



**“Let’s Talk Business!” using *ThoughtExchange***

***A dialogue with Gorham businesses about operating conditions, resources and emerging trends.***

## **Executive Summary**

In March 2026, the Town of Gorham’s Economic Development Division hosted an online dialogue with the Gorham business community to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities businesses are facing. Over the course of four weeks, a series of three “Let’s Talk Business” engagement sessions were held using the online platform ThoughtExchange, a popular engagement tool used in education spaces.

ThoughtExchange is an AI-powered engagement platform designed to present a single open question, collect many candid responses, and surface what matters most through peer rating and analytics. Participants first share their own thoughts, then read and rate others’ contributions using a simple five-star scale. The platform aggregates those ratings to highlight the most valued ideas, themes and concerns.

The dialogue focused on business and economic conditions in the area and invited local businesses to share perspectives on current conditions, challenges, and opportunities. Participants were asked about resources and support programs that would benefit them most, and to look ahead at specific trends that currently or are expected impact their industry.

While perspectives vary by industry, several cross-cutting themes consistently emerge: appreciation for supportive Town staff, concern about regulatory complexity and response timelines, pressure from rising costs, visibility and space constraints, and ongoing workforce challenges. Together, these insights offer a grounded view of Gorham’s current business climate and inform opportunities for targeted economic development strategies.

## **Engagement Context and Methodology**

The findings below are based solely on qualitative comments from three facilitated business engagement sessions. Participants were asked to respond to three open-ended questions:

- HOW WOULD YOU BEST DESCRIBE CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR BUSINESSES IN GORHAM?

- WHAT TYPES OF RESOURCES, ASSISTANCE, OR SUPPORT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS?
- WHAT TREND(S) IN YOUR INDUSTRY OR THE REGION DO YOU SEE MOST INFLUENCING YOUR BUSINESS NOW OR IN THE FUTURE?

Over 150 people across 26 different industries participated in one or more of the dialogue sessions. A total of 117 thoughts from participants were shared in response to the three guiding questions, and these thoughts received a total of 1,479 ratings.

A summary of responses from the most engaged industries (based on overall participation) is below, organized to highlight both sector-specific conditions and shared challenges.

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## 1. Manufacturing, Production & Wholesale

**Doing Business in Gorham** Many manufacturers view Gorham as comparatively business-friendly and praised Town officials for their accessibility. However, high utilities, taxes, infrastructure costs, transportation challenges, and limited workforce housing remain barriers. Unreliable power and outages disrupt productivity.

**Resources & Support Needs** Tax Increment Financing and state programs were cited as valuable tools for offsetting high operating costs. Businesses expressed interest in targeted tax relief for established firms and support with apprenticeships to address skilled-labor shortages.

**Trends & Future Outlook** A lack of skilled labor—particularly machinists and welders—was identified as the primary constraint on growth. Rising electricity rates and increasing regulatory pressure are expected to intensify.

## 2. Shopping & Specialty Retail

**Doing Business in Gorham** Retailers generally find permitting and inspections helpful, though businesses located on side streets struggle with visibility due to limited signage. While customer support for shopping local is strong, growth is constrained by scarce commercial space and resistance to physical changes downtown.

**Resources & Support Needs** The Town's revolving loan fund was described as a critical financial lifeline. Retailers expressed strong interest in expanded village events, public seating, and seasonal programming to increase foot traffic, as well as mentoring and peer-connection opportunities.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Workforce shortages and rising insurance, utility, and inventory costs continue to squeeze margins. At the same time, trends toward quality,

sustainability, and repair-oriented consumption are creating opportunities for higher-value local goods.

### 3. Construction & Building Trades

**Doing Business in Gorham** Contractors characterized the environment as difficult, citing delayed or inconsistent responses and complex sign ordinances. Some expressed concern about perceived lack of support among elected officials, contributing to uncertainty.

**Resources & Support Needs** Participants requested clearer deadlines for Town responses to improve project planning. Shortened municipal office hours were viewed as inhibiting efficient business operations.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Rising costs and expanding regulation remain persistent challenges. Regulatory growth at the state level is viewed as a long-term constraint on the industry.

