


This popular Lake Charles restaurant expects to lose its land during I-10 bridge construction

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BY COURTNEY PEDERSEN | Staff writer, Courtney Pedersen

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A beloved Lake Charles restaurant, Steamboat Bill's, is expected to lose its location across from the lake as construction progresses on the [new Calcasieu River Bridge](#) for Interstate 10.

The state has started acquiring properties along a path slightly north of the [current I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge](#) as work begins on the new bridge. Several properties stand in the route for construction and state officials say those that will be impacted have been notified, though they have declined to publicly share a comprehensive list of affected properties.

An attorney for Steamboat Bill's, New Orleans-based Randy Smith with Smith & Fawer LLC, confirmed that the state plans to take the entirety of the Steamboat Bill's property at 1004 Lakeshore Drive. He added, though, that he does not expect the state to take the land until 2027.

The right-of-way process allows the government to take land to [complete road projects](#).

The potential of losing their property has been traumatizing for Steamboat Bill's owner Katherine Vidrine and her family, Smith said.

"It's her life's work, and it's a family business," Smith said. "They're not happy about it, and they're very nervous about it."



Steamboat Bill's has been located at 1004 Lakeshore Dr. in Lake Charles for over 40 years. Photo taken June 25, 2026.

[BY COURTNEY PEDERSEN | Staff writer](#)

Since the 1980s, Steamboat Bill's has been a popular lunch and dinner restaurant, offering Cajun cooking, authentic seafood, gumbo, étouffée and red beans and rice.

Calcasieu Bridge Partners Public Information Officer Jonathan Hill said agencies determine which properties need to be acquired for projects after they plan them and meet government requirements.

“Property owners who are impacted are contacted by a right of way agent,” Hill said. “The agent will walk them through the process which includes appraisals, negotiations, acquisition and relocation, if applicable.”

Though Hill declined to confirm who had been notified, news of other impacted properties has come out at Downtown Development City Council meetings.

City of Lake Charles Planner Kelly Miseles confirmed during a Downtown Development meeting in May that the buildings on the north side of the bridge along Lakeshore Drive would be demolished. The old fence company at 1112 N Lakeshore Drive was already in the queue for demolition on May 4.



The old fence company at 1112 N Lakeshore Drive sits vacant on June, 25, 2026.

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And during a Lake Charles City Council meeting last month, Calcasieu Bridge Partners Public Information Officer Patricia Prebula said that a couple of “older homes” in Westlake have been demolished already.

It’s likely other impacted properties will include those on either side of Steamboat Bill’s along Lakeshore Drive on the feeder road for Interstate 10 westbound.

Steamboat Bill’s faces two choices: either close its decades-old location near the bridge or move to a new property.

“They don’t want to close it forever,” Smith said. “But then to find another piece of land (that) will work to rebuild the business that has good access, good location, has all the right features, and then not knowing if they’re going to get enough money to make that work.”

Eminent domain and right of way laws require the state to make good faith offers to properties that it wants to acquire based on two appraisals. Landowners then have 30 days to accept or reject an offer.

The state has not yet extended an offer to the restaurant, but Smith said he expected the offer to be millions of dollars as the state tries to compensate for both the cost of the land and the business itself.

Property owners have some leeway to negotiate, Smith said, but if they ultimately disagree on the offer from the state, the state can take the land with its offered amount of money before the two sides fight it out in court.

State officials are in the process of appraising properties, according to Smith. He said it can take a few months before offers come in.

“My clients certainly haven't figured out what they're going to do,” Smith said. “A lot depends on how much they're offered.”