Exhibition
 Museum F&B	 Program
 Education	 Creative Industries
 Auditorium	 Back of House

Figure 5: Key museum spaces  
(source: Durbach Block Jagers & Architectus)

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## Ground floor (level with The Goods Line, refer to Figure 6)

There would be three flexible, international standard museum spaces that can support and adapt to new and dynamic exhibitions and programs that facilitate direct connection with the Powerhouse Collection.

### Exhibition Space 1

(current and proposed: 1,900 sqm)

Exhibition Space 1 is in the Boiler House. As shown in Figure 2, the existing internal mezzanines would be removed to reveal the full height of the building, creating a larger volume, more flexible exhibition space. The heritage fabric would also be restored and preserved.

### Exhibition Space 2

(current and proposed: 2,000 sqm)

Exhibition Space 2 is in the interconnected Turbine Hall and Engine House. As shown in Figure 2, the existing internal mezzanines would be removed to expose the full height of the building, creating a larger volume, more flexible exhibition space. The overhead crane and heritage mezzanine in the Engine House would be retained, and the heritage fabric will be restored and preserved.

### Exhibition Space 3

(current: 2 separate auditoria;  
proposed: 900 sqm exhibition space)

Exhibition Space 3 is a new exhibition space that would be formed by combining the two existing auditoriums in the Wran building to create a single volume, flat floor exhibition space, as shown in Figure 2. Retractable seats would offer flexibility and allow the exhibition space to be transformed into an auditorium. The space is designed with black box functionality to allow for diverse utilisation, including exhibitions, programs, presentations, and immersive experiences.

### Concierge

The museum's entrance via The Goods Line would be the main entry point into the museum on the ground floor of the Switch House, providing visitors with direct connection to the new public square, Light Rail, and surrounding precincts.

### Food and beverage

The ground floor of the Switch House includes spaces for museum food and beverage. It is adjacent to The Goods Line Terrace enabling mixed mode dining and utilisation of public domain spaces.

### Loading dock and back of house

To ensure the care and safety of the Powerhouse Collection, the proposed design scheme includes a new internal loading dock with entry off Macarthur Street. It would provide a designated area for the safe and efficient loading and unloading of Collection items and other deliveries within the museum. Dedicated back-of-house corridors have been designed to separate front-of-house and back-of-house operations from exhibition and circulation spaces.

Waste collection would be separately managed within the new loading dock, and the existing basements below the Boiler House and Turbine Hall would continue to be used as plant rooms.