### 4. Art, Recreation & Entertainment

**Doing Business in Gorham** Participants noted strong community spirit but expressed frustration that many Town initiatives occur at times incompatible with evening-based businesses. Limited parking, high rents, and isolation from the broader business community are ongoing challenges.

**Resources & Support Needs** Creative businesses are seeking consistent, actionable promotion, cross-marketing opportunities, and partnerships to improve visibility. Many noted that long-standing businesses remain largely unknown to residents.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Economic stress has reduced demand for creative services such as photography and design. Changes in social-media algorithms and time constraints on families continue to affect audience engagement. Some fear downsizing among cultural organizations could force relocation.

### 5. Real Estate & Property Management

**Doing Business in Gorham** This sector generally described Gorham as supportive and welcoming, though delays in responses can negatively affect transactions. Participants emphasized the importance of proactive long-term planning to support growth.

**Resources & Support Needs** Economic Development and Planning staff received high marks for their open-door approach. No significant additional resource needs were raised.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Adoption of AI tools for marketing and data analysis is increasing, though professionals cautioned against losing personal connection. Anticipated changes to state housing-density laws and local zoning are viewed as catalysts for development and potential affordability gains.

## 6. Restaurants, Food & Beverage.

**Doing Business in Gorham** Daily operations feel manageable and Town staff support is appreciated, but scaling up—or even maintaining margins—requires fresh approaches to marketing and expanding customer reach beyond the immediate community. Growth and long-term sustainability feel tougher than start-up or basic operations; the local market is “small-town” in size and spending power.

**Resources & Support Needs** Traditional marketing channels are “expensive and can have mixed results,” making customer outreach harder. Programs that reduce overhead (e.g., energy efficiency grants) or drive customer traffic could help restaurants weather tightening margins. Town should support lend support to cooperative marketing campaigns that spotlight Gorham dining and events that bring visitors downtown.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Owners are preparing for further escalating costs that makes everything more expensive —utilities, rent, cost of goods, and labor—while customers’ disposable income lags behind. The ability to raise menu prices will be limited by local income levels. Sustainable or expanding margins will likely depend on programs that reduce overhead (energy efficiency, group purchasing) or increase foot-traffic and visibility.

## 7. Business & Professional Services

**Doing Business in Gorham** The loss of prior networking groups has reduced opportunities for relationship-building, which firms view as essential. Some participants see Gorham at a fiscal crossroads and stressed the importance of balancing residential and commercial tax revenues.

**Resources & Support Needs** There is strong demand for Town-supported networking events and promotional opportunities. Economic development advocates highlighted interest in a “Business Concierge” model to streamline approvals and reduce complexity.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Firms are closely tracking policy changes affecting insurance markets. Artificial intelligence is increasingly integrated into marketing and data use, with training access helping businesses remain competitive.

## 8. Automotive & Marine

**Doing Business in Gorham** Businesses in this sector report significant difficulty finding and retaining qualified employees, compounded by rising energy costs. Tight building codes, high real-estate prices, and taxes limit expansion options and, in some cases, prompt consideration of relocation. Winter operations are particularly challenging, with snow removal and limited parking restricting customer access.

**Resources & Support Needs** Participants emphasized the need for more frequent snow removal and expanded winter parking. There were also repeated calls for reduced administrative burden and faster permitting for transportation-related facilities.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Owners expressed concern about the broader political and cost environment in Maine. Looking ahead, the transition to electric vehicles is expected to reduce traditional maintenance and parts revenue over time.

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## 9. Healthcare & Health Services

**Doing Business in Gorham** Business start-up and permitting were described as challenging but supported by helpful individuals. Limited office space and strict signage regulations restrict expansion and client outreach.

**Resources & Support Needs** Healthcare providers expressed interest in networking and community-outreach opportunities to raise awareness of services.

**Trends & Future Outlook** No sector-specific trend comments were recorded.

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## 10. Education & Nonprofit Organizations

**Doing Business in Gorham** Schools and nonprofits consistently described Gorham as an exceptionally supportive community. However, red tape and complex rules were noted as challenging, despite improvements in permitting processes.

