Historic Preservation Board

Wednesday, July 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM
Room 24 (Ground Level of City Hall) and Zoom

MEMBERS
Brad Miller, Chair
Valerie Paquin-Gould, Vice Chair
Hilary Bassett
Kip DeSerres
Michael Hutchins
Rob Whitten

HYBRID PARTICIPATION:
The Historic Preservation Board invites the public to attend the meeting in person or Zoom pursuant to the Remote Meeting Policy adopted by the Historic Preservation Board. Prior to the meeting, please check the Agenda Center https://portlandme.portal.civicclerk.com to view memos and reports which will be posted by the end of the day on the Friday before the Historic Preservation Board meeting.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION
Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend either in person or via Zoom, a recording will be available in the Agenda Center following the meeting.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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+1 305 224 1968 US
+1 253 205 0468 US
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
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+1 386 347 5053 US
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+1 564 217 2000 US
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+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
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Webinar ID: 883 5314 3296
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PUBLIC COMMENT INFORMATION:

To submit written public comment on an agenda item, email hp@portlandmaine.gov. Submissions must be received by 12:00 pm **the day before** the Historic Preservation Board meeting to guarantee their inclusion in the agenda packet. All submissions must include the commenter's name and legal address. To help ensure your comment is submitted for the correct item, please include the name of the agenda item (see below).

Please note that the placement of each item on the agenda is subject to change. Please check the Agenda Center prior to the meeting for the item start time.

AGENDA:

1. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

2. REPORT OF ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING HELD ON JULY 1, 2026

i. Communications

Victoria Mansion, Preservation Trades Training Program. Hutchins, Miller, Paquin-Gould, and Whitten present. Bassett & DeSerres absent.

Workshops

Review of New Construction; 57 St. Lawrence Street; St. Lawrence North, LLC & Fafnir Design & Development, Applicants. Plan Number: HP-00089-2026. Hutchins, Miller, Paquin-Gould, and Whitten present. Bassett & DeSerres absent.

3. REPORTS OF DECISIONS AT THE MEETING HELD ON JULY 1, 2026

i. None

4. COMMUNICATION AND REPORTS

i. None

5. PUBLIC HEARING

i. None

6. WORKSHOP

i. Review of Alterations; 522 Congress Street; Maine College of Art & Design, Applicants. Plan Number: HP-00092-2026.

STAFF MEMORANDUM
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

TO: Chair Miller and Members of the Historic Preservation Board
FROM: Evan R. Schueckler, Historic Preservation Program Manager
DATE: July 8, 2026
RE: 522 Congress – FIRST WORKSHOP – Alterations
PROJECT ID: HP-00092-2026
MEETING: July 15, 2026

Owner: Beth Elicker, Maine College of Art & Design
Architect: Virginie Stanley, Invivid Architecture

A sign announcing the Historic Preservation Board's meeting on July 15, 2026 was posted at the property, and 39 notices were sent to neighboring property owners within 100 feet of the subject property.

PROJECT SCOPE

Redesign first floor storefront along Congress Street.

Material Specifications:

Foundation	NA
Siding	Not specified
Trim	Not specified
Roofing	NA
Windows	Not specified
Doors	Not specified

