

June 3, 2020

Dear City Planning Commission,

I am pleased to be writing this letter in support for the continued funding of the *Hear, Here* program. I write this letter as a proud UWL graduate and La Crosse community member who participated in Ariel Beaujot's original class that implemented the *Hear, Here* project back in 2015 while I was in the spring semester of my senior year. I know many of the other letters you will receive and read will be from our outstanding community partners who also see the value in the project, however, I thought it was also important that you hear how important this project is from the perspective of the student and individual community member.

Hear, Here has had a profound impact on our community and many individuals including myself. The project gives a voice to our city that may have otherwise gone unheard. Many times history lives in a museum or the archives of our libraries which are phenomenal resources, and resources that we use often during the creation of *Hear, Here* stories – however, The *Hear, Here* project brings the voices of our history to life out in the public and takes pride in trying to make our history accessible to everyone. It gives the people a chance to listen to the stories of their neighbors as well as to tell their own stories that may otherwise have not been recorded. The project has also made sure to try and capture the stories of minority groups or those who have been underrepresented in the past – given the events of the past week we can see that this is especially important to continue right now.

From a student perspective, The *Hear, Here* project is truly remarkable. More often than not, students are given a hypothetical situation or a proposal for a final grade for classes, but this project brings real-life experience to the students. The class itself taught important skills and provided a critical opportunity for the community and the university to connect. I have met many important members of our community while working on the project and found that this truly is a collaborative effort between so many people of different backgrounds which makes it very unique. I know for myself, being a part of this project has made me feel invested in the community and want to stay and give back long-term. In fact, working on this project made such a huge impression on me, I have continued to stay on as a volunteer after graduation working with Ariel on the *Hear, Here* website and with other classes of students who are eager to be a part of something bigger. Continuing to fund this project would allow more students and community members to have the opportunity to be involved in this collaborative effort and have an even bigger positive impact on community members, visitors, and the city as a whole.

I strongly believe that continuing the funding for the *Hear, Here* project will continue to foster positive growth in many aspects of our community. I am grateful that the City Planning Commission is considering this request and hope that that support will be continued for this wonderful project.

Sincerely,



Hannah Siech
Webmaster for *Hear, Here*