



We the Museum

Episode 13

Environmental Restoration at Ford House (with Mark Heppner, Kevin Drotos)

EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Can museums and historic sites be leaders in environmental conservation and restoration? The Ford House in Michigan recently won a grant of up to \$7 million from NOAA to restore the coastal habitats of their lakeside property. I talked to Ford House's President & CEO, Mark Heppner, and their Landscape and Natural Areas Manager, Kevin Drotos, to learn more. They shared the progress so far on this bold project and we discussed our field's responsibilities to care for people and nature. Plus, get ready to learn some fun facts about flora and fauna in this region.

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Hannah Hethmon (Narration): *Welcome back to We the Museum: a podcast for museum workers who want to form a more perfect institution.*

I'm your host, Hannah Hethmon, Owner and Executive Producer at Better Lemon Creative Audio, where I make podcasts for museums, history organizations, and other cultural nonprofits.

As someone born and raised in the Chesapeake Bay area, I'm a supporter of any efforts to protect and restore wetlands and other ecosystems critical to our native flora and fauna. So, when I saw the news that the a historic house museum had won a 7 million dollar grant for environmental restoration, I just had to do an episode about it.

The Edsel and Eleanor Ford House is a stunning 1920s estate located just outside Detroit, Michigan on the banks of Lake St. Claire. Lake St. Claire spans the US/Canada border and is connected by rivers to two of the great lakes, Erie and Huron.

Edsel Ford was only child of the Henry Ford, and he lived there with his wife Eleanor and their children. When Eleanor passed away in 1976, it was her wish that the home and grounds be opened up for "the benefit of the public." Today, in addition to the 30,000 sq ft house, the grounds feature a 40,000 sq ft visitor center.

And now a bit about the grant: the Ford House has been awarded a Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant from NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This means up to 7 million dollars in funding to cover restoration of the property's shoreline and the Ford Cove part of the Lake.

To learn more about the project, the local ecosystem, and how museums and historic sites and do better by our local environments, I spoke to Mark Heppner, the estate's President & CEO, and Kevin Drotos, their Landscape and Natural Areas Manager.

Before we get started, I want to shout out our show sponsor, Landslide Creative. This podcast would not be happening without their support. Landslide Creative provides custom website design and development for museums who want to increase their engagement and connect with their visitors, donors, and volunteers. With a custom website designed for the unique needs of your museum, you can stop fighting with your website and focus on growing your impact. Head over to LandslideCreative.com to learn more.

Alright, let's kick things off with an introduction to the Ford House's surrounding landscape from Kevin Drotos:

Kevin Drotos: So here at Ford House, we have about 87 acres of land and I'd say roughly 20 acres are natural areas, forest, forested wetlands, some other wetlands, and then about two miles of shoreline on Lake St. Clair. We didn't really heavily manage it up until about five years ago or so. We did a little work here and there, but realizing this great resource we have, we've really stepped up our commitment to being a steward of the land.

Hannah Hethmon: So tell me about like the lake, the animals that are there, like for someone who's never been to that area, what kind of habitat is this?

Kevin Drotos: So we have actually great bird habitat. We are on a migratory flyway, basically where the Mississippi migration path meets the Atlantic migration path. And we have seen over 200 individual species of birds on the property throughout our recorded history.

Hannah Hethmon: Wow.

Kevin Drotos: And then for our aquatic habitat, we have a protected cove, which is probably about eight or nine acres. And that has phenomenal fish habitat because it's protected from the heavy wave and wind action from Lake St. Clair. The shoreline is lacking a bit in terms of ecosystem services as it's mostly crushed concrete. So there's not a great transitional zone between the land and the water, which is vital to a lot of species such as turtles and frogs. So that's an area we need to make a lot of improvements, hence this project.

Hannah Hethmon: And how does this small environment have a bigger impact? What is its kind of role in the larger ecosystem?