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

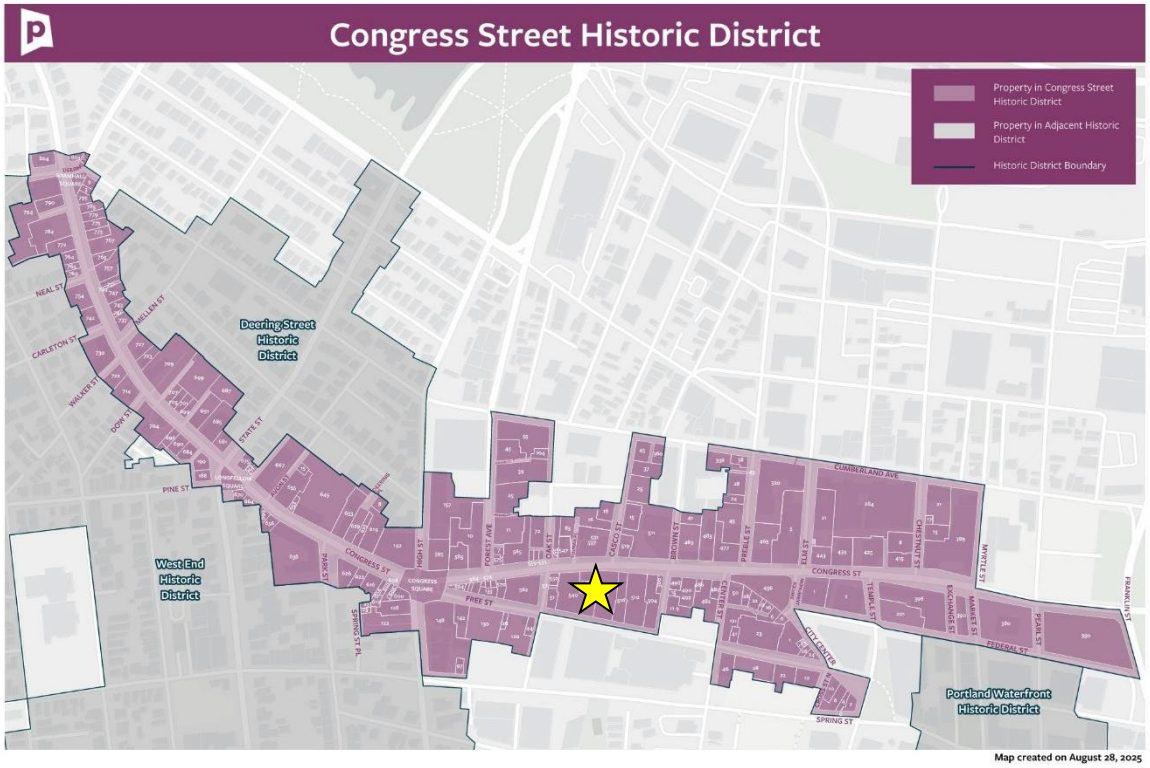


Figure 1: Map of Congress Street Historic District showing location of 522 Congress Street with a star.

The building located at 522 Congress Street is a Landmark located within the Congress Street Historic District. The eastern three bays were constructed in 1904 as the Miller Building, originally housing The Boston Store, an early department store. The building and business were purchased by Porteous, Mitchell & Braun in 1906. In 1911, the new owners expanded the building by constructing the western three bays, which are slightly narrower than the original bays. The building was further expanded in 1947, when the rear of the building was extended through to Free Street. The original storefront featured a simple classical design that complemented the architecture of the building's upper floors. The storefront featured substantial classical piers aligned with the building's bays, supporting a thick first-floor entablature. The spaces between the piers were filled with slightly recessed display windows topped by large prismatic glass transoms, similar to the upper stories. The two building entrances were more substantially recessed and featured additional ornamentation.

Sometime between 1942 and 1946 the first-floor storefront along Congress Street was heavily redesigned. The piers and entablature were eliminated and replaced by a continuous surface of polished red granite with large flush brass display windows and recessed building entries. The design also featured a cantilevered canopy that ran the full length of the building frontage. The canopy was relatively narrow, with curved corners and a ribbed metal edge (presumably brass or chrome) lending a Streamline Moderne character to the redesigned storefront. The canopy edge was topped with a sign made of free-standing letters, also typical of Streamline designs.

