



April 8, 2014

La Crosse Community Foundation
401 Main Street, Suite 205
La Crosse, WI 54601

RE: Hear, Hear: Voices of Downtown La Crosse application

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Heritage Preservation Commission I am writing in support of the Hear, Hear: Voices of Downtown La Crosse application. This project is an exciting way to be proactive in collecting oral histories in La Crosse. Preservationists tend to be more reactive to historic preservation, collecting or researching history as it becomes endangered or threatened. This project allows for the collection of history now through stories and experiences told by pedestrians and visitors. While historians use traditional documents to reconstruct the past, everyday people fall through the cracks in the written record. This project is an amazing opportunity to document their stories, their histories, and preserve and share them for years to come.

The proposed location for this project is also in a perfect place to be successful. La Crosse's Downtown is rich in history, drawing tens of thousands of people a year to the various festivals, shops and restaurants so the opportunity in this area for diverse stories to be told and collected is immense. The Downtown is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the largest commercial historic district in Wisconsin. In addition there is tremendous support by the City, the County, the La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, local businesses, and various organizations to continue making the Downtown vibrant, active, and prosperous.

The Heritage Preservation Commission fully supports this project and is willing to assist the applicant in any way possible to make this project a success. History, after all, is all about the human experience. Through this project people can share their experiences and make them tremendously rewarding for everybody.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 789-7512.

Sincerely,

Timothy Acklin
Heritage Preservation Planner

Barbara Kooiman- Chair Terence Collins- Vice Chair
Wayne Olson Charles Clemence Chris Kahlow
Ryan Cornett- Council Member
David Krump- Council Member



Tim Kabat
Mayor
City of La Crosse

April 7, 2014

La Crosse Community Foundation
401 Main Street, Suite 205
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Selection Committee,

As Mayor of the City of La Crosse, I am writing this letter in support of funding under the La Crosse Community Foundation's Small Grant for the *Hear, Here: Voices of Downtown La Crosse* project.

Hear, Here is a location-based mobile phone documentary project about Downtown La Crosse. The project will enhance all of the current efforts toward making Downtown La Crosse an arts and cultural destination. As La Crosse is the center of the Coulee Region, the benefits of the project are numerous, including allowing listeners to hear about the stories of Downtown as well as providing the opportunity for listeners to leave their own story for others. These stories and the opportunity to share will give voice to the neighborhood and tell the everyday stories that make up our City. Once heard, these stories can change the way people think about our City and the people who live, work, shop, and play here.

I strongly recommend funding the *Hear, Here: Voices of Downtown La Crosse* project.

If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tim Kabat
Mayor, City of La Crosse



La Crosse Community Foundation
401 Main Street, Ste. 205
La Crosse, WI 54601

April 10, 2014

Dear Wisconsin Humanities Council Major Grant Committee,

As the Executive Director of Downtown Main Street, Inc. (DMI), a non-profit business group focused on the continued revitalization of Historic Downtown La Crosse, I am thrilled to partner with Ariel Beaujot and the Public and Policy History Program on *Hear, Here*. One of our major goals identified in the "City Vision 2020 Master Plan" is to continue improvements in the historic core, and this is where I see the *Hear, Here* fitting into our overall vision for downtown. *Hear, Here* would bring history into the core; and not just any history, but the forgotten stories about spaces in downtown. I think that this project will bring up important memories that have been hidden because of the more traditional stories we tell about the city—stories about our founding, and the development of the city by entrepreneurs and architects. This project helps to acknowledge the importance of the downtown to the average citizens of La Crosse, people who are absent from the historic record. I also appreciate the idea of locating diverse voices for this project. It seems particularly important to reassert our Hmong and Native American history into a space where their presence has been well documented but is lacking in any official city-sponsored public history project. As is identified in the grant, we have various cultural institutions that surround the downtown core: two museums, an art center, a library and a theater. But there are no heritage institutions in the center of downtown. *Hear, Here* will help to correct this. Our hope is that the project will encourage people to enjoy the downtown in a way that integrates shopping, dining, culture and art for a unique experience in La Crosse.

Although we are a non-profit organization, DMI will support *Hear, Here* in many ways. We have agreed to provide space for Dr. Beaujot's classroom so that she might teach within the geographic local that she and her students are studying. We will help to distribute posters, postcards, and brochures. We will locate stories for the project by putting a call for stories in our bi-weekly e-newsletter. And we will include the *Hear, Here* website on our homepage. We have also invited representatives of *Hear, Here* to present the project to the community at the various DMI sponsored downtown events including The Spring Fling Open House, La Crosse Celebration of the Arts, Downtown Kraze Days, Historic Downtown Day. Furthermore I have personally invited Dr. Beaujot to present her project at various DMI committees, and for the City Vision Foundation which we hope will agree to fund the project in the longer term.

The downtown community is fully in support of the *Hear, Here* project. Many people have expressed an interest in sharing stories, and we are excited to see the project move forward successfully.


