



## SUMMARY REPORT

**Gonic Meeting  
September 22, 2022**

*A Community Meeting to Discuss Zoning and Development*

Hosted by

The City of Rochester and  
Rochester Listens



We envision a Rochester where everyone is connected, engaged, and heard in decisions that impact their lives and where all have equitable access to justice, opportunity, and liberty. *We bring people together to talk, listen, and act so communities can work for everyone.*

*We started off the night asking all in the audience to shout out a word or phrase that describes Gonic. The following was what we heard:*



## BACKGROUND

On September 22, 2022, the City of Rochester and Rochester Listens hosted a community meeting at the Gonic School. The purpose of the meeting was to present information to community residents about re-zoning a piece of city owned property and get feedback on concerns or ideas about the property and its development.

The City decided to host this meeting based on community and Planning Board member concerns at the August 22, 2022 Planning Board meeting about the re-zoning of this property. A link to the video of that Planning Board meeting can be found [here](#). Concerns from that Planning Board Meeting included:

- R2 and spot zoning doesn't belong in this area
- Information about surveying and a housing proposal for property in question that the Economic Development Office was in preliminary discussions about
- The process has not been transparent
- The city did not speak to abutters about this property
- Property lines are not correct
- Concerns about environmental contamination of the property
- Concerns about housing proposal and increase in population/traffic as well as devaluation of abutting properties
- Concerns about apartment /multifamily development in the city in general
- Tired of getting bad things dumped in Gonic (Waste Mgmt, WWTP, etc)
- Gonic lacks support services needed for new residents like in the proposed multifamily development



# ROCHESTER LISTENS MEETING AGENDA

Informative presentations were given by the city Economic Development and Planning Offices, Seacoast Housing Coalition and Catholic Charities.



## Agenda

### Facilitated Conversation with Residents of Gonic about Zoning Changes and Housing Development

**When:** Thursday, September 22, 7:00-9:15 pm

**Where:** Gonic School Cafeteria, 10 Railroad Ave, Rochester, NH

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Shared understanding of what Residential 2 (R2) and the Industrial Zoning Districts are
- Shared understanding of the Housing need across the State and the City
- Learn other concerns/ideas the community has about zoning and housing
- Potentially, gain community input on specific property and potential vision for that property

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
7:05-7:15	Welcome, purpose of meeting	Rochester Listens (Stacey Purslow), <u>Mayor</u> Callaghan
7:15-7:25	Group Norms Icebreaker	Rochester Listens
7:25-8:00	Presentations	Planning, Economic <u>Dev.</u> , <u>Seacoast</u> Housing Coalition, Catholic Charities. 5 minutes each.
8:00-8:45	Small group facilitated discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What concerns about zoning or development in <u>Gonic</u> do you have?</li><li>• If <u>Gonic</u> needs more housing options, what is needed?</li><li>• If time: What do you think about the concept and proposal that was presented?</li></ul>	Facilitators, notetakers
8:45-9:00	Facilitator/notetakers share <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capture themes</li></ul>	Rochester Listens, notetakers/facilitators
9:00 – 9:15	Next steps-information to be shared	Rochester Listens, Planning

## **Planning Department**

### ***Residential 1 and Residential 2 Districts***

Goals of Res Districts: (1) To enhance these older residential areas through sensitive, small-scale infill construction, building renovation, and redevelopment; and

(2) To foster new development in remaining open areas

R1 Districts are intended to allow single-family neighborhoods and thus allows single-family use with few other allowed uses.

R2 Districts allow for a mix of residential types and limited nonresidential uses.

### ***General Industrial District***

The district is flexible in allowing nearly the full range of industrial operations, as well as high-impact uses which might not conventionally be considered industrial: sawmills, power-generating plants, and warehouse and distribution facilities. It also may accommodate those uses generally classified as assembly, high technology, precision manufacturing, research and development, light industrial, and similar office-type functions.

Maintain flexibility in siting the General Industrial District because of design standards which manage potential environmental impacts.

Exercise a minimal to moderate level of aesthetic review based upon the level of segregation from retail-type businesses, residential areas, and ecological resources.

### ***Density Rings***

Adopted In 2018 to promote higher density housing in the 3 villages of the City, Downtown, East Rochester and Gonic. The minimum lot area per dwelling unit within a one-half-mile radius of the Center of Gonic and East Rochester shall be

5000 square feet. Any lot that is partially within the radius of the density ring shall be treated as if it were entirely within the radius of the density ring.

