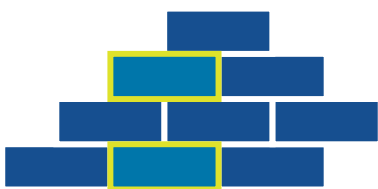


Capital Campaign



Building & Supporting
COMMUNITY

Our History

In 2014, a small group of people envisioned a Center that would serve the LGBTQ+ community, with shared offices and meeting rooms for organizations, alongside meaningful social spaces, support, and health services for individuals. They further envisioned providing affordable rental housing to the vulnerable among us. When fully realized, their vision would be a small campus offering programming, services, community spaces, and affordable and market-rate rental housing – all in service of our diverse and growing community.

Our Vision in Action

Achieving equality and equity requires visibility, access, and a sense of belonging. The Equality Community Center (ECC) will meet our communities' needs by being the first point of contact for people seeking resources, services, and programs; by offering co-working space for collaboration, and rental space for community events and gatherings; by being an incubator for creativity and solutions; and by providing affordable rental housing to the more vulnerable members of our community.

! To meet these needs, the ECC is embarking on a \$4 million capital campaign to raise funds to renovate our new home at 15 Casco Street and for the site planning of an affordable housing unit adjacent to the Center.

As someone born into a refugee family, who went through foster care and was adopted by a deeply religious family, I didn't feel completely at home or able to come out until after high school. I wish a place like the Center had been available to me –

a place where I could be my full and authentic self.

For me to be a part of creating a safe space and home for kids today who are like me, who are not only LGBTQ but also Black, brown, or indigenous, means a lot to me.

–Marpheen Chann



Phase I

A First Iteration

The ECC opened its doors in 2016 in a temporary office space at 511 Congress Street in Portland, and for six years, it was the hub for the LGBTQ+ community. The Center originally housed EqualityMaine, GLSEN, MaineTransNet, PFLAG, Pride Portland! and SAGE Maine. The programs of these organizations positively impact the lives of thousands of LGBTQ+ people and their families across the state of Maine through advocacy, education, community events, and support.

The success of Phase I has fortified our vision and now, the ECC is stepping into an exciting and essential future.

In its first 5 years, the Center has:

hosted more than **1,500 events**
and welcomed over **7,000 visits**
from LGBTQ+ community members,
families, and allies.



**1,500
events**

7,000 visits



Phase II

The Campaign

In 2019, the ECC underwent an independent funding feasibility study to gauge interest in our vision and to determine our capacity to raise the financial support necessary to bring a permanent community center to fruition. The results of the study were favorable. We found strong interest in expanding the Center beyond LGBTQ+ interests to include allied justice-seeking organizations, and beyond services and programming to include affordable housing.