All the best,

Robin Moses
Executive Director



LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY
Books and a Whole Lot More

April 7, 2014

La Crosse Community Foundation
300 2nd Street North, #320
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Community Foundation Grant Reviewers:

As director of the La Crosse Public Library it is my pleasure to offer our cooperation with and support of the proposed project “*Here, Hear.*” As a department of the La Crosse Public Library, it is the mission of Archives to develop and promote a vital historical “connection” within the community between the past, the present and the future by collecting, maintaining, and providing and promoting access to the local historical record. More specifically, this fits into the library and archives’ goals as stated below:

- **Goal: Provide engaging learning/creating experiences**
 - Strategy: Highlight and promote Archival collections and resources with innovative programming
- **Goal: Become community anchors (library as place/destination)**
 - Strategy: Continue to find partners in the community who can help expand/promote our knowledge, collections or services
- **Goal: Provide access to knowledge (not just “stuff”)**
 - Strategy: Partner with others to offer more interpretative programming or co-sponsor other’s historical programming, particularly off-site

Past public history projects that the La Crosse Public Library Archives has participated in include: Wisconsin Public Television’s documentary *Wisconsin Hometown Stories – La Crosse* (2008), support for a local book *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin in the Twentieth Century: Reinventing La Crosse Again and Again* (2007), and research help for many others with local history information and projects.

As I understand it, much of the historical work done for this project will need to be researched and verified by our Senior Archivist Anita Doering, and that she and her staff will host engaging learning sessions with the students in Beaujot’s class to support them in doing this work. The students will be in very capable hands.

The public benefits of “*Here, Hear*” are to include a website and a strategy to more fully engage and connect the La Crosse community with its otherwise unseen and unheard past, hitting particularly a younger audience than normally attends historical lectures or traditional outlets of local history. We hope that as a result of this project that the number of visitors to the Archives Department will increase after the project’s completion, as people become so

Main Library
800 Main Street
La Crosse WI 54601

**North
Community Library**
1552 Kane Street
La Crosse WI 54603

**South
Community Library**
1307 South 16th Street
La Crosse WI 54601

(608) 789-7100

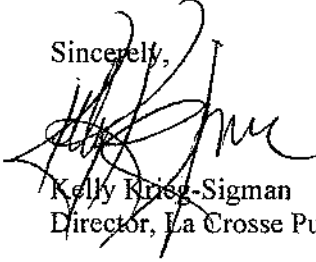
FAX (608) 789-7106

TTY (608) 789-7073

www.lacrosselibrary.org

engaged as to want to learn more about their community on their own or even deposit historical collections (papers, photographs, etc.) with the La Crosse Public Library Archives. We are particularly excited to know that underrepresented groups within our community will be targeted for inclusion in this project, as we struggle to have representation of these folks since their collective voice is often only spoken pieces.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Kries-Sigman', written over the typed name below.

Kelly Kries-Sigman
Director, La Crosse Public Library

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

April 7, 2014

La Crosse Community Foundation
401 Main Street, Ste. 205
La Crosse, WI 54601

I am writing in support of Dr. Ariel Beaujot's grant application, in partial support of her *Hear, Hear* project. Please add your support to mine.

I have known Dr. Ariel Beaujot for two years, ever since we hired her to the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Ariel joined our department to help teach in and create the new topical major of Public and Policy History. She came to us as a public historian with a number of large community-based projects on her record, all of which had strong humanities content and were very successful especially considering that she created them in conjunction with undergraduate students in her classes. Ariel has produced two museum exhibits. The first titled "If you can't stand the heat: The history of the kitchen," looked at the changing representations of family and domesticity throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as made evident through such objects as ice boxes, can openers, and Tupperware. A second exhibit, "Music to our ears" paid homage to the instruments that have brought us sound and the meanings they have carried for immigrants and aboriginals, women and men, middle and working class people. But the project that Ariel created that most closely resembles *Hear, Here* is one where she worked with study-abroad students to mount "Ballade Blanche, Ghost Walk" in Pontlevoy, France. Participating students used the local archives to research village history. In cooperation with a noted artist from the village, Ariel and the students created a nighttime historical tour that integrated history, music, costume, and dance at various sites around town. They even involved local children in the performance helping them to connect with the history of their community. Because of Ariel's previous work with communities in the area of public history and because of her ability to motivate undergraduate students to produce professional-level work I have no doubt that she will, with the help of the other humanities experts, be able to carry this project forward successfully.

As a long-time resident of La Crosse and a public historian myself I also think that there will be strong community interest and buy-in for this project. *Hear, Here* will draw on the untold history of La Crosse and bring it to the residents in spaces that they pass through every day. As executive director of the UW-La Crosse Oral History Program, I know that the people of La Crosse want to tell their stories and have them part of the public record. *Hear, Here* will draw partially on these extensive recordings, helping to bring stories told by the people of La Crosse into public spaces allowing them to be heard by more people. My work in oral history also leads me to believe that with the right amount of social media, print and radio advertising *Hear, Here* will draw many community members to participate by sharing their stories and listening to them.

