

ARCHITECTURAL WONDERS: CONGRESS STREET & ARTS DISTRICT

1 CITY HALL

389 Congress Street

Architecturally inspired by New York City's City Hall, Portland City Hall is one of the city's most striking landmarks. The building boasts porticos, columns, large wings, and a majestic 200-foot tower – making it a favorite among local photographers. City Hall is “U” shaped and fills almost the entire block bounded by Congress, Chestnut, and Myrtle Streets and Cumberland Avenue. Inside you'll find city offices and departments and – in the right rear wing – Merrill Auditorium. Merrill seats 1900 and is the home venue of the Portland Symphony Orchestra and the Kotschmar Organ. Fun fact: City Hall is built with granite from North Jay, Maine.

2 THE PORTLAND MASONIC

415 Congress Street

The Portland Masonic – better known as the Portland Masonic Temple – is an example of a commercial block in the style of Beaux Arts Classicism. It was erected in 1911 and is home to several active Masonic organizations whose work involves preserving and restoring its incredible interior spaces. One of the most remarkable of these spaces – the two-story Corinthian Hall – features Corinthian columns on all four walls reaching to the ceiling. The hall also houses one of Maine's largest working pipe organs – second only to the Kotschmar Organ next door at Merrill Auditorium. If you're a history buff, be sure to check out the Maine Masonic Civil War Library & Museum on the third floor!

TOUR DURATION
10 - MINUTE WALK
(PLUS EXPLORING!)

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TRAVEL DISTANCE
.5 MILES

3 FIRST PARISH CHURCH

425 Congress Street

First Parish Church is considered one of Portland's finest examples of Federal Period architecture. It was commissioned in 1824 to replace a wooden meeting house called “Old Jerusalem,” and – thanks to its granite structure – it survived the Great Fire of 1866. One of the building's most notable features – the Simon Willard clock tower – is the last remaining and functioning of its kind. Fun fact: First Parish Church is the oldest place of worship in the city.

4 TIME & TEMPERATURE BUILDING

477 Congress Street

As one of Portland's tallest buildings, the 14-story Time & Temperature Building is an iconic part of the city skyline. Originally known as the Chapman Building, it was erected in 1924. Today, the stately edifice houses more than 100 businesses ranging from law firms, nonprofits, tech companies, and retailers. Rising high above the city streets is a giant rooftop sign that flashes the time and temperature, as well as frequently changing (and occasionally cryptic) eight-letter messages. The messages – sponsored by The Law Office of Joe Bornstein – promote holidays, charitable causes, local events, and more...a fun way to spread the word!

FUN FACT!

MANY OF THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN PORTLAND DON TWO DATES – THE OLDER IS THE DATE ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED AND THE NEWER IS THE DATE THE BUILDING WAS RECONSTRUCTED AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF 1866.

5 WADSWORTH-LONGFELLOW HOUSE

487 Congress Street

The childhood home of celebrated poet and educator Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has the distinction of being Maine's first house museum open to the public. Built in 1785-1786, it was the first dwelling in Portland to be constructed entirely of brick. Maine Historical Society offers tours of this historic landmark June through October. While you're visiting, don't miss the stunning Longfellow Garden located behind the house – it's a wonderful oasis in the heart of Portland's bustling downtown!

6 MECHANICS' HALL

519 Congress Street

In 1815, the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association was formed to support Maine's creative community: they were blacksmiths, coopers, artists, innovators and creators. Between 1857 and 1859, they built Mechanics' Hall in Portland – a communal gathering space with a lending library at its center. Today, Mechanics' Hall celebrates that rich history through literary arts programs, music, performance and more while working to restore the landmark building as a vibrant cultural resource. Inside you'll find a number of unique spaces including a grand ballroom, a member-supported library, and a historic classroom.

7 J.B. BROWN MEMORIAL BLOCK

Congress & Casco Streets

The J.B. Brown Memorial Block is one of the few commercial buildings in Portland designed in the Queen Anne style. This style – which favors fine details, asymmetry, and broken rooflines – was more commonly applied to residential buildings.

8 ASA HANSON BLOCK

548 - 550 Congress Street

The Asa Hanson Block is an example of late Victorian architecture and was built in 1889. Francis Fassett & Frederick A. Tompson were the architects and it is one of seven surviving commercial designs by Fassett in Portland. Charles Perry, a real estate developer, constructed the building – and you can see the panel on the building which bears his name. In 2001, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

9 CHARLES Q. CLAPP BLOCK

Congress, Free, & High Streets

The Portland version of NYC's Flatiron Building, the Charles Q. Clapp Block is situated on a triangular site at the junction of Congress, Free, and High Streets. It was designed by Charles Quincy Clapp in the Federal style and is one of the city's oldest commercial blocks. Fun fact: Hay's Pharmacy occupied the ground floor for many decades, and today the building is more widely known as the “Hay Building.”