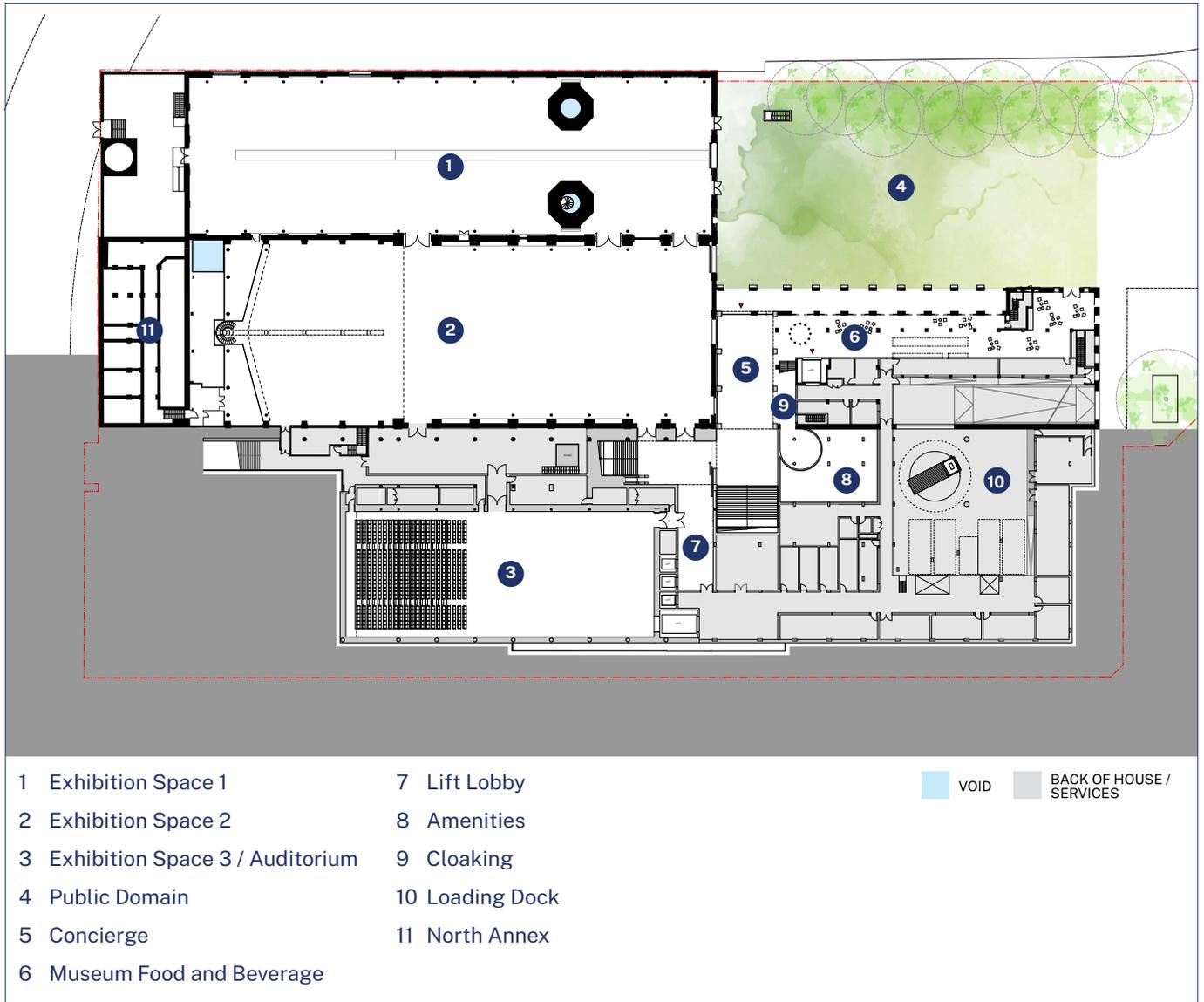


Figure 6: Architectural drawing of proposed ground floor of the Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation (source: Durbach Block Jaggers & Architectus)

## Level 1 (refer to Figure 8)

Positioned at the mid-level between The Goods Line and Harris Street, direct access from Macarthur Street would lead visitors to the new internal courtyard and program spaces. This new level would be created through the removal of the Harris Street forecourt.

### Internal courtyard

The internal courtyard would be a green space set within the museum buildings, providing a protected and green space for visitors. The full two storey façade of the Switch House would be revealed, and the original building profile would be restored through the removal of the roof addition.

This area would be accessible from Macarthur Street during the museum's operating hours and would function as both a place of respite and space for museum programming.

### Museum program space

This space is positioned in the new building along Harris and Macarthur Streets. Glazing would be used to allow passersby to see into the space and through to the courtyard beyond, activating the streetscape. The building would have adaptable interior spaces to accommodate a diverse range of museum programs.

An additional program space would be located within this level of the Switch House on the opposite side of the courtyard.

### Powerhouse staff offices

Powerhouse staff offices would be located on this level of the Switch House.



Figure 7: Artist impression of Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation, view from Macarthur Street

