

Tight Housing Market Stirs Concerns

BY ANDREW ATWAL
andrew.atwal@yankton.net

On a local level, Yankton County might be suffering from a housing shortage.

At a City Commission meeting earlier this year, Commissioner Charlie Gross said the housing shortage question had been brought to his attention.

The question was raised at a recent City Commission meeting after the subject was brought to Commissioner Charlie Gross's attention.

"I've heard we're having trouble getting people to come to work in Yankton because of a housing shortage," he told his fellow commissioners.

Gross said he was informed that people who work in Yankton are finding apartments in Vermillion.

"One of the concerns I heard was, you run the risk of losing them to Vermillion because Vermillion is also looking for (workers)," he stated. "If we've run out of apartments and housing in a certain price range, that's something we need to ask the Economic Development Council, Yankton Area Progressive Growth or the Planning Commission to take a look at."

Vision Real Estate rarely has rental openings, and when they do they typically get eaten up very quickly.

"I would say the biggest housing issue Yankton has is the shortage of market-rate apartments," Community Development Director Dave Mingo said, referring to apartments

that have no rent restrictions on them. "We could use some additional moderately-priced lots for smaller independent contractors to build on."

According to Mingo, there are about 60 homes on the market listed between \$75,000 and \$130,000 — a price range that is in demand.

"We need to watch the situation closely," Mingo said, noting there may be things the city can do to encourage home building.

Dan Specht of Vision Real Estate echoed Mingo's concerns.

"What we're hearing from the rental market is, there is a definite need for rental housing in a price range of \$600 to \$1,200 a month," he said. "There is not a lot of rental housing available right now, especially for people with pets. It's a crunch. I think there is some opportunity out there for potential investors to gain a lead in the rental market."

Kaye O'Neal, of Shore to Shore Realty, does most of her work in Nebraska, but thinks there is a definite need for more housing in the area.

"For rentals, I see a huge need for rental property for folks who come into the area for temporary work, such as for the wind farms near Bloomfield," she said.

Specht added that, even though there seems to be a shortage in housing in Yankton, overall the mar-



Specht

ket has been relatively stable.

"The residential housing market, in terms of the number of sales, has been stable for the last three years," he said. "We have seen some fluctuations in home values, but nothing too drastic. I think we're starting to see the residential market tighten up a bit."

He added that Vision Real Estate has been doing research on how the market in the area might be affected by a decrease in new home construction, and its relationship to the number of lots sold and the number of buildable lots currently on the market.

"The research will help us get a better understanding about where the market is heading," Specht said. "Our residential rental market is something we don't get into too much. However, we do see a need for that type of housing. My best guess is that Yankton is missing out on that 2-3 bedroom units that rent for \$750-\$1,000 a month."

He continued by saying the market here in the area could use a few more homes in each price range. He said there are not as many homes on the market as there have been in the past 5-7 years.

"Some of that is due to the decline of new construction in both spec and custom homes," Specht said. "When a home is built, many times those people are selling a home that is of less value, thus opening up the market. That is not happening as much today as past years, leaving the affordable housing market a bit behind."



He said, based on speculation, Yankton and the surrounding areas will continue to take advantage of the opportunities as they arise and the development of infrastructure, including roads, will play a vital role in the development of new lots.

"Gone are the days of \$15,000 and \$20,000 lots as land values, as infrastructure costs have in-

creased," Specht added. "We will see some continued rehabilitation of older homes by investors, which provides good housing and up-grades neighborhoods. I also think we will see a new apartment complex aimed at that \$850 a month renter. Those renters appear to be out there, but the apartments aren't."

Internet Connectivity Now Vital For Businesses

BY ANDREW ATWAL
andrew.atwal@yankton.net

As time has gone on, more businesses in Yankton and surrounding areas have moved into the wireless network age.

One of those businesses is Ben's Brewing, a bar in Yankton.

Ben's first opened in 2005 and has been a thriving bar ever since.

Ben Hanten, general manager at Ben's, said he decided to have the wireless network in the bar from the day it opened seven years ago.