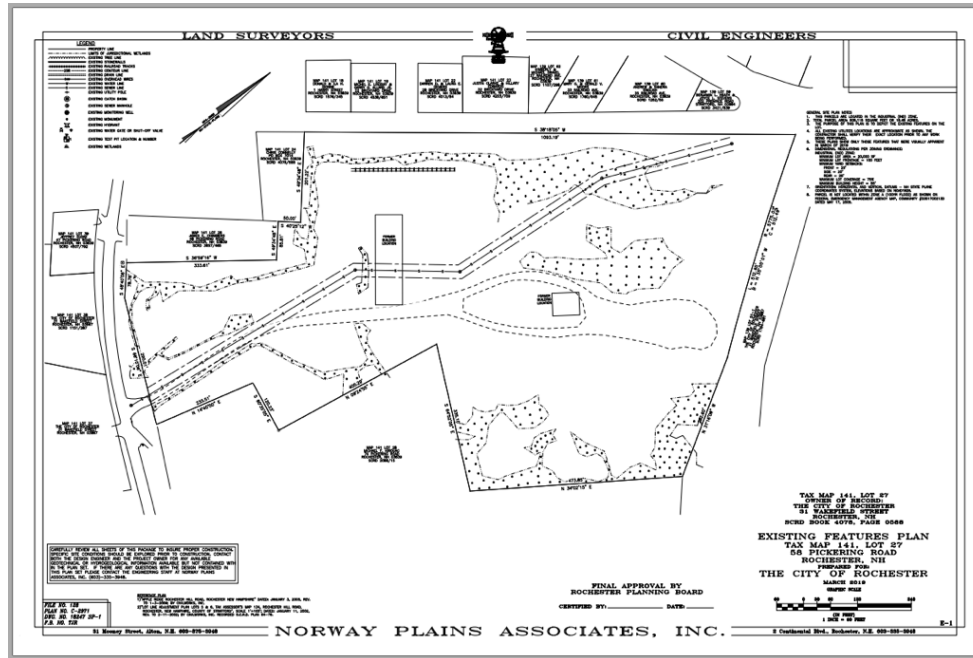
[Link to City Zoning Codes](#)

[Link to City GIS Maps](#)

### ***Land Use Approval Process.***

Once an application is submitted, the City follows the process set out by State statute and caselaw.

- Site Plan or Subdivision Application
  - TRG Meeting with the following Departments:
    - Planning
    - Zoning
    - Building
    - Police
    - Fire
    - DPW
    - Econ Dev
    - Assessing
    - Conservation
  - Abutter Notice
  - Planning Board Public Hearing
  - Conditional Approval
  - Final approval



## Economic Development Office

- City-owned parcel for the past 20+ years.
- Currently zoned as General Industrial
- Marketed as an industrial site but any interested parties have had issues designing around the waste water line that runs through the middle of the property, as well as the clay soils and wetlands
- Changing the zone to R2 would allow for multi family redevelopment
- Goal has always been to add the property back to the tax rolls



Catholic Charities is a non-profit based in Manchester, NH.

“Catholic Charities New Hampshire helps individuals and families – of all ages, beliefs and backgrounds, and at any stage of their struggle – build more stable lives and paths toward self-sufficiency through a range of comprehensive services. We stay connected and responsive to the evolving needs of New Hampshire residents, aligning our programs to address current human services issues.”

Catholic Charities preliminary multifamily affordable housing proposal includes a three story 160-unit development featuring 1, 2 and 3 bedroom options, a community center and store or café.

\*Affordable means rent with utilities is capped at 30% of verified household income.

- The property would not be for section 8 Housing, HUD, or offer rental assistance or subsidized rent.
- The site will have a full-time property manager.
- The property will pay property taxes.
- Anyone applying to live there would have their employment and income verified every year as well as a background check.
- Catholic Charities is committed to working closely with the city and Gonic community on the project.

[Link to Catholic Charities website](#)



## Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast



The housing coalition provided information about the housing and rental market in the state and Seacoast Region of New Hampshire.

- The statewide rental vacancy rate is only 0.3% to 0.5 %. The rate has been declining for a decade.
- Statewide rents have been increasing for a decade or more. The average 2-bedroom rental in Strafford County is \$1,572 per month.

CITY OF ROCHESTER			
	Sample Size	Rent Range	Median
0-Bedroom	13	\$804-\$1,218	****
1-Bedroom	69	\$749-\$1,996	\$1,164
2-Bedroom	184	\$375-\$2,472	\$1,359
3-Bedroom	31	\$473-\$2,013	\$1,597
4+ Bedrooms	2	****	****
All Bedrooms	299	\$375-\$2,472	\$1,290

- The lack of housing units combined with demand = higher rents and housing prices.
- The lack of housing and affordable housing creates challenges for employers such as the school district, police and fire departments and area businesses. Employees can't find or afford housing in this area.
- Renters are paying a disproportionate percent of their income on rent.
- Mixed use or multifamily housing has higher value per acre than single-family housing. Higher property taxes are paid to the city.

[Link to Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast website](#)

**Community Concerns about the Proposed Project and Desired Attributes and Features the Community Would Like**

***Community Concerns***

Increased traffic/congestion

Pedestrian Safety (school is on close proximity)

School capacity

Increased crime

No interest in large-scale development. Small neighborhood development only.

Increase in property taxes and concern over both lower and higher property values

Concerns with Section 8 Housing

Project does not fit into the fabric of the existing neighborhood

Too dense of a development. Concern over Multifamily density.

Environmental Concerns/More soil testing at site

## ***Attributes and Features***

Slower Growth and Small-Scale Development • Master Plan • Maintain Fabric of Community

### ***Recreation***

- Community Gardens
- Dog Park
- More Open/Green Spaces
- Pedestrian and Bike Friendly
- Youth Focused Recreation

### ***Housing***

- Single Family Homes
- Housing for Single Adults

### ***Other***

- Solar/Sustainable Energy

### ***Business***

- Small Business Incubator
- Trade Skill Development
- Maintain Industrial Zoning

### ***Traffic/Transportation***

- Traffic Speed Enforcement
- Sidewalks
- Public Transportation
- More Crossing Guards
- More Schools Buses

## UPDATES

Catholic Charities has withdrawn its proposal for the Gonic site.

“We listened and heard the views of residents regarding the brickyard location and will be exploring potential alternative locations — whether Rochester or surrounding communities.”

[Link to article in Fosters Daily Democrat](#)

[Link to Planning Department Website](#)

[Link to Economic Development Website](#)

## **CONTACTS**

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