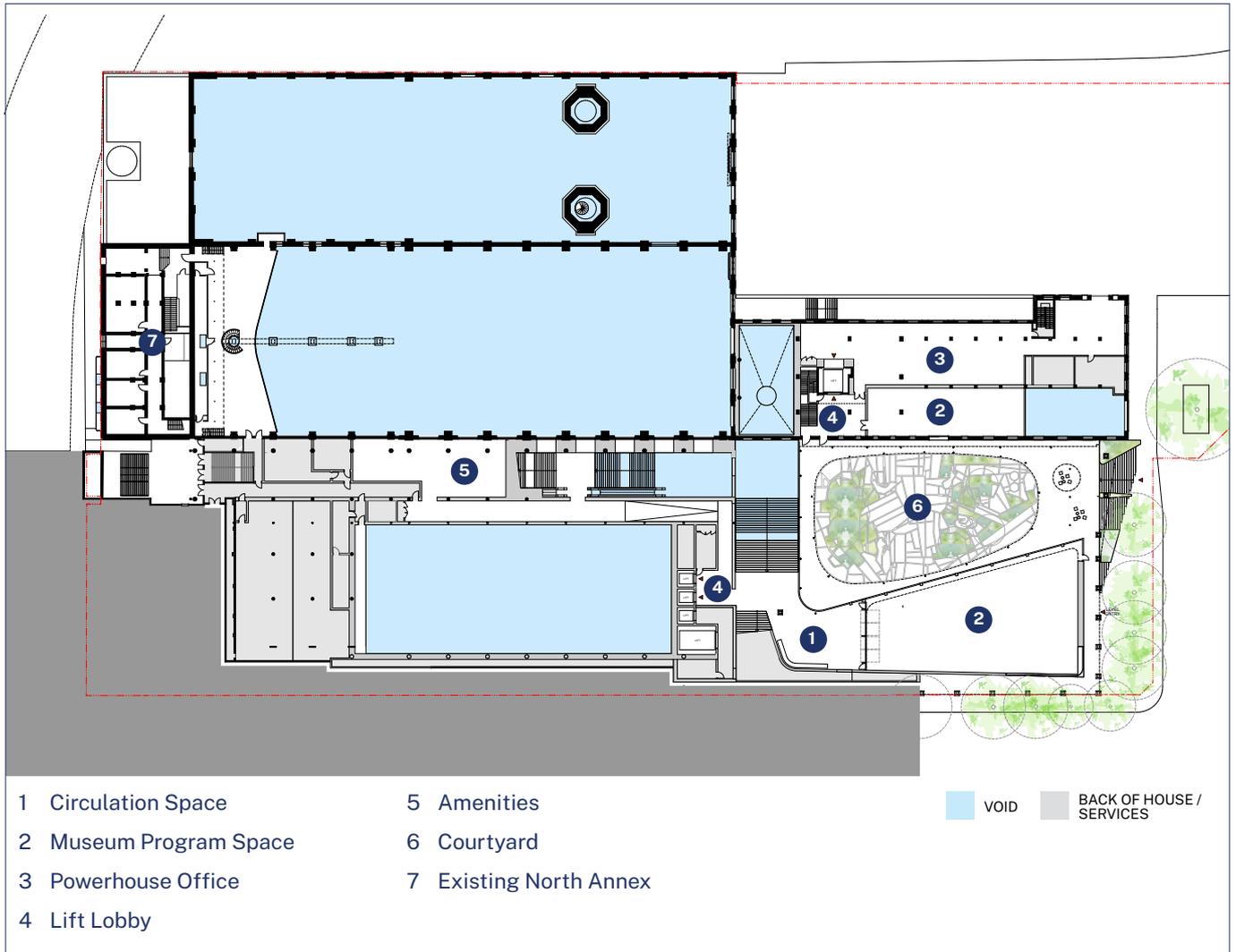


Figure 8: Architectural drawing of proposed first floor of the Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation (source: Durbach Block Jagers & Architectus)

## Level 2 (level with Harris Street, refer to Figure 10)

This level would house the creative industries spaces, the fourth exhibition space within the Wran building, the revitalised Post Office, and the Harris Street entry to the museum that would directly connect to the concierge on the ground floor. The new circulation space would be enabled through the removal of a section of the southern façade of the Wran building, bringing it in line with the Turbine Hall and Boiler House.

### Exhibition Space 4

(current: 1,480 sqm; proposed: 1,400 sqm)

Exhibition Space 4 would be an enlarged space created within the Wran building. As shown in Figure 2, internal mezzanines and columns would be removed to create a large volume, international standard exhibition space.

### Museum program space

This flexible space adjacent to Exhibition Space 4 would be utilised for museum programs.

### Creative industries space

Creative industries spaces would be in shopfronts along Harris Street to activate the frontage of the revitalised Wran Building. The spaces would accommodate the Powerhouse's creative industries program, providing subsidised work space for NSW-based practitioners of the applied arts and sciences. In exchange for a subsidised work space, the practitioners would collaborate with the Powerhouse to deliver programs.

The existing creative industries spaces in the North Annex would be retained.

### Powerhouse Academy

This level of the Switch House would accommodate the Powerhouse Academy and enable immersive learning experiences for regional students.

### Post Office

The Post Office floor plan would be reconfigured to create community meeting and creative industry spaces.



