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From The DIRECTORS DESK - Something Is Happening in Portland

Have you ever had that feeling that you're on the precipice of a big change for the better? Something you've been waiting for. Something that's been a long time coming. You can't quite put your finger on the exact moment it changed—but suddenly, things feel different.

Things are humming in Portland. And the catalyst has been lit. It didn't happen because of one project, one event, or one organization. It has been building through conversations, investments, ideas, partnerships—and, most importantly, people deciding that it's worth their time to do something.

It started, in many ways, with last fall's stakeholder survey. Those conversations led to three extremely well-attended presentations during the first few months of 2026. **Those presentations became Positively Portland**—our monthly gatherings designed to keep the conversation going, bring people together, share information, solve problems, and create opportunities to work together. And that has become one of the things we can all be most excited about.

Because momentum isn't created by a single big announcement. It's created when people start showing up. And people are showing up. They're bringing ideas. They're opening businesses. They're volunteering. They're partnering. They're asking questions. They're making investments. **They're improving buildings. 9 Facades this year - unheard of!!** 5 are restorations, 4 are receiving investments from DDA.

The **Youth Makers Market** became a thing this summer, that looks promising to continue in the off season with a few of our businesses.

42 of 45 downtown buildings, including City Hall, will be lit for the deLIGHTfully Portland synchronized music to light show with huge improvements this year. **Did you know we're already the nation's 2nd largest display of this kind in a historic downtown?**

All this and more, the people coming together, are part of our community moving forward. The **Social District** is moving along, and will be working through legal over the next month or so.

We're planning a new signature festival for the 3rd Saturday in May, the goal is to build something that gives people a reason to come specifically to Portland - something they can get now where else - not simply another community event. Please be ready to support and help with **Once Upon Two Rivers!**

Right now, talking about what is happening in Portland—and why - we're beginning to see the results of all those conversations, investments, and efforts come together.

The candle has been lit. Now, it's everyone's job to keep the momentum going. Reach out, connect, be a part of all the great things to come for Portland! This is your story, make it a good one.



Contact Us: 517-647-5027

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**Featured Business - GRAND BARBER LOUNGE****Submitted by: Kurt Fedewa**

More Than a Haircut... There's something special about a place where people come in for a haircut and leave feeling a little better than when they arrived.

That's the atmosphere Michelle Hodge has created at Grand Barber Lounge, where a good haircut is only part of what keeps customers coming back. For 35 years, Michelle has been behind the chair, building relationships with generations of customers and creating a welcoming place where everyone—from the youngest family member to the oldest—is treated like a regular.

Grand Barber Lounge is a walk-in, dual-licensed facility offering both barbering and cosmetology services. Michelle is joined by Samantha and Melissa, and together they offer an impressive range of services, including haircuts, beard trims, waxing, highlights, balayage and hair coloring. "Every day we're doing something different," Michelle said. "A single stylist can have someone getting their hair colored while another customer is getting a haircut, and then she might do an updo for someone heading to a wedding. Between the three of us, we're able to offer a little bit of everything, which is one of the things that makes our shop so much fun."

That versatility has helped Grand Barber Lounge attract customers from well beyond Portland. People make the trip from Pewamo, Westphalia and even the Lansing area—drawn by the quality of the work, reasonable prices and, perhaps most importantly, the experience. Because at Grand Barber Lounge, conversation is part of the service. "I've always enjoyed serving people," Michelle said. "Some people need a listening ear while they get their haircut, and we provide that. Other people like to catch up on local news. Talking to people is a big part of our job, and it's one of the things that I enjoy the most."

That genuine connection extends beyond the shop, too. Michelle and her staff regularly take their services on the road, visiting shut-ins and nursing homes to provide hair services for people who aren't physically able to make it into the shop. "If someone cannot physically come here, then we go to them," Michelle said. It's that simple philosophy—serve people, make them feel welcome and do good work—that has helped Grand Barber Lounge become part of the fabric of the community.

And Michelle clearly loves what she does. "Every day is different," she said. "The people we serve are friendly. They leave the shop with a smile on their face. It all makes for an enjoyable experience and a positive environment in which to work." After 35 years, that enthusiasm is still evident. For Michelle, Samantha and Melissa, Grand Barber Lounge isn't simply a place to get your hair done. It's a place to catch up, have a conversation, feel cared for—and, of course, walk out looking your best.

Michelle's message to the customers who have supported her along the way is simple: "I appreciate their kindness and generosity. Without them, we wouldn't be here."

Grand Barber Lounge—come for the haircut, stay for the conversation, and leave with a smile.

318 Kent Street (517) 647-2699 Salon services available by appointment

Walk-In Hours: Monday–Thursday: 9 a.m.–7 p.m. / Friday: 9 a.m.–6 p.m. / Saturday: 8 a.m.–12 p.m



What's Going On Around Here? MiPortland.org
For Dates, Times, Locations, and What to Expect



Sign Up by 10/18 for inclusion in all promotions!



**MiPortland.org/
HolidayFest**

How will YOUR Business be showcased this holiday season?