**Resources & Support Needs** Organizations requested clearer points of contact and predictable timelines for permit approvals, particularly for fire reviews.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Shifting demographics and residential growth are expected to reshape service demand. Religious organizations in particular described significant

long-term structural changes that are driving new partnership and shared-space models.

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## 11. Agriculture & Agritourism

**Doing Business in Gorham** Farms located off main travel routes struggle with customer access, a challenge intensified by signage limitations. Experiences vary, with some farmers encountering minimal barriers and others citing burdensome codes.

**Resources & Support Needs** There is strong interest in marketing initiatives that draw visitors inland and compete with coastal destinations. Concerns were raised about large e-commerce firms drawing away both customers and labor.

**Trends & Future Outlook** Participants expressed concern that large distribution centers could absorb an already limited labor force, threatening smaller agricultural operations.

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## Overall Observations

Across industries, five recurring themes emerge: strong community support, simplifying the permitting process, visibility and space limitations, rising operating costs, and workforce challenges. While each sector experiences these issues differently, together they illustrate the interconnected challenges shaping Gorham's evolving economic landscape and highlight areas where targeted, sector-aware interventions may yield meaningful impact.

# DOING BUSINESS IN GORHAM

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HOW WOULD YOU BEST DESCRIBE CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR BUSINESSES IN GORHAM? (Think about how easy or difficult it is to operate, grow, or sustain your business right now.)

1 of 2 >

**Gorham has a great Village area, but not many retail spaces. This could be improved.** Need to accentuate a more vibrant "downtown" feel.

4.1 (21) Ranked #1 of 62



**Gorham is at a crossroads. The community needs business, technology and industry to diversify its tax base to support growth as a community.** Without this growth, the community will have difficulty to balance residential and commercial revenues for the future.

4.1 (17) Ranked #2 of 62



**There doesn't seem to be any one group to bring business community together. No Rotary or Exchange, etc.** This makes it hard to network and navigate the local market.

4.0 (21) Ranked #3 of 62



**Strong business community with significant growth potential if taxes, infrastructure, transportation, and housing are addressed.** Addressing these factors supports workforce access, lowers operating barriers, and enables sustainable economic growth

3.9 (11) Ranked #4 of 62



**As a business in Gorham we face the same challenges business's face everywhere. High operational costs like utilities and taxes are a challenge.** We need to be profitable in order to keep our doors open and supply

3.8 (21) Ranked #5 of 62



good paying jobs to our team members that live in this community.

**The business community is very welcoming and we pride ourselves on community involvement. It would be great to see the town use more local services.**

Having a positive and safe community is important for our employees & clients. We would love to see more growth in our Gorham office.

3.8  (19 )  
Ranked #6 of 62



**Its difficult to open a business due to a lack of prime commercial real estate, and a lack of public willingness to change downtown to accommodate** If we continue to hold out of for a small town feel, we will never have the business tax infrastructure needed to support the population of Gorham

3.8  (4 )  
Ranked #7 of 62



**Not easy, getting harder Taxes**

3.7  (21 )  
Ranked #8 of 62



**I haven't faced too many obstacles in Gorham operating as a business. I have heard other people grumble about code, but idk exactly why** Having diverse, locally owned businesses in our town is important because it helps strengthen the tax base & local families experiences.

3.7  (19 )  
Ranked #9 of 62



**It seems that the current conditions are in a positive growth from, perhaps, the past. It feels like lots a great potential exists for the future.** The creation and sustaining of businesses in Gorham is extremely important to us as it serves our students and faculty/staff who work and/or live here

3.7  (16 )  
Ranked #10 of 62



**Gorham is a supportive and welcoming community with lots of opportunity for business growth.** We need to plan for the growth that will be happening rather than resist change/progress. A good plan will help lessen the long term impact.





















































3.7  (14 )  
Ranked #11 of 62



**Having Kevin and his team there to help has been a positive change the past few years, but still it seems lots of red tape is a barrier for many.** The more