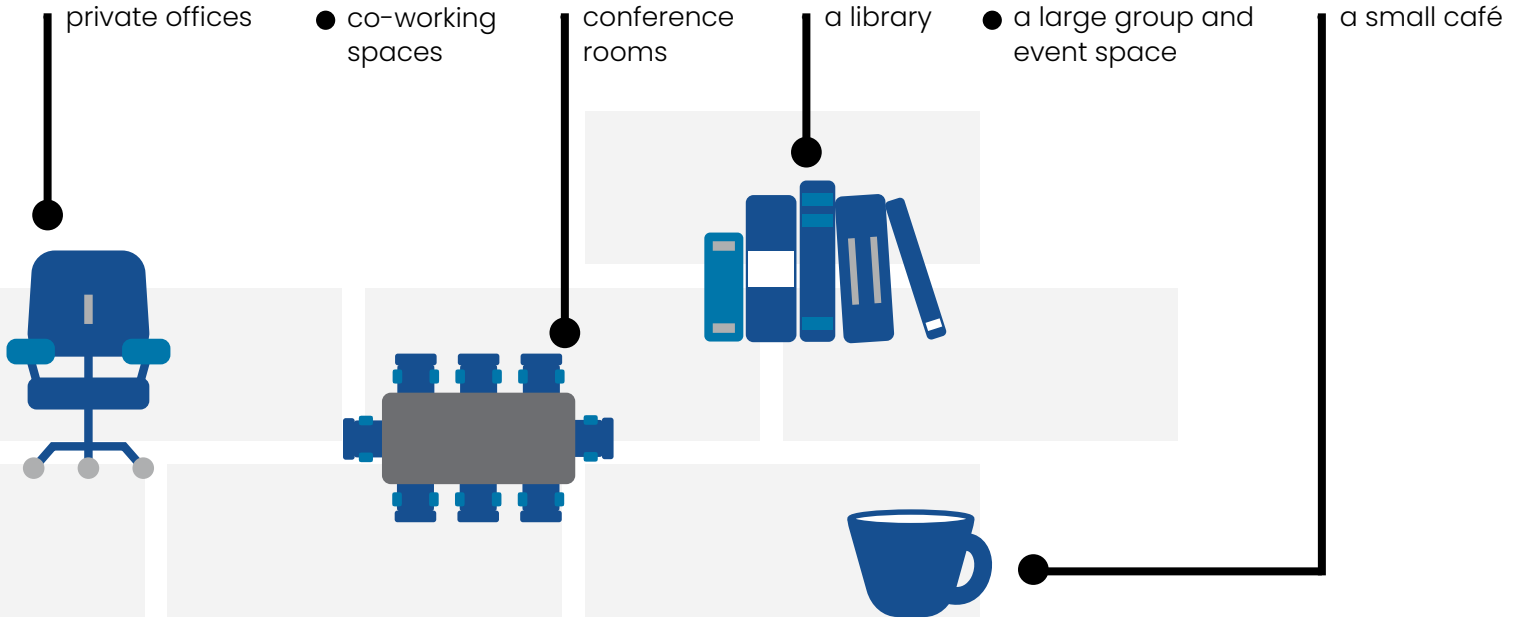
In 2021, thanks to a visionary \$1 million gift, the ECC purchased the former Maine Savings Bank building located at 15 Casco Street in Portland. Renovations to the building are now required to ensure accessibility and safety for all. When completed, the Center will be home to a library, a small café, and a large rentable space for community events and gatherings, in addition to offices and co-working spaces for individuals and organizations.

What we are doing is building infrastructure for full inclusion.