Kevin Drotos: So it ties into a larger ecosystem goal of having connectivity between Lake St. Clair and the various other waterways. If you just do one project in the middle of a lake with nothing on either side, you know, the fish and other animals can't jump from point A to point B if there's just dead zone between it. Thankfully, there have been a lot of really good projects along Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River, which we would really help bridge together. And in terms of naturalized shoreline: in Macomb County on Lake St. Clair, there is less than 0.01% left in a slightly natural state.

Hannah Hethmon: And you said it a bit, but again, what's the importance of a natural shoreline versus built-up?

Kevin Drotos: Yeah, so natural shorelines offer a wide array of benefits. They create resilient habitat. Fluctuating water levels are going to be an issue in the Great Lakes well, pretty much forever. So to really design it to where it can handle those historic lows and historic highs without having erosion issues or flooding or any significant issues like that, it really creates. That transitional zone again between water and land creates phenomenal habitat where turtles spend a lot of their life in water, but they nest on land.

So if you have broken concrete on your shoreline or a seawall or a more inaccessible shoreline, turtles, frogs, animals like that really struggle to complete their entire life cycle.

Another benefit of naturalized shoreline is, other than the fisheries, the herpetology—aesthetics is a big one. It looks a lot better to have a naturalized shoreline than concrete or a seawall. And then nutrient loading into the lake is reduced because native plants really uptake a lot of nutrients. So if there's any runoff from pollution, fertilizers, various other things, it will help filter that out before it gets to the lake. And on site we already have a system of bioswales throughout our parking lot. which I'll go to a retention pond to help kind of filter out any pollutants before the water goes from our site back into Lake St. Clair.

Hannah Hethmon: Interesting. I live pretty close to the Chesapeake Bay. So runoff, wetlands, this is a big issue for us. Okay, so this is the situation in your environment. So tell me about this NOAA grant that you've got and what you're planning to do with it. What is the significance of this? What are the big, what's the big vision for this project?

Kevin Drotos: Yeah, so I'll start with a little history of the project. Uh, we were approached by the County probably seven or eight years ago. Uh, they were looking at some shoreline enhancements and, you know, one of the guys from the County was boating in Ford Cove right off of our property. And he just dawned on them. Like we're one of the last remaining large-scale sites suitable for restoration on Lake St. Clair in Macomb County. So he really took the lead to find, well, what can we do with this information? How do we move forward?

In 2020, we were given a grant from NOAA to do a feasibility study. So we worked for the year of 2021 to gather all the background data from fish populations to vegetation to wetland delineation, sediment testing, hydrodynamic modeling, all sorts of good stuff that's really integral in having a successful project. So from there, we looked at other funding opportunities to... move to the next phase, which is engineering and design. And in August of last year, we submitted a grant, the Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilient grant through NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and we were awarded it this spring.

Hannah Hethmon: And it's up to \$7 million, right?

Kevin Drotos: So currently we're given \$490,000 to create the engineering and design plan, get all the construction documents finalized, get everything together, and then up to \$7 million in total to actually implement the construction of the project.

So this will really give us the chance to take what we have and transform it into something functional. So that might mean creating... acres and acres of coastal marshes or forest, you know, enhancing a forested wetland on the property, creating emergent wetlands out into the cove.

And really a part of it will likely be removing a lot of this broken concrete to create a more gentle gradient from the land to the water. We'll be able to more or less hopefully regrade the shoreline to be filled with native plants, to be functional for our frogs and our turtles and our snakes and all these other really cool animals. There'll be various other methods hopefully used. Again, we're just starting engineering and design.

Hannah Hethmon: Early days, yeah.

Kevin Drotos: So, you know, we don't have a firm even selected at this point, but we're looking to even create potentially offshore breakwaters. to reduce wave action and create additional protected habitat.

So it's kind of creating this protected environment where fish can spawn, where our fisheries can thrive to create recreational opportunities for kayakers or fishermen, for people just looking to enjoy nature.

