

November 9th Forum Feedback

What characteristics give Westmoreland it's rural character?

- 20 Farms, fields, pastures, trees
- 12 Dirt roads, low traffic
- 10 Conservation areas, walking, biking trails
- 7 A mixture of forests, streams and open fields
- 6 Quiet, calm
- 5 Low residential density
- 4 Historic homes, buildings
- 3 Protect hilltops
- 2 Green space
- 2 Localized village(s) and larger farm and dwellings beyond the village proper. Walking/hiking trails could be improved on old woods roads by neighboring landowners for open use/access.
- 2 Neighbors, outdoors, safe
- 2 Slower traffic
- 2 Recreational areas along the river
- 1 neighbors far away
- 1 Slow growth
- 1 No HOA
- 1 Constructive zoning
- 1 Rural areas with places for housing
- 1 Existing farms that produce food

What doesn't Westmoreland have that you wish it did have?

- 9 +(2) Access to (boat landing on) the river for recreation
- 11 A small grocery store
- 5 I'm good as is
- 3 Town park with swimming access
- 3 a restaurant
- 2 Slower traffic
- 2 additional business along Rt 12
- 1 Hardware store
- 1 Improved impact of rural power outages
- 1 Senior housing in a localized configuration
- 1 A network trail system for recreation on old settler's roads
- 1 Preschool & afterschool programs
- 1 more walking trails

This or That

31-Keep a small village center 2-Create a vibrant downtown

24-Explore new designs and designated growth areas

11-Continue development along roadways

Density

4-Reduce lot frontage

8-Do both

4-Reduce lot acreage

12-keep as is

Key Housing Points Shared

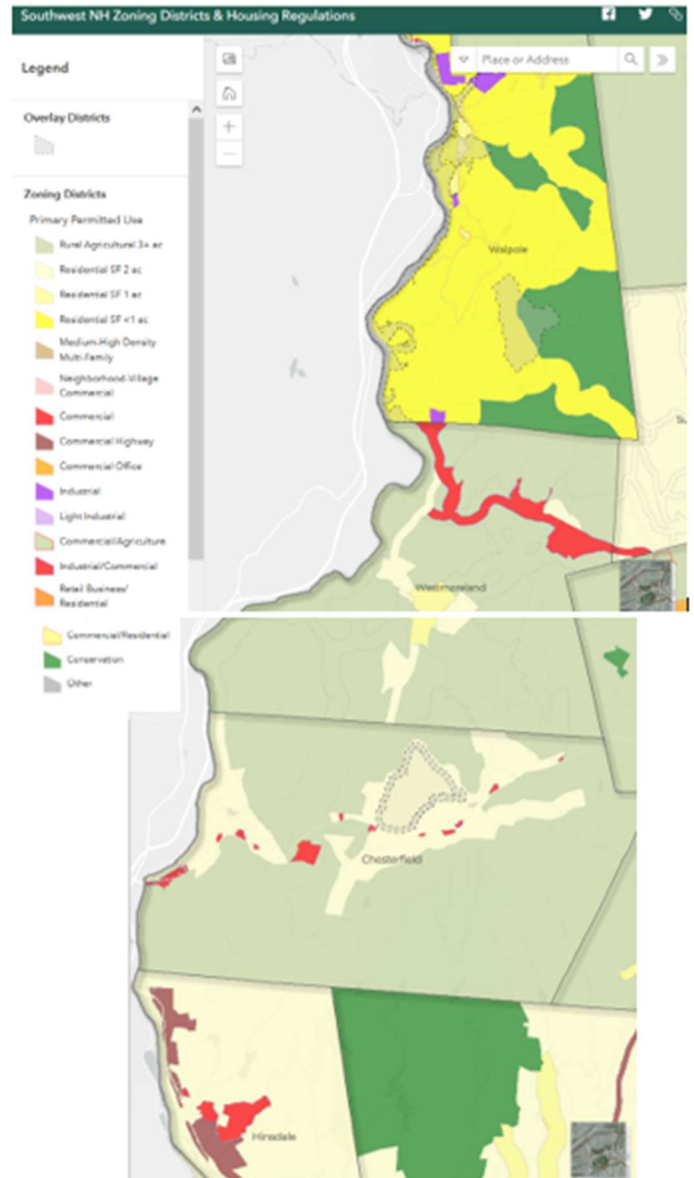
The zoning ordinance balances land rights of the individual land owner with the health, safety, and general welfare of those who have chosen to live together in the community. While some may feel that what one does on one's property is no one else's business, there are things that an individual could do that do affect abutters, neighbors or the community at large. Good Zoning helps define harmonious property use and can direct growth to identified areas. Specifying growth areas makes these areas more attractive to the development community than other areas where the community does not want development. It influences the town's delivery of and cost of services along with the vitality and health of the community,