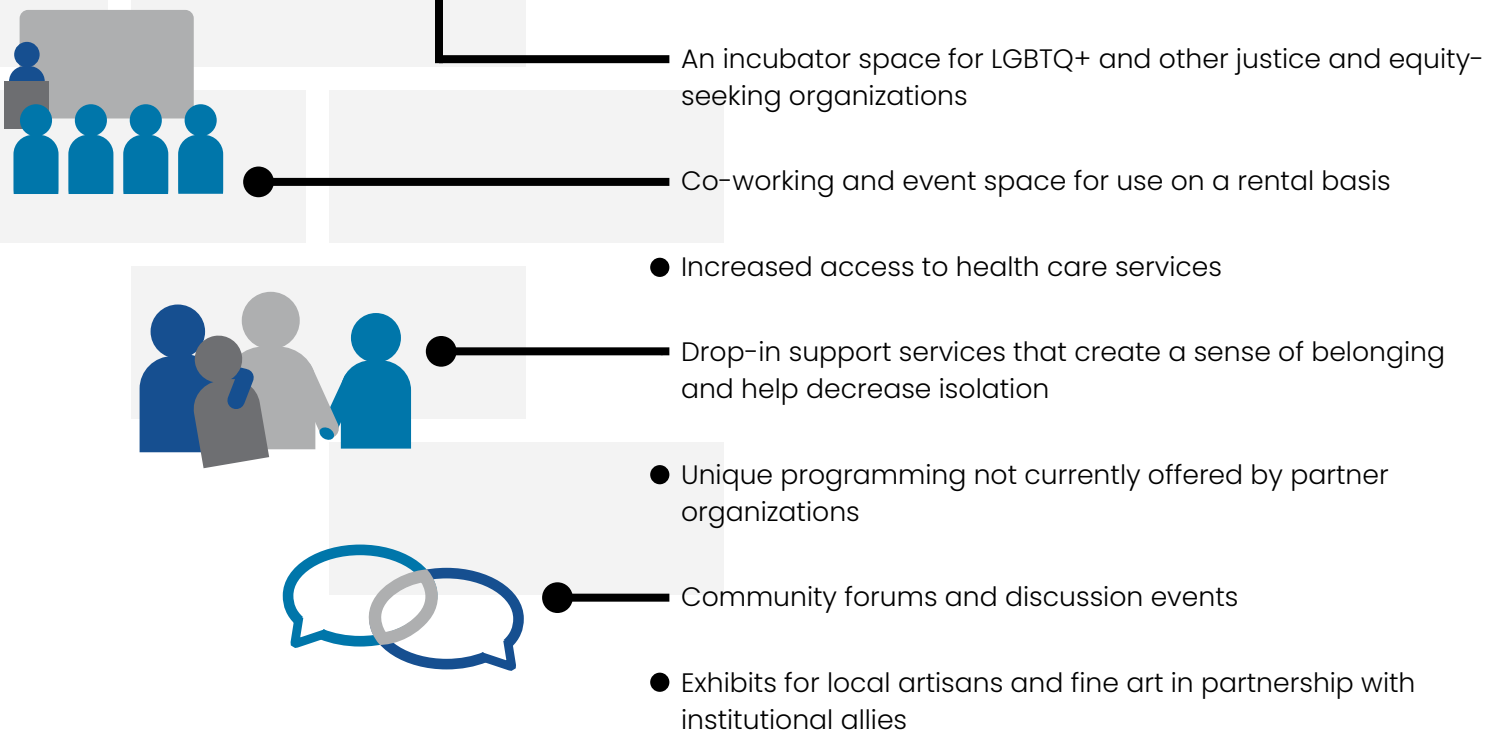
Turn on the news on any given night and you will be dismayed with what you hear and what we risk losing as a country. The Center is the antithesis of that – a place where people can be heard and seen and ideas can be cross-pollinated. It will be a reliably optimistic place, something all of us need desperately during these times.

–Anonymous Donor

The accessible **21,930 square feet of public space** in the old bank, one of the few Colonial Revival buildings built in downtown during the post-war period, will be renovated, upgraded, and repurposed to build out:



As the Center continues to develop, we envision:





Phase III

An Affordable Home

Housing costs have skyrocketed over the last several years and many individuals and families can no longer afford to live in the city of Portland. The unforgiving rental market has forced many people to move out of the city, or worse, experience housing insecurity and homelessness.

In response to this large and growing crisis, the ECC is in the planning and development phase of an affordable housing building on the lot adjacent to the Equality Community Center. This location, in the heart of downtown Portland, will provide residents with convenient access to social services, healthcare, transportation, entertainment, and recreation. The building's proximity to the ECC will also give residents easy access to our programs and services.

The building will provide parking on the ground floor and up to 60 residential units offered at reduced rates. Planning and construction will be funded primarily through affordable housing tax credits from MaineHousing, with additional financial support from our current capital campaign and a commercial bank loan. Kevin Bunker, founding principal of Developers Collaborative and recipient of Portland's prestigious Economic Development Achievement Award in 2019, has been chosen as our developer. We estimate construction of the building to begin in mid-2024 and to be complete by the end of 2025.

The ECC wants to do more than just provide housing to seniors and other vulnerable populations—we strive to build and support community.

This is an audacious vision

and something I would have never dared wish for: a place of safety, honor, respect, dignity, and acceptance. This is an opportunity to put our roots down and leave a legacy for future generations. It is a place to be. A place where no one is a minority, and everyone is embraced. It is a collective win, where we can invest and create a legacy in bricks and mortar, and collaboration, advocacy, and coalition.