Hannah Hethmon: Yeah, making it better for the humans and the animals.

Kevin Drotos: Yeah.

Hannah Hethmon: Great, okay, so let's zoom back to the Ford House [and] sustainability generally. So I know this is not your first foray into sustainability and to environmental issues. So talk to me about how sustainability as a core value. What does that look like at the site?

Mark Heppner: Sure, Hannah. It's a great question. It's one that does go back many years, actually, even before Kevin's arrival.

Hannah Hethmon (Narration): *As a reminder to listeners, you're now hearing from Mark Heppner, Ford House's President & CEO.*

Mark Heppner: And even with my predecessor, back in 2012, we did a master site plan. And certainly, sustainability and environmental stewardship were kind of buzzwords and keywords that were coming into that. However, as you probably know, just from your experience, sometimes those are great words, but the action them sometimes stops still. And it wasn't really until the creation of two new buildings that we created and opened in May of 2021, the new visitor center that we created as well as a separate administration building— beautifully, artfully designed and created. But a lot of thought went into is that if we're gonna create these buildings so that we can be a more meaningful, engaging organization and 21st century museum, how can we do this a little smarter, a little bit better?

And so it's interesting, there was a commitment from out of the gate, from core values, from our leadership, but also our board of trustees, which are members of the Ford family. And this is a very personal state for the family because this was granny's house. And they think of the legacy of the family as a continuation moving forward. So what you'll see, as Kevin alluded to, some of these already, with the creation of these new buildings that we installed geothermal wells, we have a whole bioswale system here to filter the storm runoff water throughout the whole estate and filter it through these bioswales and back out to Lake St. Clair. There was a major commitment to solar panels throughout both buildings.

As a matter of fact, the administration building I am sitting in was only, at the time designed, the second building in the state of Michigan designed to be an energy

plus building. The other building was to be designed the same way, but because it also features a kitchen to support our restaurant, that was never gonna happen.

But there was a commitment for gold or platinum standard with LEED. So another thing that was interesting though, that we learned, and again, we certainly did not have all the answers. One of them is as Kevin noted, we are the migratory bird path. And so bird populations, their safety, their nesting habitat is all really, really important to us, one thing we did not think with these new buildings was a lot of glass.

And it was not until actually a dedicated ambassador here in the community who was an avid birder said, have you thought about this? And actually I remember seeing a video from a building in Chicago that was a new construction with unfortunately piles of dead birds because nobody thought about that and the birds striking the glass. That was a great example of the commitment by the board and the leadership is that we on a dime, even though the design had been out there, to put extra expense to bring in bird safety glass from Germany throughout every pane of glass here so that we can protect the bird wildlife. So there's a lot of this commitment through just the evolution of Ford House.

And as we move forward, we knew with these new buildings, and now with this project that we not only have an opportunity, we have responsibility. And so it is one of our core values. Now, as we move forward, we have a sustainability committee here comprised of staff members throughout the whole organization representing different departments and hierarchy, if you will, too, because we want to make sure that everybody's kind of heard and we do things smarter, whether it's composting, whether it's we run a restaurant here and we've been working about how, what we do with the food, leftover food from events and product.

Hannah Hethmon: *We'll be right back to my conversation with Mark and Kevin, but first it's time for a digital minute with Amanda Dyer, Creative Director at Landslide Creative.*

Amanda Dyer: Hi, I'm Amanda Dyer, creative Director at Landslide Creative, and I've got a quick tip you can use to improve your museum website. Most websites now see the majority of their traffic come from people on mobile devices, but if you're like me, you typically access your own website on your desktop computer while you're at work.

That means there could be issues on your mobile site that you haven't noticed, but your visitors will notice. Take some time to browse your website on your. Try doing common tasks like finding your opening hours or current exhibitions, purchase a ticket, renew your membership, find an upcoming event and register.