The La Crosse community also has a long history of interest in our built environment, which is another focus of *Hear, Here*. The walking tours, "Footsteps of La Crosse: A journey through time and architecture," produced by the archives at the La Crosse Public Library, for example, are well attended throughout the spring, summer, and fall, and the historic trolley tour, run by the La Crosse County Historical Society throughout the summer and fall, has a strong architectural narrative. *Hear, Here* will

Department of History

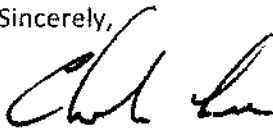
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse | 401 Wimberly Hall | 1725 State Street | La Crosse, WI 54601 USA
Phone: 608.785.8350 | Fax: 608.785.8370 | www.uwlax.edu/LS

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tie people's fascination with architecture and space to individual stories, giving people a new sense of the town in which they live. Furthermore *Hear, Here* fills a niche that the other projects do not: it will be available year round and does not require much time commitment on the part of users. People can choose to do a full tour, or they can access the story of a single location. There is no special time commitment, no fee, and it is very easy to access using a simple cell phone. Because of this I can see the project being used by a diverse cross-section of the community. Since the stories can be retrieved using any type of cellular device, the older, more-historically minded but perhaps not technically savvy, residents will be able to access the stories. But they are also available in a space that is highly frequented in the evenings by undergraduate students from the three colleges in town. The specialty shops tend to attract a middle-class civically-minded population that appreciates the ability to access culture and heritage projects in the midst of their busy days. And the downtown is also frequented by youth, semi-homed people and addictions counseling spaces. Since stories from all of these populations will be solicited and welcomed they will likely all interact with *Hear, Here* at some time. This is truly a democratic endeavor in terms of the types of stories solicited and the technology used and I think it will bring the hidden voices of our city to the forefront adding to the more traditional stories we tell about our city.

As the Chair of the Department of History I strongly support *Hear, Here* and the work being done by Dr. Beaujot. I have no doubt that, if granted this money, the project will be successfully launched and that it will engage community interest both in terms of generating stories for the project and producing an active audience.

Sincerely,



Charles Lee, Professor of History and Chair,
Department of History
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

UNIVERSITY *of* WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

April 7, 2014

La Crosse Community Foundation
401 Main Street, Ste. 205
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Foundation Members:

Please accept this letter in support of Dr. Ariel Beaujot's project titled "Hear, Here: Voices of Downtown La Crosse" submitted to the La Crosse Community Foundation. I have known Dr. Beaujot for approximately two years in my role as an Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Studies. More specifically, I have served as a formal mentor for her through our college new faculty mentoring program, served on grant review committees that funded research projects for faculty in our college, and have worked with her on a college-wide task force on interdisciplinary initiatives. Thus, I am familiar with her work as a teacher and scholar.

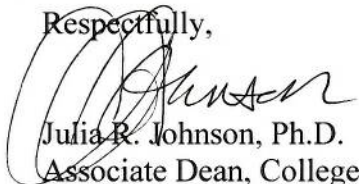
As you know from Dr. Beaujot's application materials, she is a public historian who works with classes to mount local history projects. She has had several successful projects similar to "Hear, Here," including a ghost tour of Pontlevoy France and exhibits at university and county museums that explore local histories of kitchens, sound, and instruments. Based on my review of these projects, they are both engaging and pedagogically sound. The distinctiveness of these projects can be attributed to Dr. Beaujot's approach: She teaches students the contemporary importance of historical artifacts and events by requiring students to physically engage with ideas, objects, and community members. Furthermore, the everyday process and objects brought into focus by projects like "Hear, Here" make accessible ideas people often find beyond their interest or theoretical comprehension.

As a public, comprehensive university, the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse continually seeks opportunities to build partnerships with local communities. In the College of Liberal Studies, we take this goal to heart and many of our faculty provide students opportunities to conduct research off campus and to learn with community partners. Historically, our local community has enjoyed these partnerships. Evidence to this effect is provided by the positive responses to projects conducted by Dr. Chuck Lee (a recipient of grants from your organization. Further evidence of community interest can be found in the willingness of community organizations to a) host Dr. Beaujot's courses taught in the buildings of local organizations and b) the local organizations that are willing to contribute stories and storytellers to the "Hear, Here" project.

Finally, I consider “Hear, Here” a model humanities project. In terms of content, Dr. Beaujot has developed a pedagogically engaging strategy for teaching History—a core humanities discipline. Second, this project engages a broad audience to that end. Many of us learned to treat history as something outside ourselves—and to learn that history is about events like war. Dr. Beaujot’s focus on history transforms typically static historical ideas into lived realities, thereby offering community members and students an opportunity to reflect on their lived experiences within/as part of historical moments and events. Historian, Peter Stearns, argues that history is a “laboratory of human experience” that, when studied well, allows us to gain access to “basic data about the forces that affect our own lives” and helps us acquire the “relevant skills and enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.” “Hear, Here” is one such laboratory.

In sum, Dr. Beaujot has designed a thoughtful project that engages students and the local community in an important dialogue about the history of La Crosse, WI. She is an accomplished teacher and scholar with a record of bringing projects like this to fruition. She receives my unqualified support.

Respectfully,



Julia R. Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
Director, School of Arts and Communication
jjohnson2@uwlax.edu
608-785-8113