-Diane Sammer

The ECC is in the business of moving power from the center to the margins. It invites us to do things differently,

and it is so bold!

It's a message written in actions that says, 'When you have a place — when you have presence — go and invite the others.'

-Ophelia Hu Kinney



The ECC is truly a safe space for people to grow, learn, collaborate, move to take action and serve the people; a place where anyone who comes in contact with the Center feels like they are a respected and valued member of the community. A place that is used and shared. A place of nurture as a working environment and honoring ourselves.

A place where we don't have to shrink.

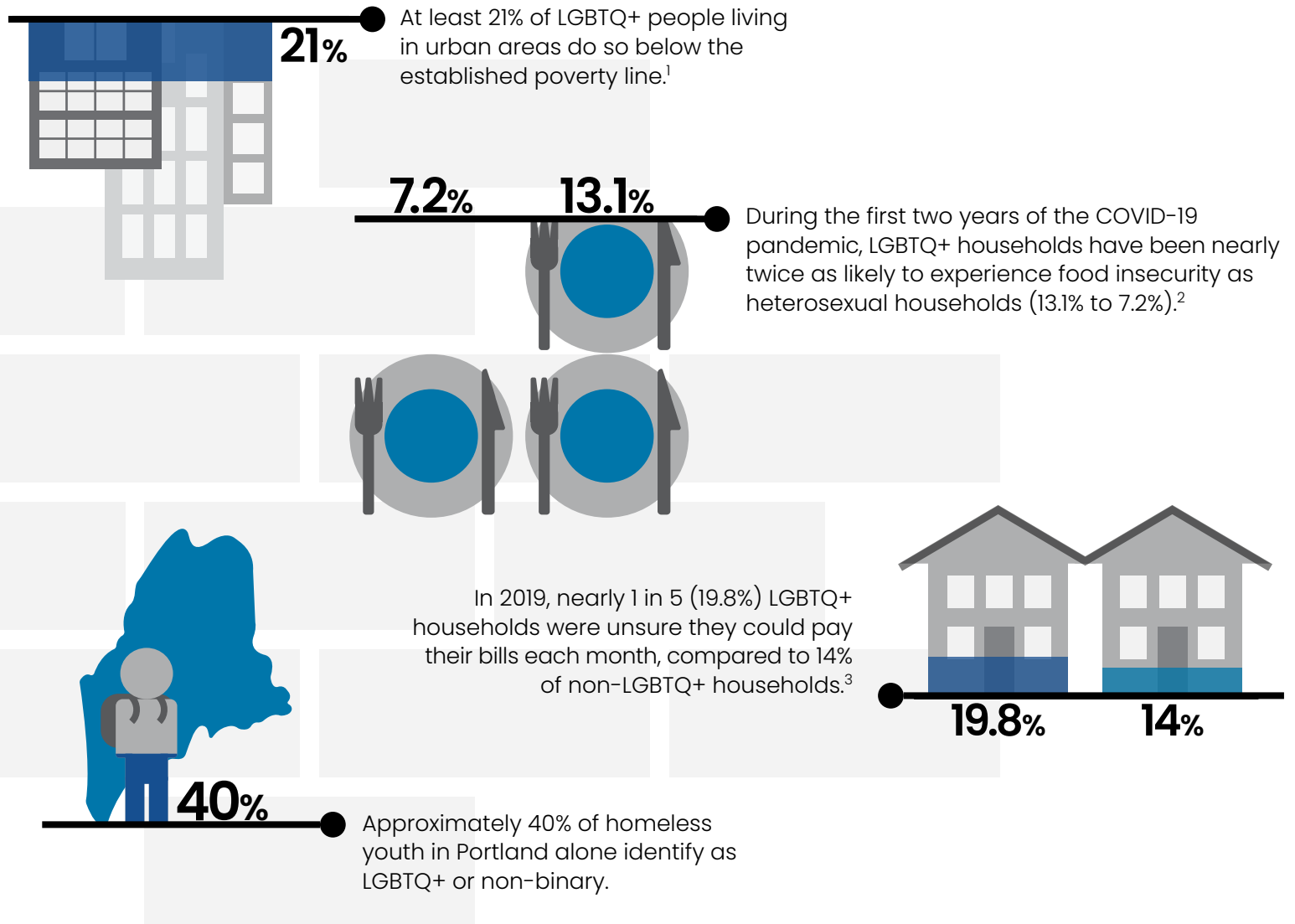
A place to partner with people and organizations that demonstrate their unwavering commitment to equality, equity, freedom, justice and a clean planet.