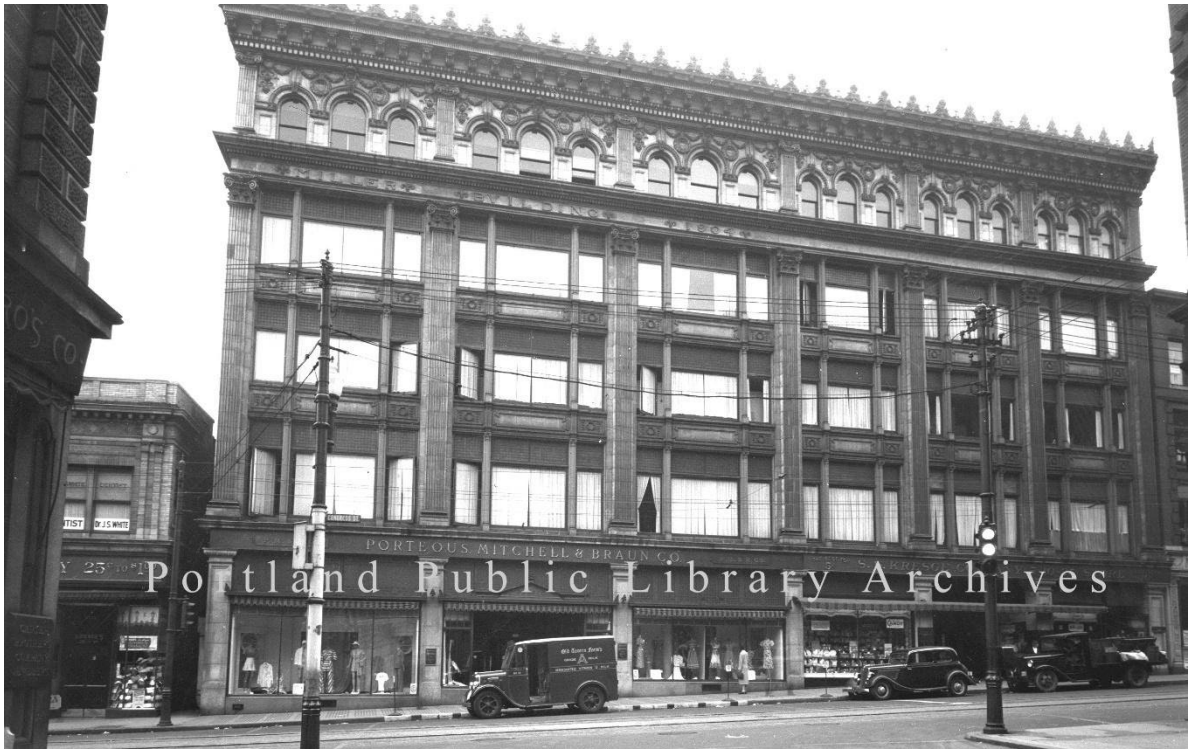


Figure 2: The Porteous, Mitchell & Braun Department Building (522 Congress) in 1938 with its original storefront design. (Courtesy of the Portland Public Library)



Figure 3: 522 Congress in 1942 with the original storefront design still present. (Courtesy of the Portland Public Library)

