



June 29, 2026

City of La Crosse
Building Inspection Department
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

946 Division St.
17-30052-100

Re: Request for Variance – Basement Stair Headroom Requirement

Dear Building Inspector and Members of the Review Authority,

On behalf of Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region, we respectfully request a variance from the basement stair headroom requirement contained in Section 103-64 of the City of La Crosse Municipal Code, which adopts the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code. Specifically, we are requesting relief from SPS 321.04(2)(d), which requires a minimum stairway headroom clearance of 76 inches measured vertically.

The existing condition within the home provides approximately 63.5 inches of headroom from the stair tread to the ceiling, which is 12.5 inches below the required minimum.

This condition exists within an existing home undergoing renovation. Achieving the required 76-inch clearance would require a complete redesign of the stairway. Due to the structural limitations of the home, compliance would necessitate constructing a staircase at the maximum allowable rise and minimum allowable tread run above the landing but minimum allowable rise below the landing. While technically code compliant in headroom, this redesign would result in a significantly steeper and more difficult staircase, as well as a trip hazard while transition between flights, creating a greater safety concern for future occupants.

Habitat believes that maintaining the existing stair configuration, while acknowledging the reduced headroom, better serves the overall intent of the building code by providing a staircase that is safer and easier to navigate than the alternative required to achieve full compliance. This request does not affect the structural integrity of the home or create any increased fire or life-safety hazards beyond the existing condition. Rather, it represents a practical solution that balances the realities of rehabilitating existing housing with the goal of providing safe, affordable homeownership opportunities for local families.

Granting this variance would allow Habitat to preserve a functional and safer stair configuration while avoiding unnecessary structural modifications that would increase project costs without improving the overall safety of the home.

We respectfully request your consideration and approval of this variance. We appreciate your commitment to working with organizations like Habitat for Humanity to preserve and improve the existing housing stock in our community while ensuring the safety of future homeowners. Please feel free to contact me if additional information, plans, or site inspections are needed to assist in your review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kahya Fox', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kahya Fox
Executive Director
Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region
608-797-8086
kahya@habitatlacrosse.org