-Maine Black Community Development



A Community Still in Need of Support

While the LGBTQ+ community has made great strides in the face of over two decades of unprecedented challenges, at the same time, some members remain marginalized, the needs of our community are changing, and the population of Maine is becoming more diverse. This includes people of color, immigrants, those living with disabilities, and people who are economically disadvantaged. The Center will serve as a support and community for everyone.



¹ Badgett, M. V. Lee, et al. "LGBTQ POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES." Research That Matters, Oct. 2019, UCLA School of Law: Williams Institute.

² File, Thom, and Joey Marshall. "Household Pulse Survey Shows LGBT Adults More Likely to Report Living in Households with Food and Economic Insecurity than Non-LGBT Respondents." Census.gov, U.S. Census Bureau, 8 Oct. 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/lgbt-community-harder-hit-by-economic-impact-of-pandemic.html>.

³ Watson, Spencer, et al. The Economic Well-Being of LGBT Adults in 2019. Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR), 2021, <https://lgbtq-economics.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-Economic-Well-Being-of-LGBT-Adults-in-2019-Final-1.pdf>.



Phase I



The Center at 511 Congress Street was the first of three phases bringing together local LGBTQ+ organizations under one roof.

Phase II



The ECC creates a permanent home for the Center, a full spectrum hub for LGBTQ+ and justice-seeking allied organizations at 15 Casco Street in Portland.

Phase III



As the final phase of its vision, the ECC will provide affordable rental housing for seniors and more vulnerable members of our communities.

Being gay and walking this life, I fully understand the absence of basic human rights and want to see

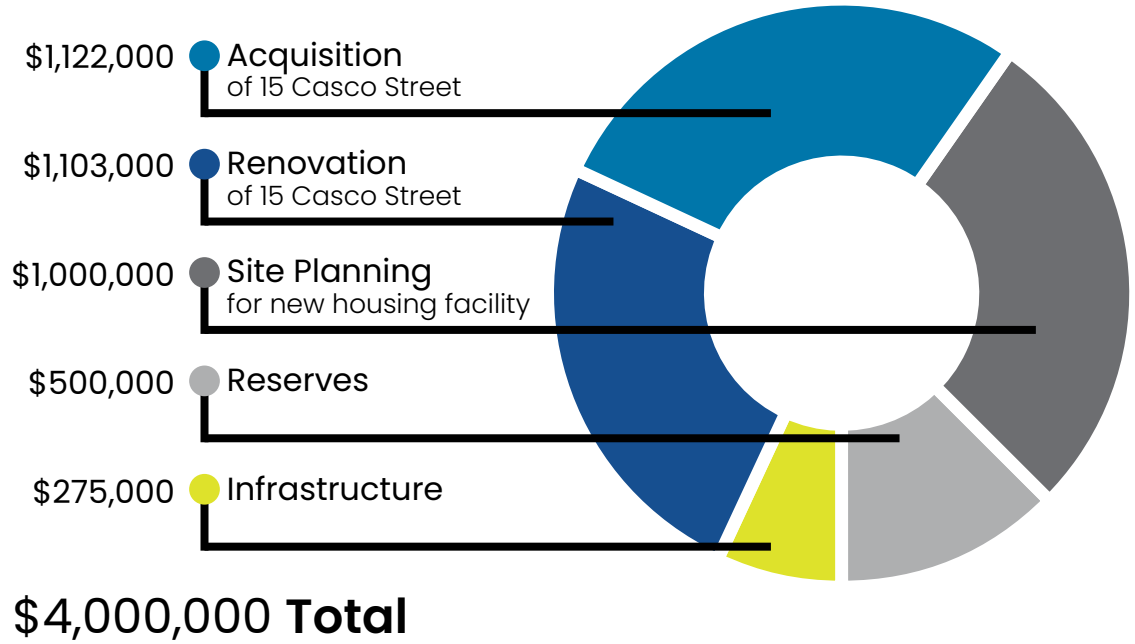
what the power of the ECC can do for others.