3.7  (11 )



<p>barriers you have, others will go elsewhere and take the path of least resistance.</p>	<p>Ranked #12 of 62</p>	<p>2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>I would say cautiously strong, locally growing, but constrained by broader state level problems.</b></p>	<p>3.6  (20 ) Ranked #13 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>I believe that Gorham supports local businesses and is working to help them grow and prosper.</b> It takes too much energy and is frustrating when a company has to "fight city hall". Business has enough challenges w/o that.</p>	<p>3.6  (19 ) Ranked #14 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>I think Gorham has been business friendly. I believe that the current infrastucture is going to be a problem in the future.</b> The town needs to widen 25 and add a bus stop in the industrial park.</p>	<p>3.6  (18 ) Ranked #15 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>It was a little challenging getting my business going in Gorham in terms of permitting. I had great help with this however from two people</b> Having access to some mentoring in the business community would be helpful.</p>	<p>3.6  (18 ) Ranked #16 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Gorham has been great to work with regarding real estate transactions. Planning Department is helpful answering questions and explaining things.</b> It's important to help continue the growth of the Town of Gorham. We want Gorham to be welcoming to new businesses, which as of now I feel they have</p>	<p>3.6  (11 ) Ranked #17 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>There has been a sustained effort by the Town to make permitting easier and to support businesses interested in coming to Gorham.</b> This has been a longtime goal</p>	<p>3.6  (11 ) Ranked #18 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Gorham is a supportive town to have a business in, but it can sometimes be hard to get questions answered in a timely way.</b> This delay can impact a business when making decisions and have collateral effect.</p>	<p>3.5  (19 ) Ranked #19 of 62</p>	<p>5 ★  4 ★  3 ★  2 ★  1 ★ </p>
<p><b>I think it can be hard to have a business in Gorham, but not sure where it would be easier.</b> Our business is</p>		<p>5 ★ </p>

**not in the village and on a side road.** We struggle to get people to come to the farm to buy products. But when we ran a farmstand off New Portland Rd, we couldn't get them to stop.



**Traffic is a big problem downtown and getting to and through Gorham daily** People do not want to visit a downtown area where parking is limited and traffic not managed property



**Challenging to attract and retain talent in manufacturing and skilled labor** people are what drives business forward, growth impacted when unable to have the people in the building to meet the demands of customers and business



**Our major concerns for operating are difficulty finding employees and the ever increasing energy costs, gas and electricity.** It's very difficult to grow a business without qualified employees, and increasing energy costs take away from growth and employees.



**Kevin Jensen** Smart and experienced



**Operating in Gorham is not a challenge, however growth and sustainability are a challenge** small town economy is challenging. Traditional marketing efforts are expensive and can have mixed results.



**Customers show a tangible eagerness to shop small and support local business which makes it fairly easy to sustain. Growth can be more challenging.** This eagerness is most important in combating big box retailers and the justifying the higher prices local businesses typically have to charge.



**Difficult finding reliable, motivated people to hire; not on a bus line for those without transportation.** Reliable employees is important and often it's transportation related.



**Given the current climate in the country, operating in Gorham is relatively easy. We are able to access Town information when it is needed. We continue to struggle with high costs for healthcare.**

3.4  (20 )  
Ranked #28 of 62



**I think the conditions in Gorham are good. The town is growing with residential and industrial/commercial construction Towns that aren't growing aren't attractive to future businesses**

3.4  (20 )  
Ranked #29 of 62



**Extremely difficult for seasoned operators. Nearly impossible for new businesses ie: Gorham Bike and Ski, Dance Studio relocation Greater Portland (and Gorham) mirrors where the State of Maine is Nationally (47th) down to the bottom**

3.4  (18 )  
Ranked #30 of 62



**There do not seem to be any resources for getting cars to see any business not on Main Street, and no options to add signage beyond the storefront. Without ways to alert drivers to all the side street business no one has a reason to stop in Gorham, sending all shoppers to Standish or Westbrook.**

