

Mapping LGBTQ+ Portland

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This research project centers around LGBTQ+ people and how they create community using “LGBTQ+ places” in and around Portland, Maine. Historically, gay men have retreated to public places to seek out other gay men and to create community in private—away from the stigma, discrimination, and policing that awaited them in and near their homes. These LGBTQ+ places thus facilitated (and continue to facilitate) the exploration, development, and reaffirmation of a frequenter’s queer identity. In our project, we aim to track the transformation of LGBTQ+ places in Portland as it relates to social and political change from the beginning of the AIDS crisis onwards. We hope to discover how these changes affect LGBTQ+ people’s relationship with identity, sense of self, and belonging in Portland. How do LGBTQ+ people conceptualize LGBTQ+ place, and how do their interactions with LGBTQ+ place help build an LGBTQ+ community in Portland? To answer these questions, we created an online survey using Qualtrics. We ask respondents to identify LGBTQ+ places on a prepopulated map of LGBTQ+ places in Portland and then share what they remember about these or other places. I designed a prepopulated map of LGBTQ+ places in Portland, past and present, for inclusion in the survey instrument using Google Maps. Additionally, I compiled an application to submit for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval consisting of a protocol description, survey instrument, interview protocol, and outreach text. Data collection is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2021 as part of an intermediate independent study with archival research and interview data collection following soon thereafter. Ultimately, we aim to create a walking tour of historical and contemporary LGBTQ+ Portland, accessible to the public, that reflects the richness and complexity of LGBTQ+ life in Maine and in general.

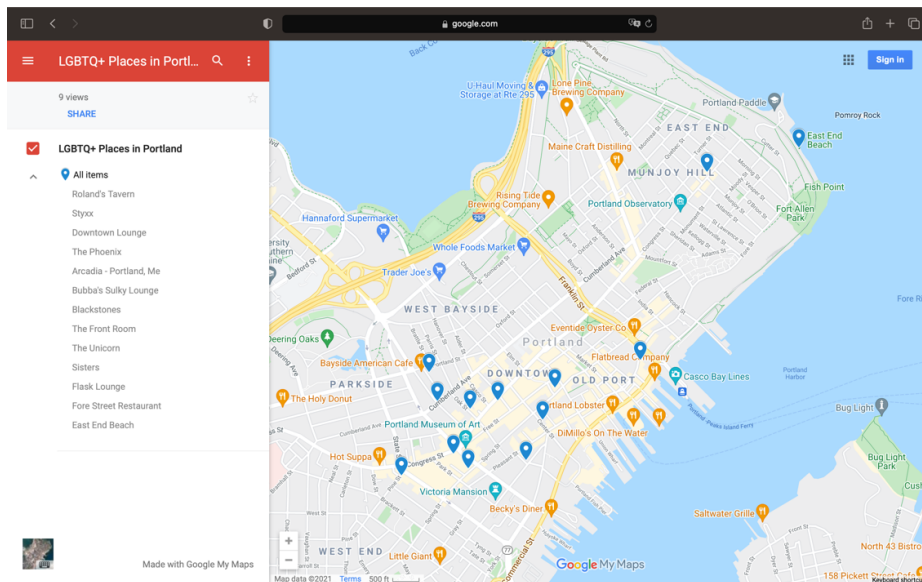


Figure 1. A prepopulated map of historical and contemporary LGBTQ+ places in Portland, Maine. Survey respondents pinpoint LGBTQ+ places on a map much like this one, then describe the place and its significance to them.

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