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## Restoring history for future use

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PORTLAND, Mich. — What was once a hub for community members to gather for various activities and live events more than 100 years ago, now sits vacant.

The Portland Opera House, located at 136 Kent St., was constructed in 1880, almost a decade before Portland was incorporated as a village.

To hear from community members, the Portland Main Street Economic Revitalization Committee is hosting an Opera House Community Meeting, where residents will have a chance to learn about the historic building, and give input on what they would like to see happen with the building in the future.

“It will be a meeting to show what it was, discussion on what it could be and just open it up to any community (members),” said Portland Main Street Manager and Portland Downtown Development Authority Patrick Reagan. “It’s not just Portland; we have met with people who have been very passionate about the restoration of the Opera House, and they are not just from Portland.”

Between 1880 and 1920, the Opera House was used as a venue for live performances of plays, operas, comedy acts and traveling musical production. It was also used for community events and films.

“It could be used for a number of things: An opera house, venue for live entertainment, community space, a museum,” said Reagan. “That is one of the things we are looking forward to hearing from the people. Maybe someone has a great idea (that we have not thought of yet).”

This is the beginning of the project, and Reagan explained that it will not be a quick fix.

“It’s not going to stop here, and it’s going to be a long process,” said Reagan. “We are going to be looking for people to actively take a part in this process.”

The meeting will start at 10 a.m. Saturday at 136 Kent St. The meeting will open with a presentation on the Opera House, case studies on similar community opera houses, and the meeting will conclude with a tour of the Opera House.

For more information, call 517-647-5027.

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