3.4  (12 )  
Ranked #31 of 62



**We used to have the Gorham Business Exchange as a way to connect with other business owners. Networking is key for my type of business. I also presented a training seminar to the GBE**

3.4  (7 )  
Ranked #32 of 62



**It is very likely that when we outgrow our building we will have to leave Gorham It's tough to compete with tight building codes, expensive real estate, and high taxes with competitors in lower cost environments.**

3.4  (2 )  
Ranked #33 of 62



**So many rules, hard to navigate.**

3.3  (23 )  
Ranked #34 of 62



**Other than a few outliers everyone at the town has been supportive of us and our growth.**

3.3  (22 )  
Ranked #35 of 62



Community support is amazing, but rent has become exorbitant (ours increases EVERY YEAR!). Stabilizing rent would allow us to grow, not just maintain. The dollars of micro, independent businesses like ours are much different than those of Burger King & Walgreens. We can't compete their expense level.



Gorham prefers and prioritizes industrial business; any other type is an uphill battle to run here. The only place to view the economic strategic plan is on the industrial park webpage. It's difficult to operate successfully when ignored.



Business is OK, the town does not interact with my business, I have no room to grow on this lot. Winter time snow removal would be helpful. Winter is the hardest time to do business, getting rid of the snow more often and taking snow from areas on my lot would be helpful.



Gorham is not a very easy town to business. Code enforcement being a very difficult department to deal with. There are and should be rules Code office has a culture of not being willing to understand they are civil servants to be willing to answer questions. "Go hire someone"



We have been operating out of Gorham for 2 years and have not had any issues with operating, growth, or sustainment.



Well my business clients are mostly outside of Maine but it is nice to have had my business in the Gorham industrial park and a very supportive town. Gorham is supportive of small business



Very helpful with all things permitting, inspections, and getting us open!



CMP and electrical outages pose challenges for manufacturing organizations blip in power outages of



any kind disrupt manufacturing organizations productivity and output

**Difficult Pricing, lack of space, town events and promotions, traffic**



**I would say it is easy enough to operate a business here in Gorham, but there are definitely barriers for growth & startup here.** Just because it's easy to operate here doesn't mean a business will stay if they can not grow.



**I wish there was more ability to get more involved with the community and other Gorham businesses.** Networking and community outreach to grow the business



**Over the last 25 years, Gorham has always been the easiest town to business in compared to other towns we operate in.** There is value in knowing town officials and them understanding the challenges businesses already face.



**Poor business friendly environment, unsupported by local government, unless your a housing development /restaurant the town council doesn't want you** This is important because there is going to be no diversity in businesses, while housing is valued higher currently this will not always be the case



**Our community is very supportive. I think it has been relatively easy to operate in Gorham.** Gorham is an amazing community.



**I get a very small portion of my business from Gorham, I have to travel to clients outside of Gorham for the most part.** I'm not sure how to get more business from town residents.



# DOING BUSINESS IN GORHAM

Gorham School District

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HOW WOULD YOU BEST DESCRIBE CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR BUSINESSES IN GORHAM? (Think about how easy or difficult it is to operate, grow, or sustain your business right now.)

< 2 of 2

**The website is hard to navigate and some documents as well, particularly the sign ordinance.** It should be clear where docs needed to do business are on site and what the ordinance governance is/is not for businesses. Simplify/clarify.

3.2 (10 )  
Ranked #51 of 62



**We enjoy having our business in Gorham, but have found few options for office space rentals and regulations about signage make advertising difficult.** We need to move to expand our business and our business is too small for some current options. Signage is important for attracting new clients.

3.2 (8 )  
Ranked #52 of 62



**Increases on cost of living for customers and cost of general operational expenses have made growth difficult on local small businesses** Tighter wallets lead to big chain store sales regardless of travel expense or if a savings even exists. Consumer mindset is they will save money there

3.2 (4 )  
Ranked #53 of 62



**Having only owned our Gorham business for 2 years, so far the conditions seem good. Our limited interactions with the town have been positive.** We are planning to expand our company, and currently

3.1 (21 )  
Ranked #54 of 62



Gorham seems like the the best of our locations to do so, partially because of the conditions.