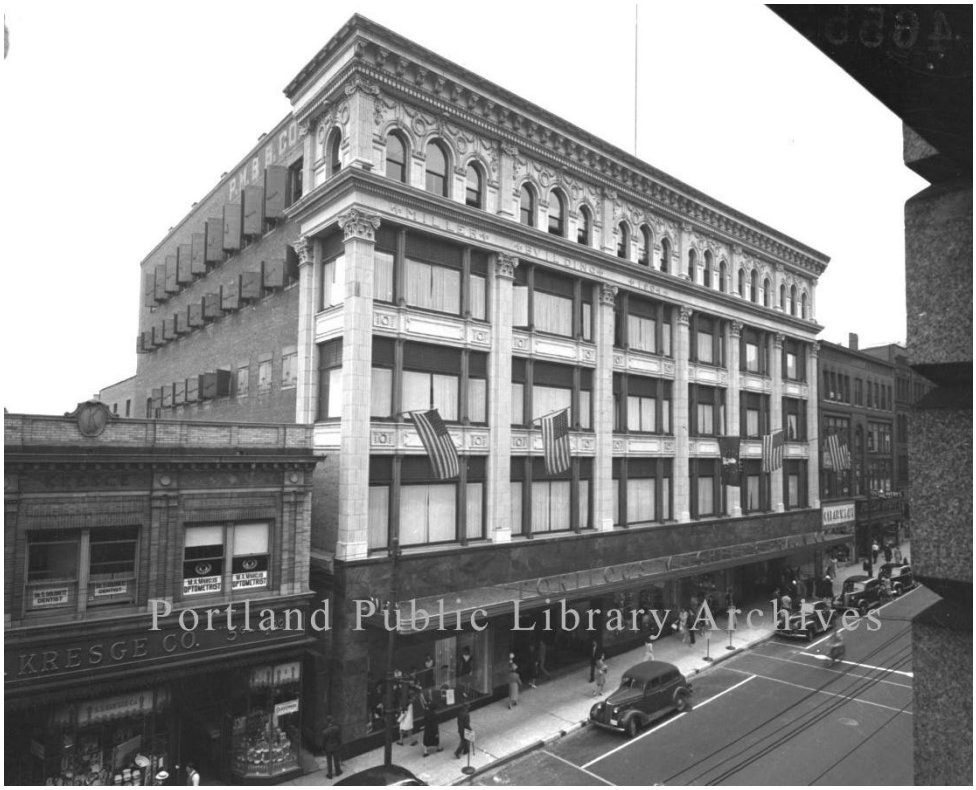


Figure 4: 522 Congress in 1946 with the redesigned first floor storefront. (*Courtesy of the Portland Public Library*)

