

# TOWN OF WESTMORELAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE

## MASTER PLAN 2003

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A local planning board is responsible, by New Hampshire law, for the development of the Town's Master Plan. This is a demanding and time-consuming project, and it can not be completed without the participation and input of town officials and residents, who provided the much-needed vital information, perspective and opinion.

We want to thank the residents of our Town that responded to the spring town survey and provided the basic information needed by our Master Plan Subcommittee. Their written comments and responses were a necessary and key part of the process of updating the 1986 Master Plan.

A special thanks is extended to our Town's past Administrative Assistant, JoAnn LaBarre and to her very able replacement, Elaine Hall guiding us through the processes of a survey and information gathering were invaluable.

The Subcommittee members would also acknowledge the overall guidance and information provided by the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) staff. A special thanks is offered to Eric Twarog, Xia Jin (Jean) and Jeffry Porter. Having these people just a phone call or E-mail away was very reassuring. Having ready access to the information and guidance they provided was truly essential to our team. Thanks to Bill Hunter and Bill Howland for updating the Town's history section and Walter Carroll for the cover design

As chairman of our Master Plan Subcommittee, I want to take this opportunity to especially thank the members of our team that labored through this long hot summer researching and writing the sections of this plan. It is their type of commitment to our community that makes Westmoreland an outstanding place to live.

### MASTER PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE

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This new Master Plan is dedicated to the memory and dedication of Reginald Simino. Reggie served our community in many ways including over two decades on the planning board. His planning foresight and dedication to our town and its people will indeed be missed.

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## **GENERAL STATEMENT**

### **The Master Plan: Purpose and Description**

As stated in RSA 674:2 , “The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.”

### **The Town Survey Process**

As an initial part of the process of generating a new master plan, we conducted a town survey. The purpose was to determine public concerns and perceptions of the present town and what direction the people would like to see the town take in the future. From the results we put together a list of charts and recommendations for town growth.

The mechanics of initiating the survey was to modify a survey used in the previous master planning process. We reviewed town surveys from similar sized communities in the area using a library of surveys from SWRPC. We had 850 forms printed. About 150 went to out of town property owners and 650 were distributed to all post office boxes and town mailboxes. This then included all town property owners and renters. The forms were mailed out late February and were expected to be returned by March 22. The last actually came in May 1 but indeed the majority was returned within one month. An example of the survey form is attached in Appendix B.

With regard to results, we received a total of 241 forms which included 277 individual responses. 202 forms were from residents. With 576 households (per 2000 census) this means a 35 % response rate for households. About 150 forms were sent to out of town property owners. 38 of these forms were returned for a 25% return rate. Both of these return rates were quite good. The returns were then tabulated onto a survey worksheet and charted using Excel. A copy of the worksheet with total numbers and the charts are included in the Appendixes.

## **SECTION I**

## **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Based upon the survey returns, public hearings and written comments we have generated a number of goals that Westmoreland should be striving toward. In addition, several more goals that are of a more general nature reflecting the overall goals of the Monadnock Region have been included. In preparation of the Master Plan, it is important that development be defined and oriented towards the attainment of established goals and objectives

Following each goal is a list of objectives or recommendations that would assist the town officials in their efforts to achieve these goals. Survey data and supporting information are referenced with the objectives/recommendations. The particular element or elements of town government that might deal with the recommendations are included as well. These goals and objectives are an important part of the Master Plan, and adoption by the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, and, in principle, by the Town Meeting should be considered.

The following are definitions for the goals and objectives used in the planning process:

- A. Goals: The goals are developed as part of the Master Plan and approved by the Planning Board. They focus on the fundamentals which require application of effort and energy by the community over a period of time in the future. Goals give direction and guidance in coordinating the town's progress, development and preservation of character.
- B. Objectives: The objectives are recommended steps directed toward the attainment of established goals. They aim for accomplishments which can, in turn, fulfill established and adopted goals by the town. In the planning process, the attainment of one objective or a series of objectives, should lead to the fulfillment of an established town goal.

### **Recommended Goals & Objectives**

**Goal 1. Retain the rural character of the town by limiting and closely controlling development.** This seems to be an overriding response from the survey results. A modest growth of businesses seems acceptable if they are limited primarily to areas along Route 12. Most respondents preferred that businesses and single family homes remain the same with little or no growth. Most respondents wanted cluster housing, multi-family homes and mobile homes to decrease. The idea of a suburban community with small lot sizes of one acre or less was particularly disapproved.

