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STAFF PHOTOS BY JANEAN SORRELL

Laura Longie and Erika Kellen, co-owners of The Wine Lounge, pose in front of their rustic yet modern establishment.

Uncorking inspiration

The Wine Lounge looks to redefine the wine tasting experience

BY JANEAN SORRELL
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A change of scenery often acts as a catalyst for inspiration, as new surroundings stimulate the mind and awaken dormant aspirations.

That was the case for friends Laura Longie and Erika Kellen, who while enjoying a long weekend away with their husbands in October 2022, walked into a wine bar and both thought, "Hutchinson needs one of these."

Wine to A6 ➤



The Wine Lounge proudly features state-of-the-art wine dispensing machines, imported all the way from Italy, offering patrons an authentic and immersive wine-tasting experience.

City Council approves ballpark upgrades

Veterans Memorial Field lighting, grandstand projects estimated to cost nearly $900,000

BY JANEAN SORRELL
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Pat May

Hutchinson City Council approved several Veterans Memorial Field upgrades, including lighting and new grandstand, during its Feb. 27 meeting.

The city's facilities committee identified the need to replace lights earlier and work was slated for 2025, Parks Recreation and Community Education Director Lynn Neumann said. However, Hutchinson Utilities pledged complete financial backing for the project, estimated to cost $325,000.

"With their generous commitment, we're able to move this project up to 2024," Neumann said.

The project involves upgrading the existing lighting systems to meet modern standards, ensuring optimal illumination for players, spectators and officials.

Ballpark to A6 ➤



FILE PHOTO

Veterans Memorial Field at Dave Mooney Baseball Complex played host to the 2016 Minnesota State Amateur Baseball Tournament. Hutchinson has been chosen to co-host the 2024 state tournament, as well.



Hutchinson grapples with housing shortage

City Council workshop discussion looks at causes, possible solutions

BY JANEAN SORRELL
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Matt Jaunich



Dan Jochum

Hutchinson is facing a critical housing shortage. With limited inventory, rising costs and a pressing need for solutions, city officials gathered last week to discuss the city's housing challenges.

Data presented during the workshop revealed a stark reality. Over the past decade, Hutchinson has seen a modest increase in new home construction, with an average of 24 homes built per year since 2012. However, this rate falls short of meeting the projected household growth in the area.

Since 2012, there have been 289 homes built, and 292 rental units built since 2017, yet Hutchinson remains behind the demand for new housing, as evidenced by vacancy rate.

"We've been historically in that 1% to 2% (rental vacancy rate); we talk about a healthy rate is 5%," City Administrator Matt Jaunich said at last week's City Council workshop.

Hutchinson's rental vacancy rate is 3.6%, but Jaunich noted that the city did not get responses to a survey from managers of 300 units.

"I'm thinking that inflated that number a little bit, but we're still low below that healthy market rate of 5%," he said.

One of the primary factors contributing to the housing shortage is the widening gap between the cost of existing homes and the cost of new construction. While existing homes have seen a steady increase in median sales prices over the years, the cost of building new homes has skyrocketed, primarily due to rising construction and infrastructure expenses. This disparity has made it increasingly difficult for residents, especially first-time homebuyers.

"It's the younger people that have to deal with the interest rates and escalating prices that's harder for them to get in," Director of Building, Planning and Zoning Dan Jochum said. "It's more of a barrier for them, than people that already have equity."

Limited availability land for development within city limits adds another layer of complexity to the issue. While there are parcels of land suitable for housing development, the costs associated with infrastructure upgrades and land acquisition present significant barriers for developers.

Infrastructure for a city block containing four to five homes costs approximately $500,000, according to Jaunich. The new Ravenwood Addition, which has 35 lots, would cost $1.2 million for the street, water, sewer and garbage.

"That's about $33,000 to $35,000 a lot," Jaunich said. "That doesn't include the cost the developer had in buying the land. It doesn't

Housing to A6 ➤

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