Fill out your contact form if you encounter any barriers or moments of frustration while completing these tasks. You'll know where to focus your efforts. Any updates you make to your mobile site can dramatically improve the user experience. For the majority of your visitors. Get more tips for optimizing your site landslidecreative.com/mobile.

Hannah Hethmon: *And back to the show:*

Mark Heppner: We talk about how we can do things for Ford House while trying to inspire our own teams. but taking it to our members, taking it to the local community, just inspire them.

And I think we've had some really good progress and just recently going through, we had a consultant by the name of Sarah Sutton, which I'm not sure if you know Sarah. And Sarah came out and spent time with us and came up with a really dynamic, wonderful recommendations for Ford House. We're now building on that with a student here from Michigan State University who is just passionate about sustainability, environmental, and stewardship. So she's been meeting with leadership and directors and staff members and with our sustainability committee to take Sarah's recommendations to see where we are today, to see what our opportunities are, so how we can plan and make financial commitments, but also just activation commitments. for the next five years.

Hannah Hethmon: Wow, exciting. That's a lot of different things going on. So coming back to the grant, you know, Kevin, you talked a bit about the process of beginning, but I don't know if you wanna go, either of you wanna go into more detail of like, what's happened so far? What have you learned so far and how is the vision starting to shape up? And maybe if you have any tips on the process of applying for a grant with NOAA, because I know this may not be a funder that many museums are familiar with or have had a lot of experience with.

Kevin Drotos: Well, speaking of writing the grant, it's the first grant I've written, so "Just wing it," I guess.

Hannah Hethmon: [Laughs]

Mark Heppner: [Laughs] Well, the good news, he's one for one.

Kevin Drotos: Yeah.

Hannah Hethmon: That's a pretty big grant for your first one, so congratulations.

Kevin Drotos: Well, thank you.

Mark Heppner: I will say the process, one of the things that we all kind of know what we want to do, and you know this Hannah from your experience as well too, and we so often forget about the importance of community voices. And so it's one of the things that excited me about this is that we held a several different, not only online surveys that we sent out to stakeholders, but also had civil meetings here and we had huge turnout because people really are passionate about Ford House number one, but they're very passionate about the Lake St. Clair and what's going on. And I'd be honest with you because I'm always kind of optimistically cautious that I expected people to come with their agendas. And Kevin can allude to this is that it was overly just positive and there were questions but none of them were questioning what we're doing, just more about how we were doing and to specifics of what we're doing. And I think again just from lessons learned about the importance of that and as we move forward now with their official grant is continuing to inform the community and the stakeholders throughout the whole project. It's not like "Thanks we heard you," then at the very end "Here's what we did." So we're talking internally with our communication engagement team about how we do that better.

Hannah Hethmon: Do you think having NOAA on board as the grant funder involved gives credibility to the project? That's a pretty well-known agency.

Mark Heppner: I think it certainly brings credibility to it. I think the other thing though, if there was some, again, if you're an institution thinking about this and it could also scare you, because it's like, you think, no, I mean, this is a huge federal organization. And my one thing I will say through the whole grant process and now once we received the grant, there's a lot of online and it's very confusing. Kevin knows, I tell him all the time, I'm like, oh my gosh, I just spent X, Y, and Z amount of time. The great thing I will tell you, And it's why it might some people might not want to even pull the trigger or even go further, but I will say our colleagues at

NOAA, our representative, our liaison—phenomenal individuals. And it is really true that they want you to be successful. They want to help you and if you are willing to ask questions and lean on them it is not as daunting and scary as it may first appear to be.

Kevin Drotos: So other than the public outreach, we found some... great stuff with our mussel survey. We had multiple species of state-threatened or endangered mussels that, you know, we found dead weathered material of them in the cove. No live samples, unfortunately, but to have the dead material means they're nearby. So if we enhance this habitat, we can bring in these really rare mussels that you just, you don't really see that often. We found seven species of... mussels that were dead and weathered. So we found some of the state concerns: Heel splitter, Deer Toe, Round Pig Toe, and the federally endangered and state-endangered Three-Horned Wartyback.