Figure 9: Artist impression of Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation, view from Harris Street

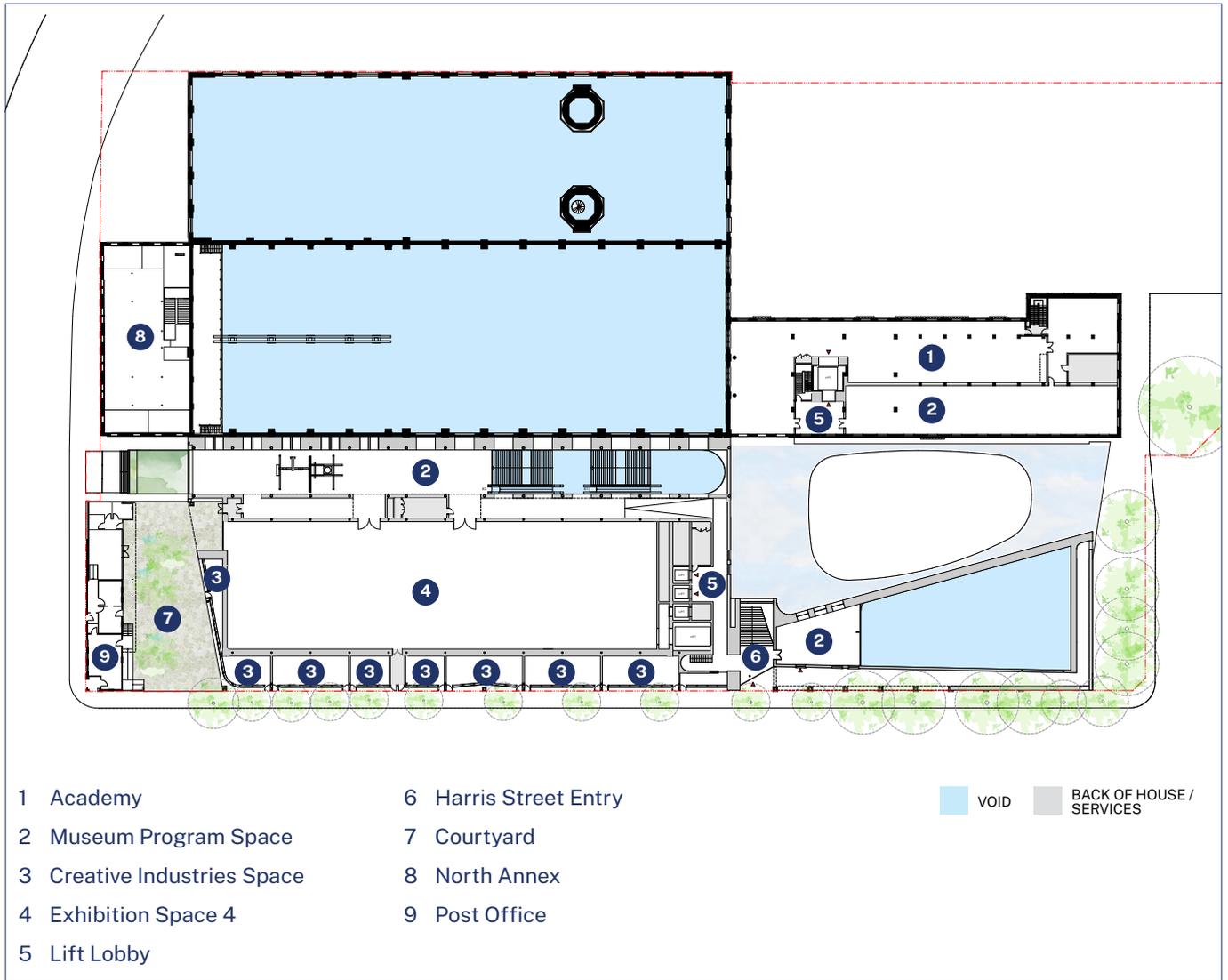


Figure 10: Architectural drawing of proposed second floor of the Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation (source: Durbach Block Jagers and Architectus)

