

About the Business

The Washington Baths will be a sauna and hydrotherapy business located at 143 Washington Avenue in Portland. A two story building will be built on the site consisting of 4,818 sq ft of commercial space to house the business on the first floor, and a single 1,113 sq ft residence on the second floor.

The business will be modeled off of public bathhouses and saunas found in cities in the US and around the world, whereby visitors pay for use of sauna and hydrotherapy facilities for a duration of time and they largely self-serve to create their own experience. The basic elements of a public bath are heat, cold, rest, and sociability.

The program offerings at The Washington Baths will include showers, two wood-fired saunas, resting areas in the interior of the building, resting benches within an open air courtyard, a large, heated soaking tub in the courtyard, a cold plunge in the courtyard, and an interior lounge with a small food service. Modest locker rooms will be provided for men and women. There will also be a small retail footprint. The design will be energy efficient, practical and unfussy with an emphasis on natural materials that relate to Maine and especially the state's timber industry. During non-sauna hours, the interior lounge space will be utilized for drop-in meditation sessions, as well as workshops, lectures, and other cultural events.

About the Customers

Sauna culture is most established in places where it is cold and dark for a considerable portion of the year. Maine has cold, dark winters, but no public sauna culture, yet. Portland is the urban and cultural center of Maine. People in Portland are already familiar with saunas, and they have responded enthusiastically to the suggestion of a public bath in town.

Patrons of this business will draw first and foremost from southern Maine. Portland ME's urbanized area has 204k residents. Based on demographic criteria, 2.8k of these residents are prospective high frequency customers for The Baths. The most common psychographic segments in the Portland area show an affinity towards health, wellness, and recreation, suggesting an openness to spa activities. Wellness in this area has become culturally common; engaging in a regular sauna routine is a complementary practice that integrates into maintaining an optimally healthy lifestyle.

Currently there is no option for a true communal bathing experience in Portland. This makes overall competitive risk for The Washington Avenue Baths very low. There are no spas or bathhouses that offer a similar experience and very few spas that offer substitute experiences in the market. The Baths are intended to be affordable and accessible so that they can become a part of people's everyday life, as opposed to a speciality retreat.