Hannah Hethmon: Great names.

Kevin Drotos: Yes, great names.

Hannah Hethmon: For the names alone, I think this on project, they deserve all the funding.

Kevin Drotos: They really do. So they're, you know, pretty uncommon species and to know they're in the area and to know that improvements we make towards, geared towards them can really have a positive impact on their populations.

We had 10 species of birds identified that could be impacted by this project in a positive way, such as the state special concern American Bittern, the state threatened Yellow Rail, and the state endangered King Rail, along with various other species that will benefit from this. Those were kind of some of the really rare ones that we don't currently have, but we could have.

Same with herpetofauna. So herpetofauna are amphibians and reptiles. So again, the transition between water and land is so important for these types of species. So we observed nine species of herpetofauna during the study, and there's suitable habitat for an additional 16 species. We saw, I want to say, one special concern species of turtle, which was really cool to see. One that I've only seen a couple times in my lifetime. So to know we could enhance that habitat is just phenomenal. And then in terms of our fish survey, we did in the feasibility study, they caught a

good amount of fish, but we are lacking a lot of spawning habitat and a lot of covered structures. So fish really like to have woody debris in the water. They can use it to hide from predators. They can use it for spawning to attach to their eggs too. They can use it for all sorts of reasons. Or if you look at a fish like a pike, northern pike, they need shallow bulrush beds to lay their eggs, which if you don't have any naturalized shoreline, you don't have bulrush beds.

So it will increase spawning habitat across the board for, I don't even know how many fish species. including game species, species that are just ecologically important, species that are food for birds or for other fish. Just a really great littoral ecosystem could be created through this project.

Hannah Hethmon: That's so cool to hear about all those things. This is gonna be like the Ologies/ We the Museum crossover episode. [Laughs]

Mark Heppner: [Laughs]

Hannah Hethmon: Anything else about the project so far, where it is now, that you wanna share?

Kevin Drotos: So we sent out requests for proposals a few weeks ago. We are expecting to have a firm selected late this week or early next week. So the project kickoff meeting will be happening within the next few weeks, and we'll really have a better idea of where this project can go once we get to that point. Everything up until now has been great baseline data. We've gotten some great conceptual ideas, but to have that concrete engineering and design is just going to really take this project to the next level.

Hannah Hethmon: Yeah, it's really exciting. So. That's the project so far. Thinking more broadly about museums and historic sites, a lot of the stuff you're talking about before in terms of environmental sustainability is very cool, but it's the kind of thing you think about when you think about what will a museum do, what will make our building sustainable, right? Our immediate property. So thoughts on the responsibilities of museums and historic sites to go beyond and to look further out into the water, literally, into the sky

Mark Heppner: I've been in the field 30 plus years and always had historic estates. And I love having colleagues like Kevin who kind of challenge you to look at a historic landscape in a different way. We have worked really hard to recreate the

historic landscape as it was designed by the landscape architect and partnership with the architect and the family and how it was used by the family because that is a big part of our story. But we've also identified these core other areas that have this other importance that perhaps even looked at how to really realize by the time the family lived there, but yet we have this opportunity to really leverage that and as you know, we all struggle as museums, even historic estates, I think sometimes even more so to be relevant.

And it's not that everybody can relate to this large size estate with, you know, domestic help and, you know, 31,000 sq. ft. of living space, yada, yada. And here we are, it's like, but you should come see us and be inspired by us. Well, sometimes that's challenging, but by turning our focus to something that we all should care about, the environment, Mother Earth, here we have an opportunity to take this story, this legacy, and really make it engaging and lasting. And I think it inspires our visitors. and inspires our members. I think it inspires our staff and even just think about things differently. So it really has given us opportunity.

