

Sound Off: Coupeville's Haller House belongs to all of us

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OPINION

by Vickie Chambers, Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association's executive director

As a Washington Main Street program, our mission is to strengthen, promote and maintain our successful historic downtown district.

Our downtown corridor in Coupeville is an economic engine that keeps this community authentic and prosperous. From our charismatic wharf and Alexander Blockhouse to our false-front western shops, Coupeville has undeniable charm. But, when most of our visitors enter our town via Main Street from the south, they are greeted at our eastern entrance, the corner of Front and Main streets, by a beleaguered historic house in much need of care and attention.

The Haller House, now over 150 years old, is a rare example of early territorial architecture and one of the few remaining.

Coupeville is fortunate enough to have the largest collection of early territorial buildings left in the state. Haller House could be an anchor venue that ties together the earliest chapters of our town's growth in the Washington Territory.

Megan Hansen's article of March 30, "Campaign to buy historic Coupeville house revived" revealed that, thanks to the generosity of the National Park Service, our fellow preservation nonprofit Historic Whidbey was given another chance to rescue this vanishing treasure and convert it to a thriving public heritage site for the benefit of all the residents of, and visitors to, Whidbey Island.

Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association heartily endorses Historic Whidbey's campaign and future plans for the property. It will be a heritage destination: part interpretive venue, part pioneer garden and part old-style "mercantile," offering local Whidbey products and an authentic Victorian soda fountain.

This retail operation, combined with the rental of office space on the second floor, will enable the Haller House to be self-supporting while providing a unique and welcoming experience for visitors on the east end of Front Street.

The \$110,000 contribution from the National Park Service towards the purchase of the property underscores the significance of this house to our national and Northwest narrative.

A \$25,000 grant from the Norcliffe Foundation confirms this is a project the people of Washington can get behind. Though outside funding for historic property acquisition is rare, funding for rehabilitation for public benefit is far more plentiful. Thus, the heavy lift is the purchase.

Historic Whidbey still must raise \$58,000 by Oct. 31, and they need the community's help.

We appeal to the people of Whidbey to join us in doing our part to make this Haller House campaign successful. In a cultural sense, the Haller House belongs to all of us. Coupeville loves its heritage. Let's show the world how much.

To learn more, or make a contribution, visit www.historicwhidbey.org or call Lynn Hyde at 206-619-4427. No gift is too small.

<https://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/opinion/sound-off-coupevilles-haller-house-belongs-to-all-of-us/>