## Level 3 (Rooftop)

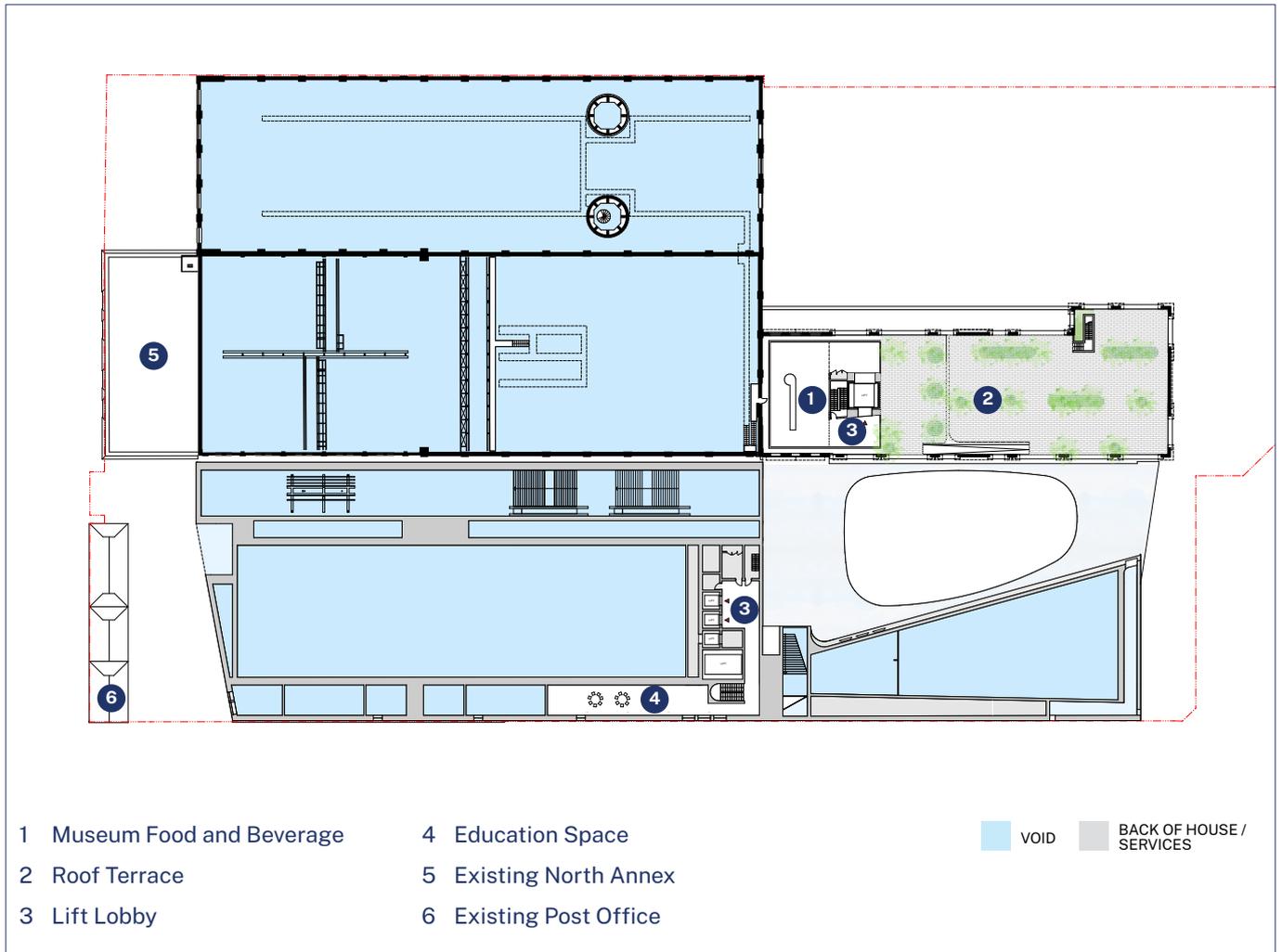


Figure 11: Architectural drawing of proposed third floor of the Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation (source: Durbach Block Jagers and Architectus)

## The public domain (refer to Figure 16)

### Museum Entry Terrace (2,025 sqm)

The public domain adjacent to the museum entrance would be an open space connected to The Goods Line and Macarthur Street, and available for museum programming, civic use and events.

The space is designed to enhance the museum's connection with the city and surrounding precincts. The square would be planted throughout to create a landscape featuring species endemic to the area, and would incorporate materials such as crushed sandstone, gravel and shells.