To volunteer in a bigger way and to help more people in need are the reasons why I picked the ECC for my philanthropy. With my donations I can reach a wider audience down the road and leave a legacy in time and place.

-Ed Gardner

Our Budget

The ECC is raising \$4 million to complete essential repairs and renovations required for occupancy and accessibility at 15 Casco Street and to begin site planning for the new housing facility.



Please Join Our Campaign

To bring this project to fruition, the ECC seeks generous support from individuals, businesses, corporations, and foundations. You've partnered with our community for a very long time. We've stood shoulder-to-shoulder and changed the state of Maine forever – both its laws and the hearts and minds of its people. We have an opportunity, through the Equality Community Center, to leave a legacy for the next generation and make a promise to future generations: Maine deserves and can have a place of belonging and renewal and synergy.

We hope you're inspired by our vision, and we invite you to join us as we build this shared future of equality together.

Request for Presentations and Meetings

To request an informational meeting, please contact Betsy Smith at betsy@eccmaine.org or call the ECC at 207-613-9633.

Board of Directors

Barb Wood, President; Retired Senior Operations Manager of Distribution/Return, L.L. Bean; 2020 Maine State House of Representatives

Matthew Dubois, Vice President, ECC Co-founder; Attorney, Vogel & Dubois

Imani Clark, Secretary; Director of Operations and Customer Service, Diversified Communications

Dale McCormick, Treasurer; former Maine State Treasurer; former Director of Maine State Housing Authority; former Maine State Senator (first out legislator in Maine); first President of MLGPA (precursor to EqualityMaine)

Fay Brodell; Accountant/owner, Bottom Line Strategies

Marpheen Chann; Community Impact Manager, Good Shepherd Food Bank; President, Cambodian Community Association of Maine; member, Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and Portland Planning Board Member

Ed Gardner, ECC Co-founder; Gardner Real Estate Group

Theo Greene; Assistant Professor of Sociology, Bowdoin College

Ophelia Hu Kinney; Director of Communications, Reconciling Ministries Network

Benn Marine, Director of Social and Environmental Impact at Dirigo Collective; host of Responsibly Different™ Podcast

Andy Serfes; Full-time student at SMCC studying liberal arts with a concentration in art

Betsy Smith, ECC Co-founder; Executive Director, Right Question Institute; former Executive Director, EqualityMaine

Carolyn Thomas; SVP, Chief Risk Officer, Norway Savings Bank

Rich Waitzkin, ECC Co-founder; social worker and long-time educator and community advocate

Staff

Christopher O'Connor, Manager
Kirsten Griffith, Administrator/Program Coordinator

For those who have gone before us, for ourselves,
and for those who will come after us.

The Equality Community Center in Portland, Maine is the first of its kind in our area. The ECC houses LGBTQ+ and allied justice-seeking organizations together under one roof. It's an incubator for ideas and creativity, for bold dreams and coffee-cup conversations, a seedbed for connections, coalitions, and camaraderie – all made possible when we unite different cultural and social organizations.

The ECC is purposefully multicultural, accessible, and welcoming. It exists to serve those seeking resources, community, and a collaborative and inclusive spirit. It's a sense of place and pride, a grounding place for all, and a space for our communities to flourish.



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P.O. Box 3587, Portland, ME 04104
15 Casco Street, Portland
207-613-9633 | eccmaine.org