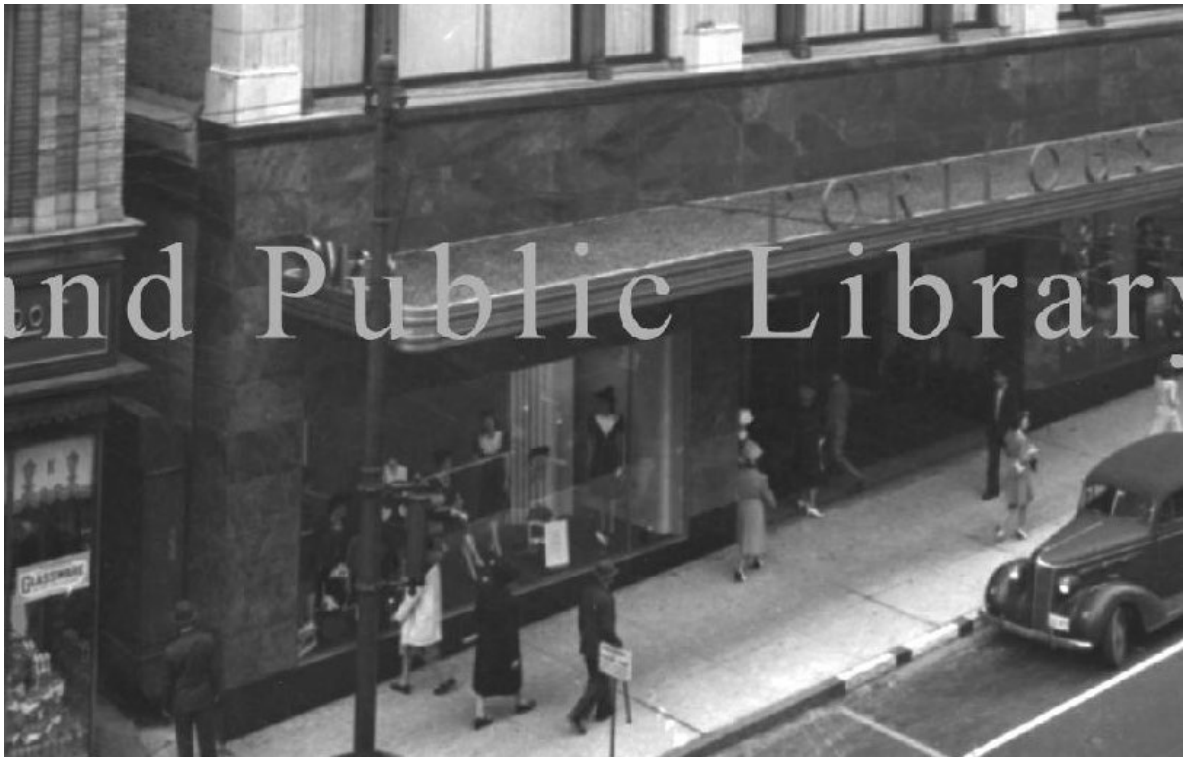


Figure 5: Detail of 522 Congress in 1946. (*Courtesy of the Portland Public Library*)



Figure 6: 522 Congress in 1970, showing the altered canopy. (Courtesy of the Portland Public Library)

Sometime between 1946 and 1970, the building's canopy was significantly altered. Its corners were squared off, the canopy was made thicker, and illuminated signage was applied to its face. As part of this redesign, metal paneling was also extended over the polished red granite above the canopy. Today, the canopy largely retains this altered appearance, though signage has been updated for MECA&D.

Additional information on the Congress Street Historic District can be found on the city website: https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1548/Historic-Designations

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STAFF COMMENTS

The applicant is proposing to remove the existing 1940s granite storefront and later altered canopy from the first floor of the Porteous, Mitchell, & Braun Building. The applicant is proposing to install a new storefront designed to much more closely resemble the original storefront, which would include heavy classical piers with an entablature, and large glazed openings below multi-lite transoms. The applicant is also proposing to incorporate a new, smaller, canopy over the primary building entrance. This program of alterations is proposed to bring back the original appearance of the building, while bringing more light to the sidewalk in front of the building and improving the

visibility of this landmark. The applicant has included a preliminary rendering of this proposed redesign.

While the applicant's proposal is to redesign the first-floor storefront, the plans and details provided are preliminary for this workshop, as the Board needs to address the threshold question of the significance of the existing storefront. The 1940s storefront was designed with a Streamline Moderne aesthetic, as best embodied in the details of the canopy. While quite different in character from the upper stories of the building, the altered storefront comes from the midcentury period of Congress Street's history and may speak to the architectural and aesthetic sensibilities of that time. The period of significance for the Congress Street Historic District is generally prior to 1959 (fifty years prior to the district's designation in 2009).

The Board should consider whether this later storefront design and canopy are character-defining elements of the Porteous, Mitchell, & Braun building and/or contribute to the character of the Congress Street Historic District as a whole. Part of the significance of the district relates to the evolution of Portland's "Main Street" from a residential area to a commercial corridor that continued to evolve across almost 200 years of history.

While the storefront and canopy date from the 1940s, it must also be acknowledged that the canopy was significantly altered sometime prior to 1970, eroding much of its Streamline Moderne character. However, the polished red granite and windows remain largely intact.

If the Board finds that the existing storefront is a significant feature, staff would recommend that members engage in a discussion with the applicant about their goals for the project so as to offer guidance on how the existing conditions might be rehabilitated to best meet those goals. Alternatively, if the Board finds that the 1940s storefront is not a character-defining feature, then staff would recommend that the Board begin a preliminary review of the proposed new storefront and identify any additional information the applicant should provide for future reviews.

ANALYSIS OF APPLICABLE REVIEW STANDARDS

Subsection 16.6.3 - Standards for review of alterations to contributing properties:

Standard A. Compatible use	
When the use of a property is being changed, every reasonable effort shall be made to minimize the alteration of the character-defining features of the building, structure, object, or site.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
Not Applicable	The use of the building is not proposed to be changed.

Standard B. Retain historic features	
The distinguishing original qualities or character of the building, structure, object, or site shall be retained and preserved. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider whether the altered canopy and 1940s storefront are distinctive architectural features of the building.

