

## Affordable housing group sees Hooksett opportunity

◆ **Plan unveiled:** 50-acre parcel on Route 28 Bypass would have to be rezoned.

By **STEPHEN BEALE**  
 Union Leader Correspondent

**HOOKSETT** — Representatives of NeighborWorks Greater Manchester, an organization that builds and rents affordable homes in the area, told the planning board last night its idea for bringing more affordable workforce housing to Hooksett.

NeighborWorks is eyeing a nearly 50-acre parcel on Route 28 Bypass south of Route 3 that is zoned commercial, but difficult to develop for that use because numerous slopes on the property are not compatible with big box stores, according to engineer Steve Keach.

"This is not a high quality piece of land from a commercial development standpoint," Keach

told the board. But affordable housing units could more easily be built on the property, Keach said, proposing it be rezoned to allow a residential project.

NeighborWorks is considering three kinds of affordable housing for the property: single-family homes that would sell for approximately \$250,000; townhouses or condominiums that would cost \$170,000 to \$180,000; and rental apartments that would be affordable for people who earn 50 to 60 percent of the median income in the area.

There currently is little affordable housing in Hooksett, NeighborWorks officials told the board. A person earning about \$59,000 a year could afford only a \$206,000 house while someone making \$88,000 could buy one for \$300,000, according to Linda Dallaire, deputy director for home ownership.

Most properties now for sale,

▶ See **Hooksett**, Page B2

## Hooksett

Continued From Page B1

however, are higher than those prices, according to data NeighborWorks provided the board last night.

There is one home for sale under \$100,000, three homes between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and 18 homes between \$200,000 and \$300,000. The remaining 60 homes are more expensive than \$300,000.

The reaction from the board last night was mixed. "I'm concerned about the impact — the impact of children," said Pat Rueppel, who represents the

town council on the board.

Dallaire said NeighborWorks calculated there would be an average of 1.5 kids per household, but the organization does not have an estimate of how many units of housing it wants to build.

The town itself, in its 2004 master plan, estimates that there are .65 school-age children for every detached single-family home.

Board chairman Dick Marshall warned NeighborWorks that changing the zoning from commercial to residential would

be an instance of spot zoning, something he said the board does not do. Instead, board members indicated they would favor a zoning amendment proposed by a petition.

Charles Watson, the town planner, also suggested the board consider its own zoning amendment that would give developers incentives to set aside a certain percentage of their housing as affordable.

NeighborWorks officials, meanwhile, said they have yet to decide whether they will pursue

a petition this year. Keach said they also have yet to enter into a purchase and sale agreement with the property owner.