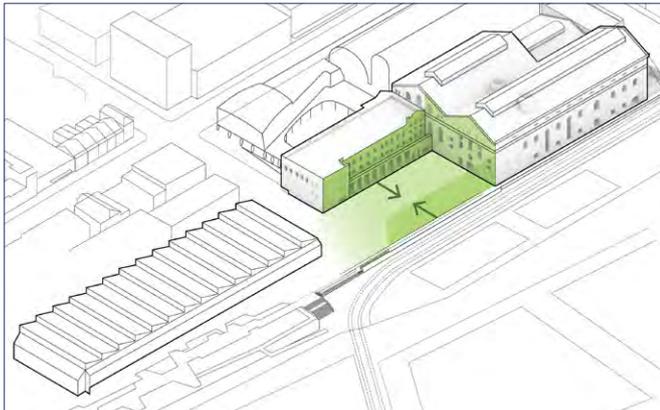


Figure 12: The Goods Line and connection to Terrace and museum entrance (source: Tyrell Studio)

### Post Office Courtyard (345 sqm)

A former back-of-house space will be transformed into a new green space for community utilisation and museum programming between the Wran Building and The Post Office.

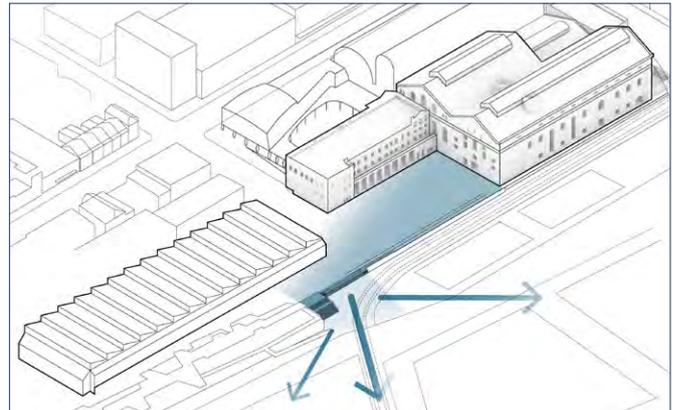


Figure 13: Connection to Light Rail and surrounding precincts (source: Tyrell Studio)

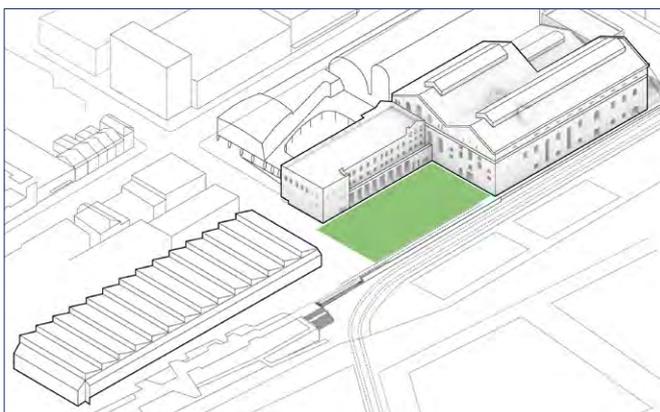


Figure 14: Terrace (source: Tyrell Studio)



Figure 15: Indicative planting to Terrace (source: Tyrell Studio)