Standard C. Historical accuracy	
The building, structure, object, or site shall be recognized as a product of its own time, place, and use. Alterations that have no historical basis or create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other properties, shall not be undertaken.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider whether removing the 1940s storefront and replacing it with a new storefront designed to closely reflect the original appearance would create a false sense of historical development, particularly if the new storefront could be perceived as original historic fabric.

Standard D. Acquired significance	
Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of the building, structure, object, or site. Changes that have acquired significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider whether the 1940s storefront and canopy are later alterations which have attained significance and should therefore be retained and preserved.

Standard E. Distinctive features	
Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize the building, structure, object, or site shall be retained and preserved.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider whether the 1940s storefront and canopy are distinctive features of the building.

Standard F. Repair rather than replace	
Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever feasible. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the feature being replaced in composition, design, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Repair or replacement of missing historic features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	Depending on whether the Board finds the 1940s storefront and canopy to be character-defining features, the Board may need to consider the degrees of removal and replacement of material proposed. If the Board finds the altered storefront and canopy not to be significant, it should consider the proposed design of the new storefront and the degree to which its design is based on historical evidence.

Standard G. Surface cleaning	
The surface cleaning of the building, structure, or object, if appropriate, shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be undertaken.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
Not Applicable	No surface cleaning is proposed as part of this project.

Standard H. Archaeological resources	
Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve significant archaeological resources affected by or adjacent to any project. If resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
Not Applicable	No subterranean work is proposed and there are no identified archaeological resources for this site.

Standard I. Differentiation and contemporary design	
Alterations and additions shall not destroy the character-defining features of the building, structure, object, or site. New work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the building, structure, object, or site. Contemporary design for alterations and additions shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant materials or features that characterize the building, structure, object, or site.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider whether the proposed contemporary work and design features are sufficiently differentiated from, yet compatible with the historic building.

Standard J. Reversibility	
Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to the building, structure, object, or site shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building, structure, object, or site would be unimpaired.	
Standard Met?	Staff Comments
For Board Discussion	The Board should consider the reversibility of any of the work proposed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Cover Letter
2. Historic Photos
3. 2026 Temporary Granite Removal Photos
4. Proposed Exterior Rendering

Portland Historic Preservation Board
389 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101

Re: 522 Congress Street – Maine College of Art & Design (MECA+D)
Request for Approval of Façade Restoration and Canopy Removal

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Board:

On behalf of Maine College of Art & Design (MECA+D), we are pleased to submit this application for exterior improvements to the historic Porteous, Mitchell & Braun Building located at 522 Congress Street in Portland's Arts District.

The proposed project seeks to restore the building's historic architectural character by removing later alterations that obscure the original design and returning the façade closer to its appearance when the building was completed in 1904. Specifically, the project proposes the removal of the existing full-length sidewalk canopy and polished granite storefront cladding, replacement of the canopy with a smaller canopy located only at the primary entrance, restoration of the façade's original vertical expression at the street level, and removal of unused storefront entrances.

The accompanying materials include historic photographs documenting the original building, photographs showing the later 1940s alterations, documentation of exploratory demolition behind the granite cladding, and renderings illustrating the proposed restoration.

History of the Building

Constructed in 1904 and expanded in 1911for Porteous, Mitchell & Braun, one of Portland's most prominent department stores, the building remains one of the city's finest examples of early twentieth-century commercial architecture. The façade is distinguished by its richly ornamented upper stories, strong vertical piers, generous display windows, and elegant classical detailing.

Historic photographs show a building whose architectural composition extended seamlessly from the sidewalk to the ornate cornice above. The vertical columns rose directly from the street, reinforcing the building's height and rhythm while creating a strong visual connection between pedestrians and the architecture.

During the 1940s, the first floor was substantially modernized. A polished granite storefront system and a continuous sidewalk canopy were added across the length of the façade. Historic photographs indicate that the original 1940s canopy was relatively thin and streamlined in character. Over subsequent decades, however, the canopy was modified and enlarged, resulting in the heavier structure that exists today.

As noted by City staff, the question before the Board is not simply whether the 1940s alterations should be preserved, but whether the existing canopy and storefront retain sufficient historic integrity to warrant preservation over restoration of the building's original architectural design.