**The lack of parking downtown is a hindrance to my business.** Allowing customers to be able to park easily removes a barrier that my competitors do not have.



**Mixed. There is strong community support, but many initiatives aren't accessible or relevant for non-traditional or evening-based businesses like mine** If we are unable to participate or feel supported, it's hard for us to grow or continue to contribute to our community fully.



**General healthy town with desirable attributes for residents and businesses** If a town is perceived as healthy and desirable, it will attract residents and businesses - small, services and large



**Gorham takes advantage of businesses by forcing them to fund infrastructure ie: sidewalks / utilities.** We already pay high taxes



**I don't feel like I am part of a business community** I want my business to grow, I am worried



**Business conditions are steady, with opportunities for continued growth.** Central connection that supports attracting customers and staff



**Gorham is a difficult town to do business in.** It is difficult to get a clear answer, departments at the town tend to delay/defer and make it difficult to get a timely and consistent answers



**Gorham is very isolating, I feel like people are very unwelcoming.** I don't find a lot of ways to connect with Gorham residents.



# RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

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WHAT TYPES OF RESOURCES, ASSISTANCE, OR SUPPORT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS? (Think about the kinds of help that would save you time, reduce costs, or remove barriers to operating your business)

**I think consistent, actionable support like promotion, partnerships, cross-marketing, and better business connections would help.** It would build community connections, and help drive real growth, engagement, and participation across industries.

4.1 (17 )  
Ranked #1 of 29



**More events and strategies for getting people to spend time in the village. Could include improved public seating/parks, seasonal events, activities.** The Farmer's Market creates great foot traffic already, making a big boost in sales. More reasons to stay & linger creates business opportunities.

4.0 (19 )  
Ranked #2 of 29



**If there was a formal path towards signage for off main street business it would be a huge help. I would pay for a sign at each end of Main Street.** It feels like Gorham is simply a pass through for commuters heading to Portland, without alerting drivers that there's more it's not going to improve

3.9 (16 )  
Ranked #3 of 29



**Networking: events, directories, etc.** I don't think many people even know I'm here. I've been here for 6 years, and I get maybe one local client a year.

3.9 (16 )  
Ranked #4 of 29



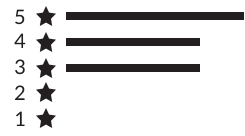
**The single biggest barrier to operating in Southern Maine today is the housing crisis.** Reduces the



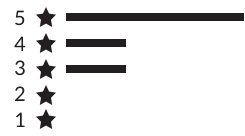
"hidden cost" of recruitment and retention for local employers. Take a leadership role in YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard) coalition building



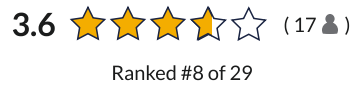
**Implementing a "Business Concierge" program—a single point of contact within your office to shepherd projects through red tape** Time is money when it comes to infrastructure. Also complexity can hinder growth and can be costly before the first shovel of dirt is moved



**Opportunities for business networking in Gorham** Helps us to spread the word about our business and to see how we can support other local businesses



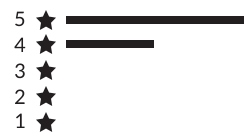
**Better in person inter-business connection, a mentor structure for new business** More business connections would help to find vendors/product to offer. Access to a more established Gorham business/mentor would help guide decisions



**Economic Development and the Planning Department always have their doors open to answer questions and guide people to their objectives.** Its important to help the Town continue to grow from a business perspective and show owners that Gorham is a great place to establish their businesses

































**A Gorham specific "networking" group** It is extremely helpful to connect with other local businesses to learn from one another and the challenges they have already faced as we grow.