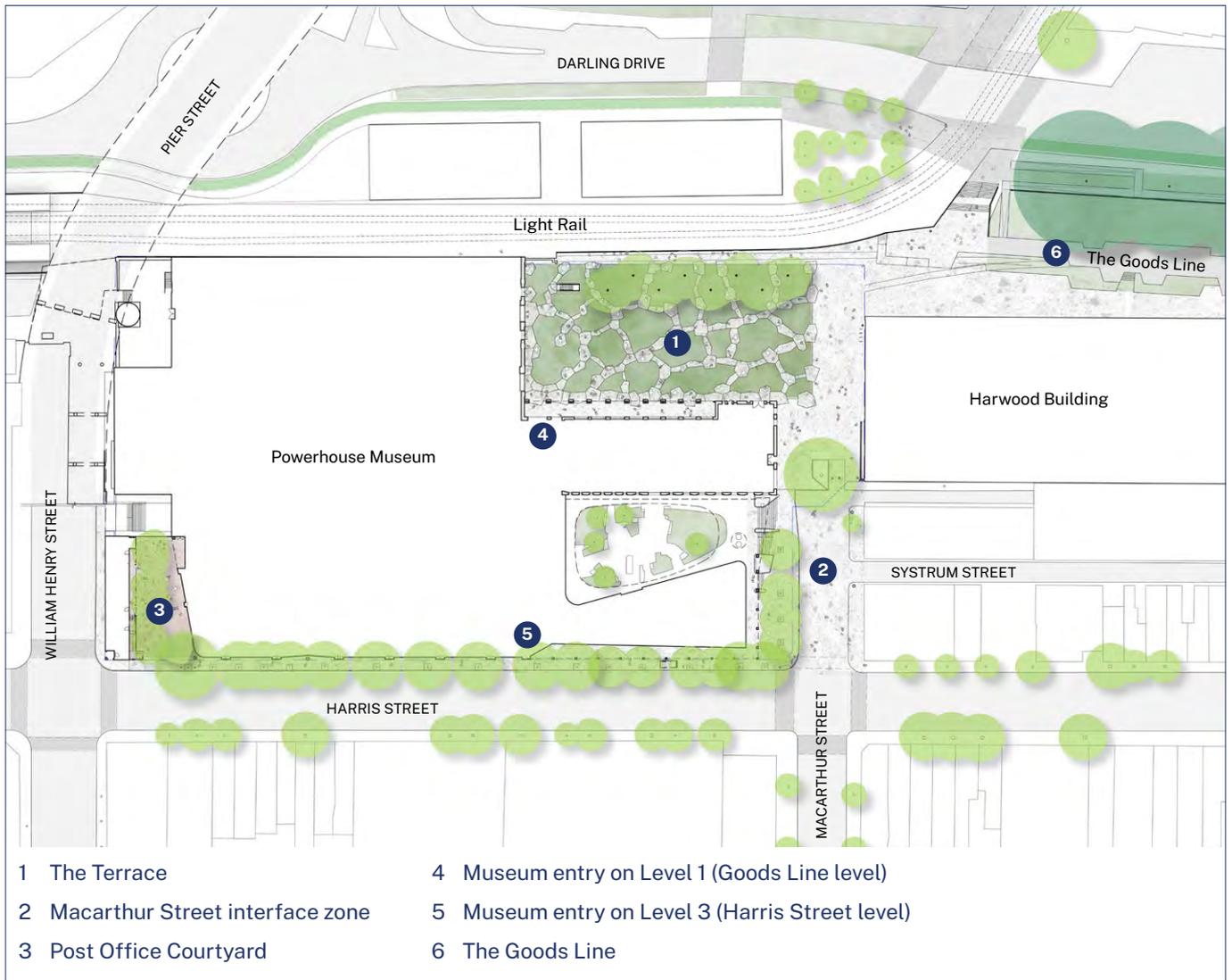


Figure 16: Landscape drawings of public domain for proposed Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Revitalisation (source: Tyrell Studio)

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## Building materials

The revised design features recycled and new materials including brick, brick slips, stone, ceramics, glass, metal cladding and precast concrete. The façade of the new building would be made from robust and timeless materials, reflective of the area. Clear glazing would be used to activate street frontages and create a porous precinct.

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## Sustainability

The revitalisation is targeting a minimum 5-Star Green Star rating with an aspiration to achieve a 6-Star rating, a process that would involve ongoing consultation with Green Building Council of Australia.

### Features of the environmentally sustainable design strategy

- Using low carbon materials, recycled materials and timber as much as possible to reduce embodied emissions
- Photovoltaic cells maximised on roofs and commitment to procure 100% renewable energy in operation
- Optimising design to reduce the need for heating and cooling
- Ensuring water efficiency and collecting and treating rainwater for landscaping
- A zero waste museum, operating optimally without sending material to landfill.

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## Powerhouse Collection

Powerhouse Collection objects currently at Powerhouse Museum Ultimo are being relocated to state-of-the-art storage facilities at Powerhouse Castle Hill.

### Powerhouse Castle Hill

During the temporary closure of the museum at Ultimo, there are opportunities to view the Powerhouse Collection at Powerhouse Castle Hill which is open every weekend.

Powerhouse Castle Hill has been recently expanded with a new state of the art 8,000sqm facility that opened in March 2024. This expansion provided more space for education, research and public programs and enhanced the conservation, preservation, storage and exhibition of the Collection.

### Powerhouse Ultimo Museum reopening

Once the museum reopens to the public, the revitalised exhibition spaces will enable the museum to display a greater range of objects from the Powerhouse Collection, of which only 10% has been seen publicly in the last 36 years. Iconic objects such as the Boulton and Watt, Locomotive No.1, and Catalina Flying Boat will feature in the museum when it reopens.

## Contact us

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For planning related questions or feedback,  
contact the Infrastructure NSW project team at:

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