And as Kevin said, the God-honest truth is this is something that we have been moving our needle, thinking about environmental stewardship and what we can do as an institution better. But this project was not something that was a high, high priority on our list with everything else that we've been doing. It was because this opportunity really came to us and we were identified and said, this is important. And we could have easily said, no, our priorities are elsewhere. But we all said, no, this is something that really we need to do because it is the right thing to do.

Hannah Hethmon: Yeah, you have all this space. I guess there's like something about, you know, the historic sites, those that are thinking kind of progressively about how do we become relevant, how do we use this space in a new way, you have this old stuff, how do we use it to learn, to understand, to create empathy across to the past and then into the future. And in the same way, if you have land, if you have space, what are you doing to connect the past, the present, and the future, and help people grow and learn in that space?

Mark Heppner: Well, for sure. And as Kevin just rattled off, all these species and why these are important and some of these at risk, these are things that I'm a fisherman. I love nature. I go out. But I've been so educated by even up to this point about the importance of this project of shoreline restoration of resiliency of our shorelines, and especially as the environments are changing and we're seeing that impact. And again, to think that. as a museum, as a historic state, we can make a,

even if it's just a little bit of improvement, a little bit of impact, that's exciting because again, why do we do this in the first place? It is to inspire people, it is to change lives even if it's just a little at of time, not just to sit there and play house and to have this, you know, say, oh look what we did, it's really to inspire people and so I get inspired listening to Kevin and the design team and the project team and these individuals who are so much smarter than I about what we can do, but more importantly, why this is important. And to sit back and say that as a historic estate, as a museum, that we can actually do this and have a role in this, that is pretty cool.

The other big part of this project that I know we were talking about as an element is the community public access to this area. As you can imagine, a shoreline with a bunch of rock and busted-up concrete is not very appealing to Mother Nature, but also to humans. And so by softening it, it'll allow better access for schoolchildren, a lot of our programming. There's going to be a design, most likely a boardwalk, to get people closer to the water. So again, we've already been working with Detroit Public Schools just this past couple years, bringing thousands of young school children out to the water area into Bird Island and to have these conversations. And this will just give us so much more access for meaningful programming.

Hannah Hethmon: Yeah, exciting.

I guess, Kevin, as someone with an environmental background, I assume you have not been working at museums and historic sites before?

Kevin Drotos: I am personally not a museum person.

Hannah Hethmon: Okay, so as the environmental person coming into the museum space, what has it been like this opportunity for you to kind of challenge the leadership, push them to be the voice from this other field in the historic site space? Like, what do you see any advantages to trying to make change in this space? Yeah.

Kevin Drotos: So I would say most of our landscape team does, I don't think anyone comes from the background of museum fields. It's a lot of, it's a very eclectic team from different backgrounds. So we have a much different perspective than those that have been in the museum field for years. We might not think of things in the same level of importance as, you know, as let's say Mark might or someone who works in collections in the house, but we really bring a really passionate viewpoint towards the landscape and the plants and all these other things that are easy to walk by and you know, so many people walk by all these beautiful trees and have no

idea what they are. And for us to be able to educate people on, oh no this is let's say a white oak tree and it hosts over 500 species of moths and butterflies and that's why it's so important for the ecosystems as opposed to a non-native tree that someone might really like that might only host five species. So to bring that level of knowledge and understanding of why we're doing what we're doing is really rewarding.

And here at Ford House, our original landscape architect was Jens Jensen, and he really helped pioneer the use of native plants in formal landscapes. So we actually have a phenomenal baseline of native plants used on the property. So that history is tied in every time we talk about them. And it really shows, you know, with this very recent native plant gardening movement, that this has been being done for over 100 years. It can be done sustainably, it can be done with the ecosystem in mind, but also artfully and aesthetically pleasing. So it's a fun balance between learning that history of how the property was created to how we keep that relevant today, as Mark said.

Hannah Hethmon: Hmm, that's really cool to hear the connection as well to the native plants.

Kevin Drotos: I'm a big plant nerd, so.