10 BAXTER BUILDING

619 Congress Street

Designed by local architect Francis Fassett, the elegant Baxter Building showcases the Romanesque Revival style of architecture. It was built in the late 1800s and served as the Portland Public Library until 1978. The building was vacant for several years until it was purchased by Maine College of Art and Design (MECA&D) in 1983. MECA&D sold the building in 2010 and today it houses VIA, a full-service marketing and advertising agency.

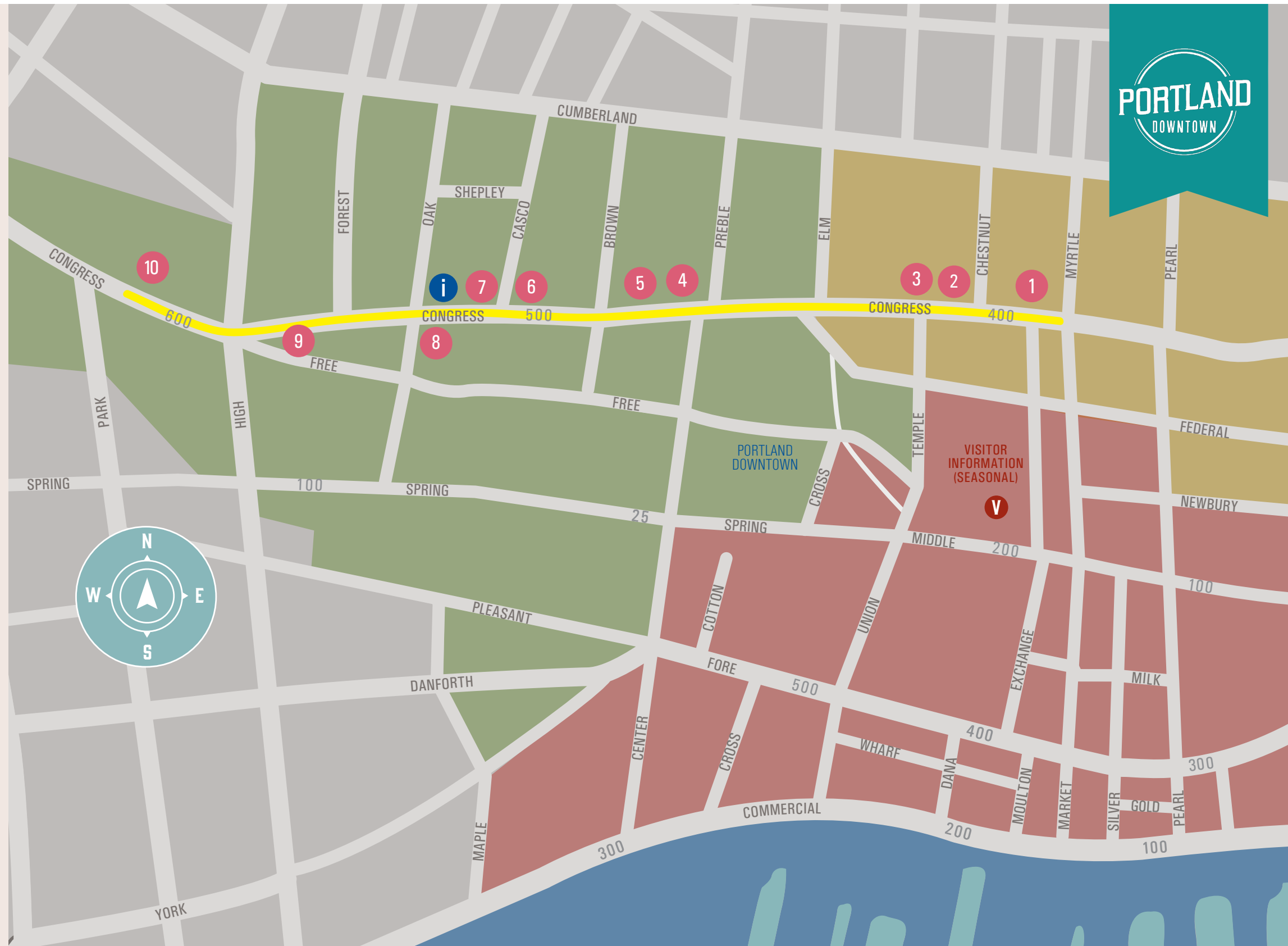
ARCHITECTURAL WONDERS: CONGRESS STREET & ARTS DISTRICT SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR



PORTLAND
DOWNTOWN

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ABOUT PORTLAND DOWNTOWN

Portland Downtown, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization, stimulates a thriving, vibrant, and sustainable downtown community.

ABOUT THE WALKING TOURS

Undergraduate students from USM's Tourism & Hospitality program designed custom self-guided walking tours through a creative academic curriculum in partnership with Portland Downtown. The City of Portland provided a matching grant to have the walking tours made into professionally designed brochures, which are available for free at locations around Portland and on-line. We hope you enjoy!



CONTACT US

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