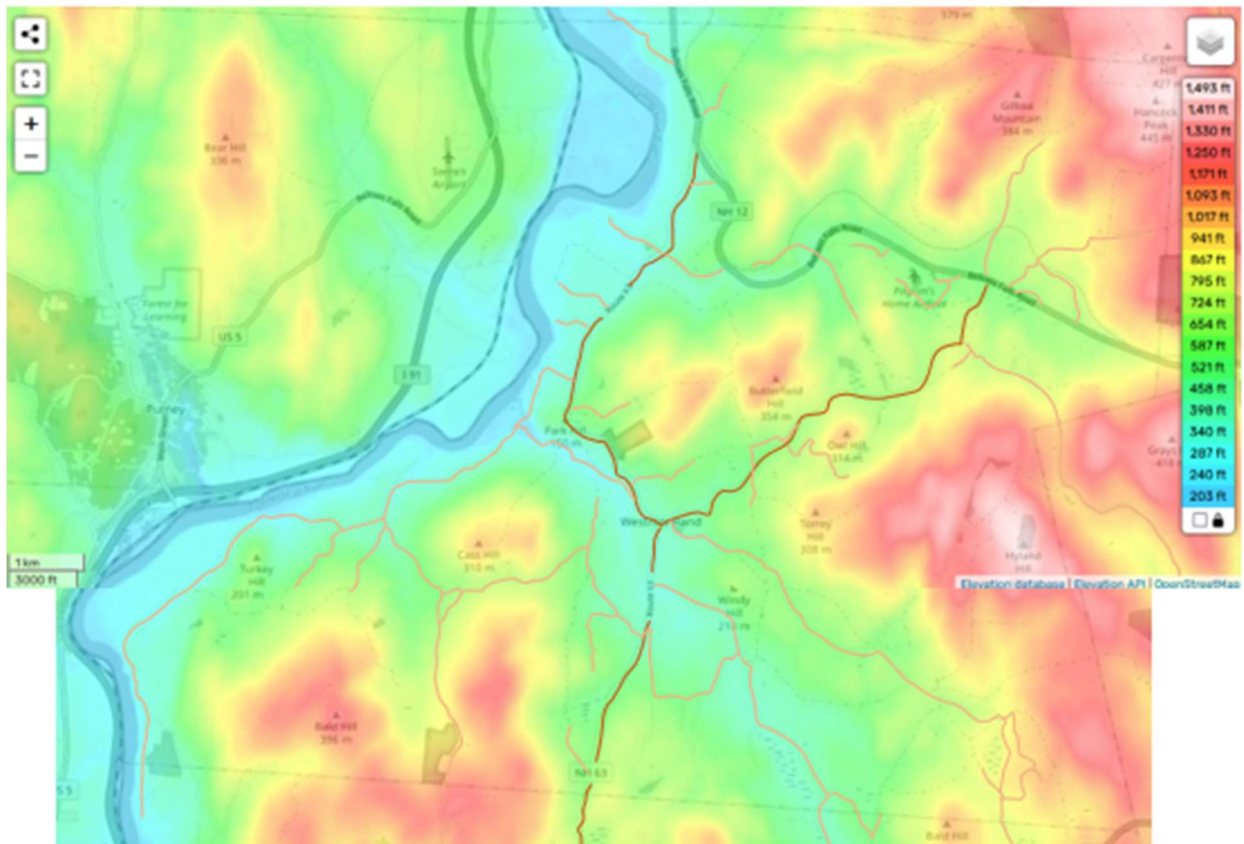
As much as we take comfort in the familiar and don't want our town to change, all towns grow. Recognizing that, the state requires every town to have a master plan and to update it every 10 years. One important aspect of the master plan is how we foresee what the growth will be and how we shape it for the future.