**Assistance navigating landscape for planning approval and assistance programs for site expansion/site development** Maine is generally an expensive place to do business. Working with the Town on Tax Increment financing and additional State programs can offset a bit



<p><b>Business property tax is insane. My landlord pays property tax, passes on to me in rent. My equipment does not burden the Town. For any tax, there should be a service.</b></p>	<p>3.5  (17 ) Ranked #12 of 29</p>	
<p><b>If the town is "open for business" it ought to be open normal business hours. 8-5 Monday -Friday! Four-day workweeks inhibit the flow of business. There is a cost to slowing the speed of business</b></p>	<p>3.5  (17 ) Ranked #13 of 29</p>	
<p><b>A person that can be reached reliably and dates when information will be available</b></p>	<p>3.5  (12 ) Ranked #14 of 29</p>	
<p><b>Targeted tax relief for established businesses driving growth; expanded public transportation beyond Village; and more opportunities for large business collaboration and recognition.</b></p>	<p>3.5  (11 ) Ranked #15 of 29</p>	
<p><b>Advertising assistance Helps us to spread the word about our business to those who may benefit from it</b></p>	<p>3.5  (5 ) Ranked #16 of 29</p>	
<p><b>Marketing Bringing more people out this way. So many travel up the coast, but not often toward us.</b></p>	<p>3.5  (5 ) Ranked #17 of 29</p>	
<p><b>I don't know exactly what, but something to help us with our acute skilled labor shortage - maybe assistance setting up an apprentice program? We could grow &amp; expand our business if we could find additional skilled labor, specifically machinists</b></p>	<p>3.4  (13 ) Ranked #18 of 29</p>	
<p><b>When we need permits, it takes awhile and information is slow in coming (fire)</b></p>	<p>3.4  (13 ) Ranked #19 of 29</p>	
<p><b>Financial support, marketing Ways to help businesses launch, grants to sustain, marketing for growth</b></p>	<p>3.4  (5 ) Ranked #20 of 29</p>	
<p><b>Snow removal, Parking is a big issue, and the snow on the streets and around my business hinder that.</b></p>	<p>3.3  (15 )</p>	

<p><b>Once a season for snow removal is not enough</b> Parking</p>	<p>Ranked #21 of 29</p>	<p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Deadlines for Town responses to improve timeliness, cohesion, and accuracy in Town department responses/req'd processes. Without it productivity is lost, costs rise, and unpredictability is had</b></p>	<p>3.3  (8 ) Ranked #22 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>The town's Revolving Loan Fund has been a crucial financial lifeline and asset in supporting the growth of my business</b> When I was dealing with unexpected large costs for mechanical failures, this loan option proved to be an easy and quick financial solution.</p>	<p>3.3  (2 ) Ranked #23 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Improving ability to network with other businesses as well as take part in community outreach. Help to get business name out to the community.</b></p>	<p>3.3  (1 ) Ranked #24 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Elected officials Support</b> It's difficult to do business in a town where 50% of the elected officials do not want businesses to grow and remain in Gorham.</p>	<p>3.2  (17 ) Ranked #25 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>I'm happy</b></p>	<p>3.1  (11 ) Ranked #26 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>support small business and community, stop amazon taking our business don't help them. takes business away, raises our costs</b></p>	<p>3.1  (10 ) Ranked #27 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Less red tape especially for permitting projects. A faster permitting process would encourage investment and get businesses moving forward.</b></p>	<p>3.1  (5 ) Ranked #28 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>
<p><b>Public bus line</b> Transportation for workers without reliable transportation</p>	<p>2.9  (5 ) Ranked #29 of 29</p>	<p>5 ★ </p> <p>4 ★ </p> <p>3 ★ </p> <p>2 ★ </p> <p>1 ★ </p>

# FUTURE OUTLOOK

Gorham School District

Search



Search

WHAT TREND(S) IN YOUR INDUSTRY OR THE REGION DO YOU SEE MOST INFLUENCING YOUR BUSINESS NOW OR IN THE FUTURE?  
(Think about changes you're already seeing or preparing for the next few years.)

**Finding employees with proper technical training and housing availability/general affordability are challenging.** Employees are truly our most important asset. The cost of living in Maine is a challenge as we compete with companies in the region and around world.