Integrity of the Existing Alterations

During the design process, MECA+D explored whether the granite cladding concealed intact portions of the original storefront system. Selective demolition was undertaken to investigate the conditions behind the granite. The demolition revealed that little, if any, of the original storefront architecture remains. Instead, the granite conceals heavily altered masonry and infill construction rather than intact historic features.

Likewise, the existing canopy no longer reflects the appearance of the original 1940s alteration. Historic photographs demonstrate that the canopy has been substantially modified over time and no longer possesses the light, streamlined character of the original mid-century design. As a result, the current condition does not accurately represent either the original 1904 building or the 1940s modernization.

We believe this loss of integrity supports restoration of the façade closer to its original appearance and architectural intent.

Restoration of the Original Architectural Character

The proposed design restores the prominence of the original façade and allows the architecture to once again be experienced as it was intended.

Today, the full-length canopy obscures much of the building's first-floor architecture and limits views of the façade from the sidewalk directly in front of the building. Pedestrians walking along Congress Street often cannot fully appreciate the scale, craftsmanship, and beauty of the historic façade without crossing to the opposite side of the street.

Removing the canopy and restoring the visual continuity of the vertical columns will reestablish the building's original proportions and reveal architectural features that have been hidden for decades. The proposed smaller canopy at the primary entrance will continue to provide weather protection while allowing the building itself, not the canopy, to define the streetscape.

The project also restores a more coherent relationship between the first floor and the upper stories, reinforcing the original architectural composition that made the Porteous, Mitchell & Braun Building one of Portland's landmark commercial buildings.

Supporting the Mission of Maine College of Art & Design

As the home of Maine College of Art & Design, the building serves students, faculty, visitors, prospective students, and members of the public throughout the year. The college seeks to create a welcoming and dignified public entrance that reflects the quality of the institution and the significance of the historic building it occupies.

The existing canopy creates a deep, sheltered area along the sidewalk that has become a frequent gathering and sleeping area. While MECA+D is committed to being a positive member of the downtown community, the conditions created by the canopy have resulted in ongoing operational and security challenges. The area beneath the canopy is difficult to monitor and maintain, and it often creates an unwelcoming first impression for prospective students and their families.

As a result, the college frequently introduces prospective students and visitors through the entrance at the rear of the building rather than through its primary Congress Street façade. This practice is not driven primarily by confusion regarding the location of the entrance, but rather by a desire to provide visitors with a positive introduction to the campus environment.

The proposed design addresses these concerns while preserving the building's historic character. A smaller canopy at the main entrance will clearly identify the primary point of entry while eliminating the extensive sheltered area created by the existing canopy. The result will be a more welcoming, visible, and active street frontage that better supports both the college and the public realm.

Conclusion

The proposed project represents a thoughtful restoration of one of Portland's most important commercial buildings. By removing later alterations that no longer retain strong historic integrity and by restoring the façade closer to its original appearance, the project reveals the architectural significance of the Porteous, Mitchell & Braun Building while supporting the continued success of Maine College of Art & Design.

The proposal will allow the building's historic architecture to once again be appreciated from the sidewalk, improve the experience of students and visitors, create a more dignified and welcoming entrance, and strengthen the relationship between this landmark building and Congress Street.

We respectfully request the Board's approval of the proposed design direction.

Sincerely,
Ginny

Virginie Stanley, AIA, Principal
INVIVID ARCHITECTURE
631 Stevens Avenue, Suite 200
Portland, Maine 04103

Undated (Pre-1911)



www.mainememory.net/item/11160
Collections of Maine Historical Society





1938
https://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/pphnegs_images_business/2/

Undated (Pre-1936)



RTEOUS. MITCHELL & BRAUN BUILDING. PORTLAND, ME.