That being said, Westmoreland has some existing limitations. Our geography is hills and mountains with lowlands along waterways. Steep slopes pepper 70% of the town. The lowlands are where farmland lies, some of which is classified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. 20th century development has been along roads in the lowlands. Older roads that went up the hills in the 19th century for the most part are gravel, class 6, or abandoned. Some residents want to preserve the existing gravel roads although these are expensive to maintain. The hilly class 6 roads are difficult and expensive to upgrade. The major highway, Rt 12, just crosses the northeast corner and is bounded along much of it by a brook and hills. The other state road, Rt 63, meanders from Rt 12 in the north through the center of town and exits to the south along a very narrow stretch beside Spofford Lake.

The only three phase power comes along Spofford Rd, through town, down Partridge Brook to Maplewood. We have no public water or sewer system. That makes it unlikely for large multi units to be built as the developer's cost would be prohibitive. In the SWRPC map you can see how the neighboring towns with public water/sewer have smaller lots and higher density as space for wells and septic are not an issue. The state is encouraging towns to put in this infrastructure.

There are larger areas in the southwest corner, northern border and between South Village and Glebe Rds on the eastern border that are the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the state. The triangle between 63 and Glebe Rd on the southern border is the area that has the least overlay of some of these important resources. ([See Westmoreland Conservation Plan](#) for maps showing these characteristics.)





Westmoreland Geography

Our current zoning was developed considering these limitations.

Commercial/industrial residential is along the Rt 12 corridor. 2 acres, 200' frontage, residential 5 ac 500'. The smallest lots are in the village center - 1 ac, 200'.

Medium density is along Rt 63, to the east of VC, and a segment in East Westmoreland - 2 acre, 300'.

Rural residential is along the town roads with wider swaths along S Village and that southern triangle – 5 acre, 500'.

Forestry residential is the back land - 10 ac, 500'.

Determining specific areas intended for growth and those that are to be preserved allows towns to:

- provide services and infrastructure more cost effectively.
- help preserve open space, agricultural lands, and natural resource areas
- provide housing in a variety of types, sizes, and price ranges while considering access to jobs, services, shopping, schools, and places of worship.
- reinforce community character based on historic town patterns.
- create more energy-efficient and sustainable communities
- create guidance for developers to match the community vision.

The region's housing inventory isn't keeping up with the population needs. The required housing study by Southwest Regional Planning Commission shows that Westmoreland is in the top quadrant in in-migration in the region. We are 3rd highest in percent of owner occupied housing at 86% which means there is very little rental housing. We are in the bottom quadrant in housing density at .03 housing units per acre and the second lowest quadrant in added housing units since 2000. In order to meet the housing needs of the region, it is estimated that Westmoreland needs 70 more units by the year 2040.

In 2023, Westmoreland had 682 dwellings. Assessments range from: Highest \$1,415,300 to the lowest \$20,100 with the median \$257,800. However, sale prices are significantly different. NH DRA recently said Westmoreland assessments were not up to equity and is requiring a reassessment which the selectmen have scheduled for 2026.

One issue relating to housing is affordability. For people looking to purchase a home, affordability is based on a household of four earning up to 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI). For our region, 80% of 2023 HUD Median Area Income for Family of four is \$89,680 so the estimated affordable purchase price is \$254,000 (46.5% of Westmoreland dwellings based on assessment). 100% of 2023 AMI is \$112,100 with an estimated Affordable Purchase Price of \$317,500 (72.6% of Westmoreland dwellings). For renters, which tend to have smaller income than owners, affordability is based on a household of three earning up to 60% of the AMI adjusted for a family of three which is \$60,530. The Estimated Maximum Affordable Monthly Rent is \$1,510. For those earning the median renter household income (census figures), an affordable rent would be \$1,106 per month. Westmoreland does not meet the measure for affordable rental units which is why the ADU ordinance was established. However, this does not control the rental price the owner sets.