4.0 (16 )  
Ranked #1 of 26



**Lack of skilled labor (machinists, welders) available to work in our business** We could grow and expand in Gorham if we could find more skilled workers

4.0 (12 )  
Ranked #2 of 26



**Increase in costs - insurance, utilities, cost of goods** Puts substantial pressure on margin, which limits growth possibilities

3.9 (9 )  
Ranked #3 of 26



**AI - The use of AI for photo manipulation, marketing materials and data is growing in our industry.** AI is great but we can't lose the importance of human intuition, interaction, and personal touch.

3.9 (8 )  
Ranked #4 of 26



**Lack of skilled workforce to meet needs** To advance and grow, it takes the right team

3.9 (8 )  
Ranked #5 of 26



**Reductions in local plan availability** Creates fewer options for people to get the benefits they need.

3.8 (7 )



**Expense Control (utilities, rent, cost of goods, taxes) in an environment where people have less discretionary spending** EVERYTHING is more expensive and incomes don't track, while the average income level of Gorham residents don't support pricing.



**Rising costs and regulation** Taxes and red tape never stop. 135,000 regulations on the books in Maine and growing every day.



**High electricity rates**



**Increased RX costs** Prohibits people from getting the medications they need.



**Maine's overall political climate of ever increasing taxes, uncontrolled benefits, high energy costs, and lack of work force, make it difficult.** Maine legislature is not business friendly, they are driving all the high earners out of state and family owned businesses are sold to out of staters.



**Nationwide trend in advocacy for independent agents** Ensures that people will continue to have access to local expertise and assistance.



**Continuously increasing wages** While it is important for employees to have decent wages, having impossible starting lines makes acquiring learning laborers increasingly difficult.



**The "Quality over Quantity" mindset is gaining momentum quickly. Along with sustainability and "Make Do + Mend" practices.** This shifts buyers to high dollar/quality goods vs inexpensive ones. Allowing us to source more local goods & achieve higher average order values.



<p><b>Changing population</b> With changing populations comes changing needs.</p>	<p>3.5  (10 ) Ranked #15 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Small businesses are facing economic stress, many are not hiring professional photographers, graphic designers, etc.</b> I lose business</p>	<p>3.5  (6 ) Ranked #16 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Affordability of space and parking</b> Space is a premium in the village with little parking and a ton of traffic during rush hour when many classes take place. It deters folks from coming</p>	<p>3.4  (15 ) Ranked #17 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Social media influence and time constraints for families are changing engagement and participation.</b> It's hard for people to find us, as well. This impacts our consistency and growth. It requires us to adapt our offerings, outreach, and community connections to stay relevant.</p>	<p>3.4  (12 ) Ranked #18 of 26</p>	
<p><b>State or regional level LD1829 which will govern housing density. At a local level the the changes in local zoning ordinance ex. Backlot Ordinance.</b> It encourages development in the areas we want development and supply in time will help with housing affordability.</p>	<p>3.4  (5 ) Ranked #19 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Electric vehicles will not need as much service. This will have a huge effect on the auto industry</b> From aftermarket shops to auto parts stores there will be a drop in sales.</p>	<p>3.4  (3 ) Ranked #20 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Use of physical space beyond organizational use</b> Buildings are expensive and current funding structure will not support upkeep</p>	<p>3.4  (2 ) Ranked #21 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Residential Development</b> Will place increasing strains on the need for more services in the community.</p>	<p>3.3  (10 ) Ranked #22 of 26</p>	
<p><b>Our sector is going through a 500 year shift, and partnerships will be a main focus</b> It is a major shift in the way religious organizations do business</p>	<p>3.3  (2 ) Ranked #23 of 26</p>	

**The down-sizing or closing of organizations locally that use our products.** If the trend continues, we may have to relocate.

3.2  (1 )  
Ranked #24 of 26



**Big business, like Amazon poss coming to town, putting small business out of business** This will take our dwindling labor market down to nothing as most small business can't compete w/ amazon wages

3.1  (13 )  
Ranked #25 of 26



**Government changes and the prevalence of AI**  
Government regulations are changing eligibility & the way that people can enroll in health insurance. Access to AI training = helps keep us current.

3.0  (8 )  
Ranked #26 of 26