Hannah Hethmon:

Yeah, trying to put more native plants in my garden. I've got a little tiny garden, but I'm working on it.

Kevin Drotos: Every little bit helps.

Hannah Hethmon: Um, fantastic. So, I guess... Let's see, maybe mark final thoughts on leadership and the environment in museums and historic sites. You know, what are some, maybe some kind of key thoughts that we need to get people thinking about? Get outside the box of the house, maybe.

Mark Heppner: So one of the things in listening to just Kevin speak there, it reminded me of also as an organization to be receptive to somebody like Kevin, who may not be a museum person that comes in with a different viewpoint, a different lens, life experiences. you have to be open from leadership perspective. And as you know, museums are not, although we're preserver of history, which is all about change, we're sometimes the slowest change, which I always found the most ironic.

And what we have to try to do here over the last five years with the new strategic plan and new interpretive plan is really change even our leadership model. It's always evolving and we have always more to do, but that is to change from a very hierarchical traditional museum where you have your CEO and vice presidents and it's, you know, really top down to what we call shared leadership model where we have... We actually don't have any vice presidency anymore. We have directors and we have managers like Kevin and the idea is that as a shared leadership or collaborative leadership model is that every voice is important.

And you need to be receptive to that. You might not always agree—as Kevin kind of alluded to—and might not see everything the same, but if I truly did it the traditional way and say, well, that's nice Kevin, but this is what we're doing. We'd repeat that same history, but by having this where you value, truly value other people's opinion—Kevin might not be a museum goer, but he may be somebody that loves arboretums. Even though we're not arboretum, he may travel the nation and come back and say, I was just at X, Y, and Z, and this is one way through signage that they engage their visitors in a meaningful way that did not distract from the environment around them.

And that is something that maybe that's he's not on the interpretation committee, but because he cares and has passion And if you're open to that, that's the kind of leadership I think moving forward that I think is going to move the needle for a lot of museums and organizations that everybody doesn't matter just because this is their title or the silo they're in, but if you're open, you'll learn a lot more from people. I think you make better informed decisions. It's a little slower sometimes, which is frustrating to a lot of people, but I think you make better ones. So I think again, from a leadership going through this project, I mean, it's a lot, it's a big commitment. This project is a huge commitment for Ford House, not only from our resources internally or our focus, but honestly, I think it's, Kevin, you would agree, is at the end of the day, not only is it the right thing to do, it's gonna be so exciting, and it's gonna change Ford House forever, just as these buildings just did, as our internal historic preservation and restoration projects do, our interpretation, our storytelling. This is another layer that's just gonna continue I hope an exciting place that people want to support and be inspired by.

Hannah Hethmon: Well, it's very exciting. I visited the house in 2016, and so I remember the shoreline. We had the party there for the conference, so I'm really looking forward to coming back in a few years and seeing how it's

Mark Heppner: You will not recognize it, Hannah. You will not recognize it.

Hannah Hethmon: Well, thank you both so much for coming on the podcast.

Mark Heppner: Thank you.

Kevin Drotos: Thanks, Hannah

Hannah Hethmon (Narration): *Thanks for listening to We the Museum. You've been listening to my conversation with Mark Heppner and Kevin Drotos from the Ford House in Grosse Pointe, Michigan.*

If you want to learn more about this project, check out the show notes page for this episode at Wethemuseum.com, where I'll leave some links as well as a transcript of the episode. You can find out more about Ford House, their history, and their work at FordHouse.org

Once again, a big thank you to our show sponsor, Landslide Creative. Making a podcast takes a lot of time and energy, and I wouldn't be able to set aside the space to make this show without Landslide Creative's financial support. If your museum is considering a new website, definitely make Landslide Creative your first stop.

Finally, I've been your host, Hannah Hethmon. As Owner and Executive Producer at Better Lemon Creative Audio, I help museums around the world plan, produce, and edit podcasts that advance their missions. Find out more about my work at BetterLemonaudio.com