"I felt as if it was a necessary service for our customers," he said. "When I'm out of town, I'd always be looking for a wireless network to connect to."

Hanten added that the network gets used every day, but he's seeing much less laptop use now, and more phones and tablets connecting to the network.

One of the changes he has noticed in the area is more businesses offering free wireless

for their customers. Hanten said that when the bar first opened in 2005, there were only a few businesses that offered wireless, and they would have big signs promoting the offering. Now most businesses in town are offering a network for customers, he said.

Another way that the bar connects with customers is through the Frontflip smartphone application.

Frontflip is an application that allows businesses to build relationships with customers and acts as an engagement platform. The application lets customers use their phone scanner and potentially win instant prizes at the business. Owners can then reach out to customers later on by sending targeted gifts directly to their phone.

"It's a nice way to reach customers because it allows me to see who is using it and how often they are using it," Hanten said.

Frontflip charges Ben's a monthly fee for the service, which launched this spring. Hanten noted that it is currently being used about 400 times a month.

Other area businesses in Yankton that offer free wireless to their customers include Burger King, Hy-Vee, Kentucky Fried Chicken / Taco Bell, The Landing Bar, Magilly's Broadway Eatery, Marketplace Cafe, McDonalds, Pizza Ranch, Minervas, Riverside Park, the Yankton Community Library and the Visitors Center.

In addition to businesses offering customers free wireless networks, many cellular phone providers have also expanded their 4G internet connectivity options to subscribers in the area.

Verizon Wireless recently brought 4G coverage to the area, and also recently activated a new cell site in Yankton, which further expanded its coverage in the area.

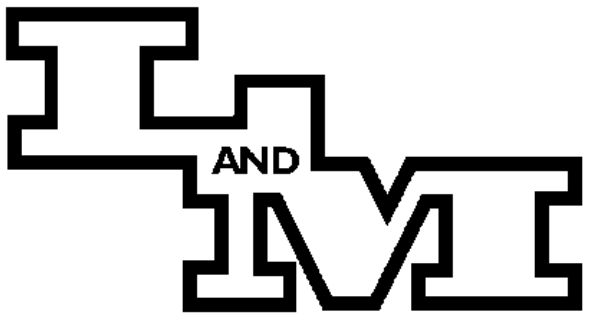
The cell site which was recently activated is located near the intersection of U.S. Highway 81 and West Eighth St. The site improves coverage area for Verizon subscribers on north to west 20th street, areas south of the Missouri River, east to Burleigh street and west to Summit street.

"South Dakotans are increasingly relying on smartphones and applications to manage their busy lives and to stay connected at home or on-the-go," said Seamus Hyland, president of the Verizon Wireless Great Plains region, in a statement. "This new cell site is part of our continual investment in our network so our customers can use their devices when, where and how they need them."

In addition, SDN Communications, a business-to-business broadband service provider in South Dakota and surrounding states, has continued to expand fiber optic connectivity in Yankton.

Yankton was the fourth city in South Dakota to benefit from the company's \$25 million expansion, \$20 million of which was provided through the federal stimulus-funded Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

The construction, which is projected to be



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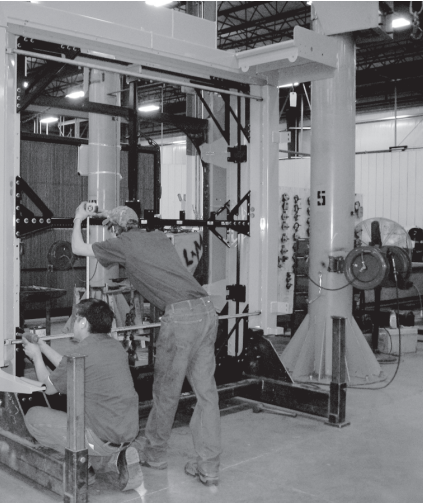


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- 2007 – Sixth plant opens in Yankton, South Dakota, U.S.A.
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