MaineMemory.Net #20321
Collections of Maine Historical Society

1946
https://www.mainememory.net/record/20321/image/20321



1946
https://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/pphnegs_images_business/296/



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1946
https://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/pphnegs_images_business/297/



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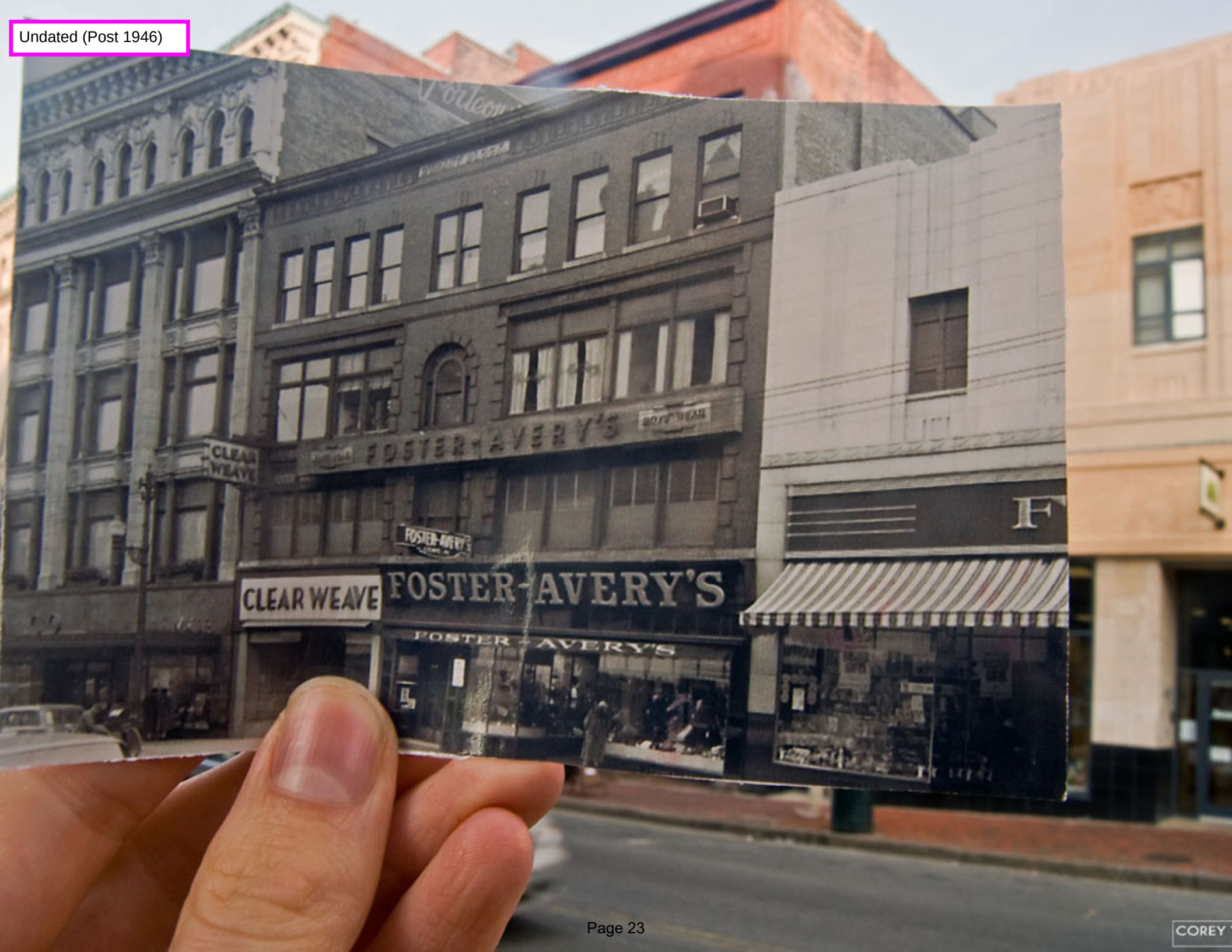
1946
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Portland Public Library Archives

Undated (Post 1946)



Undated (Post 1946)




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architecture
invivid