



LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Archives & Local History Department

June 2, 2020

La Crosse City Plan Commission
c/o Tim Acklin
Letter of Support for Hear, Here Project

Dear City Plan Commission:

As a community partner and part of a city department, the La Crosse Public Library Archives (LPLA) is pleased to write a letter of support for the continuation of the unique and engaging Hear, Here (HH) project.

The LPLA is the community repository of local history—including municipal records deemed worthy of historical preservation. The Archives staff as well as the physical resources serve as the foundation upon which the library helps its community and the broader public get answers to their questions related to La Crosse's cultural heritage.

Among the benefits HH provides to LPLA are:

- Access: Increased traffic and awareness of LPLA collections by exposing more people, including the UWL community, to our collections and allowing us to show how helpful LPLA staff are and can be used successfully in their research projects and history classes;
- Diversity: Gives LPLA more diverse tours for Footsteps of La Crosse (footstepsoflacrosse.org) and showcases a greater spectrum of peoples' backgrounds and experiences in La Crosse. When all of these tours are released, they will provide history tours around topics and communities such as the Ho-Chunk, Hmoob, LGBTQ+, the La Crosse parks system, the local preservation movement, and our historic Red-Light District. These primary sources are also retold largely by people who are not traditionally accurately represented in the written historical record;

Each of these tours take HH narratives and local history and contextualize this information on a national and sometimes even global scale. Though each tour revolves on one of the main topics listed above, they also explore themes such as municipal resources and services, public art, tourism, immigration, migration, colonialism, historic preservation, acts of kindness, environmental issues, the built environment, city planning, activism, community leaders, systemic racism, and more;

- Community Reach: By being so centrally located, HH street signs help pull in community members who wouldn't normally visit cultural heritage institutions or research local history on their own. In this way, HH helps teach our community about primary sources like oral histories and encourages them to seek out local archival repositories. This engagement helps reinforce the importance of cultural heritage institutions like libraries, archives, and history.

Among HH's benefits to the La Crosse community are:

- Sense of Place: By listening to first-person accounts of someone's experience, community members can feel more connected to one another. And because these stories are place-based, that means listeners also will grow connections to the spaces that the stories take place, like local businesses, municipal parks, and historic buildings—all of which are important investments to the City. HH is arguably a component in downtown vitalization and livelihood for this reason. It helps community members and tourist interact with our downtown neighborhood and brings them into businesses. HH teaches an appreciation for our built environment;
- Connection to the Past: As community members learn about their own cultural heritage and local history, they feel more attached to their community and their city. Public history projects like HH are important for this reason. Not only is it so easily accessible to learn about and explore, but it is also free for community members to participate in. Most cultural heritage institutions that give opportunities for learning require entry fees, which can be a barrier for people. HH only requires a phone or internet access to participate in. For this reason, it is a great resource for the City to invest in;
- Awareness of Prejudice: HH works to open minds and teach community members to question prejudices and stereotypes. HH allows narrators to share their stories without experiencing trauma over and over through retelling their stories (e.g. many stories teach moments of xenophobia, racial profiling, racist stereotypes, homophobia, etc.). In this way, HH follows initiatives that the City works towards revolving around diversity and "foster[ing] a civic spirit that desires a condition of sustained improvements to the city for future generations" (City Planning and Development mission statement).

For all of these benefits to the City and the community we serve, I strongly encourage the City Plan Commission to invest in the continuation of HH. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

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