Let's look at some of the possible configurations to address housing needs. What do you feel is desirable for Westmoreland?

Single family houses – the most common type of housing both in town and in the region. The recent challenge has been that with the in-migration of people from the eastern seaboard the demand is for larger and fancier homes. The building industry has responded and this has increased sale prices. Because these folks are moving in from elsewhere, the normal balance of folks moving from a smaller home to a larger home, freeing up the smaller home for the lower end of the market is no longer occurring. The other issue is with the population living longer, seniors are staying in family housing which means it isn't available for younger families. There are few other options for seniors who are healthy and active but desire smaller housing or less maintenance.

Accessory Dwelling Units - ADUs are accessory small, self-sufficient dwelling units on single-family plots. Whether these structures are new or adapted, detached or attached, ADUs are designed to blend into existing neighborhoods. Westmoreland added ADU's in 2016 prior to the state law requiring their adoption. In 2020 Westmoreland expanded the ordinance to allow ADU's in detached accessory structures. ADU's empower individual homeowners to create housing on their own property while also keeping their neighborhood's "feel." ADU's help to increase a community's housing density without needing to develop new land. One question is whether the ordinance should allow ADU's on properties where the owner doesn't reside – it means nonresidents could buy and develop properties without living here and being a part of the community.

Apartments – This is similar to an ADU in that it is also self-contained dwelling units but it doesn't have the constrictions such as size, accessory classification, and owner residing. It can be a single apartment in an existing house. Other configurations include:

Duplex/triplex/fourplex – these tend to be more affordable than a single unit detached home but can fit in well with the character of neighborhoods that are predominantly single-unit detached housing. These can be oriented vertically stacked, side by side, or a combination.

Apartment building or multifamily housing – usually 5 or more apartments in a larger structure. This is unlikely to be an application for Westmoreland currently as we do not have municipal water or sewer and the cost for a large system is prohibitive for a developer.

Manufactured housing parks – Every NH town must allow for manufactured housing (formerly called mobile homes) on individual lots in at least some zones, and Westmoreland does. Manufactured home parks are clusters of mobile homes in one development, usually with shared septic and water sources.

What we don't have currently is:

Condominiums – a building or development with multiple dwelling units where each unit has separate ownership. External maintenance is usually the responsibility of the condominium association and each owner pays set fees into the association to cover these costs. Does this concept fit in Westmoreland's character? Is it a way to support our aging population as it provides ownership with much less maintenance?

Conservation subdivision - is a style of development in which homes are grouped closer together on a site and the remaining land is shared open spaces that is protected with a conservation easement. It increases density while also preserving natural resources, providing high quality open space amenities, and reducing the ecological impact of new development. Having homes closer together minimizes impervious surface and site grading; reduces the cost of construction and maintenance of infrastructure; protects important views and vistas for the community; improves storm water management; and provides outdoor recreation opportunities.

Cottage Courts aim to foster community by clustering smaller houses around a shared green space with cars and utilities placed outside of these clusters. The close proximity of front porches, shared walkways, and group living spaces encourages neighbors to get to know each other and build strong social bonds. Is this a way to support keeping seniors in town?

Some recent or upcoming issues are around:

Short term rentals – this is use of housing for things such as air BNB or vacation rental. While this can be an income stream for the owner, it removes a dwelling unit from availability for permanent housing.

Tiny homes – Very small (400 sq ft or less) dwelling unit built on a movable frame. Current concerns relate to utility access (power, water, septic) and the fact that the low resulting taxes don't come close to covering the cost of services used.

Should zoning allow smaller lots or less frontage, allowing more density and possibly (no guarantee) more affordable lots? Should zoning allow a density bonus to developers who plan developments with houses that are smaller in square footage and simpler in design so they are less expensive? If we should allow more density, in what areas of town should this take place?

The Zoning Tables lay out what is permitted in a zone and what is permitted with a special exception which means a review by the Zoning Board of Adjustment to determine if it is a good "fit" for the neighborhood using proscribed measures. If a use is not listed in the table for the zone where the property lies, it is only allowed if a variance is granted by the Zoning Board after considering 5 measures and these are not easily passed.