

January 2, 2025

Dear Economic and Community Development Committee members,

I appreciate this opportunity to submit an offer for the property located on 1709 29th Street South, La Crosse, Wisconsin. The chance to purchase and own a home in the community I love, reside, and serve is a life-changing privilege.

Prior to expressing why this house is ideal for me and my family, I would like to share a snapshot of our story. My name is Abby Von Arx. I am the single mother of two elementary-aged children: Evelyn (11) and Colin (8). Professionally, I have been a practicing librarian since 2009. I grew up in the area, across the river in Caledonia, MN, but spent much of my early adulthood going to school, living, and working in Milwaukee, WI. My ex-husband and I moved back to La Crosse County in 2016 in order to be closer to family. Unfortunately, less than a year after relocating, my former partner relapsed and began using drugs and alcohol following 14 years of sobriety. Unable to remain together after such a difficult period, I initiated separation in 2017. We sold our dream home, separated, and officially divorced in 2021. Since the sale and separation, the kids and I have lived in modest rentals. Though two-bedroom apartments were sufficient during toddlerhood and early elementary, our space is quickly shrinking as Evelyn and Colin approach middle school. Owning a home will provide stability, both in terms of fixed monthly expenses but also ensuring my children will not need to move again after this transition.

A guiding professional and personal value I hold is the desire to live within the community I serve. As I navigated divorce and single motherhood, I was fortunate enough to secure a position at the La Crosse Public Library where I worked as a children's librarian from 2019 to 2022. Though I loved my job, colleagues, and library users, I have always felt a strong pull towards education. I grew up with a mom and aunts who were dedicated teachers, and my first job out of graduate school was as a private middle school librarian and composition teacher. So, in August of 2022, I left the La Crosse Public Library to become the librarian at Lincoln Middle School. The shift not only meant a new job, but I also had to return to college as a 39-year-old, earning a library media specialist certification.

Though my time at Lincoln was brief, it was an honor to serve the families, students, and staff in the school's final year of operation. Luckily, I was able to remain in the district and am currently in my second year at Central High School. Central has been the ideal landing place following Lincoln's closure. Though working with high school-aged students was unexpected, I have embraced my new role, developed strong relationships with students and staff, and look forward to being Evelyn and

Colin's librarian after they finish their time at Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary School, continue at Longfellow Middle, and eventually join their mama at Central.

Besides being a beautiful new construction with just the right amount of space for a family of three, the 29th Street house keeps my kids in current boundary schools for both middle and high school, while allowing me to live in the neighborhood where my students and their families reside. Go Birds!

As my kids get older, Evelyn especially craves more space away from her pesky little brother and cannot wait to decorate a room of her very own. She has already decided the larger of the two basement rooms should be hers. Further, both animal-loving children have been asking for a dog since preschool and the modest backyard and pet-friendly neighborhood would be the ideal place to add a furry friend to our family. Finally, working at Central, I have had the opportunity to build relationships with both the instructors and students involved in the ACE Academy. I see and chat with many of the young men who worked on this home daily. The thought of residing in a space crafted by my students as they gained valuable career and life skills makes me giddy.

As an educator and librarian, I firmly believe it is vital to live in and contribute to one's chosen community; however, the current state of housing in La Crosse makes it prohibitive to afford a home on a single teacher's salary. The La Crosse Replacement Housing Program has the potential to provide a stable, safe home for me and my growing children, while also allowing us to remain in an area of the city where we go to school and work. I would love the opportunity to make a house--carefully crafted by dedicated Central students and staff--into a home for me and my two future Riverhawks.

With grateful sincerity,

Abby Von Arx

A picture of Evelyn, Colin, and me on the first day of school 2024.  
(Colin is not feeling super enthusiastic!)