#### Specific Objectives

- a. Limit commercial/industrial zoning to Rt. 12. Limit the visibility of these developments and the number of access roads by using park clusters away from the road with a minimum of signs and lighting.
- b. Remove commercial/industrial zoning along Hurricane Rd. The commercial/industrial development of land along Hurricane Rd. is inconsistent with preserving the rural character of our town.
- c. Consider TIF (Tax Increment Financing) for funding infrastructure improvements for commercial and light industrial development. This will encourage quality development for the community. The present industrial park is a good example of what might be done. It has good

access to a major road and has a single entrance and exit. The park has some reasonable landscaping; signage is minimal and is not excessively noticeable to Rt. 12 users.

d. Although cluster housing concepts did not rate well in the survey, there are a number of planning and zoning techniques that will preserve open space as well as minimize sprawl. The Planning Board might want to have a series of public meetings that would introduce the concepts of these techniques. Ordinances would then be modified to encourage the preservation of open space. The SWRPC would provide valuable resources for this type of public education. An example of an excellent alternative is called Conservation Subdivision Design.

e. The planning board should consider the use of impact fees in order to help control the cost of additional town facilities associated with development.

f. The planning board should consider town ordinances that would encourage the upkeep of homes, land and businesses such that surrounding property values are not adversely affected. A number of written comments from the survey stressed concern and the need for strict enforcement.

**Goal 2. Retain the rural character of the town by preserving the major elements that make this town's rural character. These include wild life habitat, farms, wetlands and river shore land.**

Specific Objectives:

a. The Conservation Commission should complete the NRI (Natural Resources Inventory). This will highlight the major natural resources of the community and allow controlled development to proceed with minimal impact upon the plant and animal communities within the town. The inventory should specify critical areas that need maximum protection. The survey results indicate a very high interest in preserving wildlife habitat, wetlands and forest areas. Part of the NRI shall include an inventory and evaluation of wetlands. Where appropriate, the commission shall see that a Prime Wetlands (RSA 482-A: 15) designation be applied in order to ensure adequate protection.

b. The Planning Board should adapt and incorporate the provisions of the 1997 Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan. - The Connecticut River is a major asset to our town and retaining the rural character of this portion of Westmoreland should have high priority. The Westmoreland Conservation Commission recommends that the Town of Westmoreland adopt the principles and ideology of the 1997 Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan. The plan was prepared and presented to the Town by the Wantastiquet Subcommittee as part of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions to provide local diverse input in planning the sound use and conservation of the river resources. An updated version (6/02) is included in Section 8.

c. The Conservation Committee should set up a subcommittee focused upon farm land protection which was shown in the town survey to be a key element in preserving the rural character of the community. Urban development pressure has been a major cause of loss of farmland in New Hampshire. The scenic Connecticut River valley farmland along River Road should have high priority in land conservation efforts in our town.

Conservation easements are an important tool for the preservation of prime farm land. These easements imply buying the development rights from the land owner. Money for this purpose is not easy to obtain but the need is great. The recent purchase of Sawyer Farm in Walpole is a local example of farmland protection. The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the New Hampshire Farm Protection Program and \$200K of private money funded this effort. A number of agencies, including The Monadnock Conservancy and the Trust for Public

Lands, are available to help in this process. The goal here should be to obtain conservation easements or development protection of all river frontage shore land within Westmoreland.

d. Land Conservation - Land conservation received the highest positive response to survey question # 8 (Would you be willing to see the town budget increased for any of the following: (ie. possibly resulting in increased taxes?). 67% responded that land conservation was worthy of budget increases. The next highest was Fire/Rescue protection at 50.6%. Here again conserving land is a key element in retaining the rural character of our town.

Conservation easements, again, are a major tool and finding funding is a major issue. Many organizations including The Nature Conservancy and The Monadnock Conservancy are available to help with this process. The Natural Resources Inventory is another important part of the land conservation efforts in our community in order to determine the critical areas that need protection. Funding is a major issue. A number of organizations provide funding for land protection, particularly if the land has plant or animal communities that are in critical need of protection.

e. The Conservation Commission should setup a subcommittee focused upon land conservation issues. Their activities would include group and public education, determination of land conservation priorities, learning processes and developing funding sources. The goal here should be to conserve 25% of the land as it is presently being used.

**Goal 3. Improve communication between the elected officials, town residents, town business owners and land owners.** The survey specifically asked if a quarterly Selectmen letter and a town web page would be desired. An overwhelming number of respondents wanted both. Quite a number of written comments also indicated a strong need for better town communications.

Specific Objectives

a. Complete work that has been started on a town web site. This site should include information on town history, census results, a town personal directory, business directory, a town calendar, a listing of all boards/commissions and members. A listing of all official town meetings including agendas and minutes would be useful. Some sort of major issues news letters from the various chairmen might also be useful. The written comments also suggested using the Westmorelander for more communication. See the survey data in Appendix C.

b. The Selectmen should begin a quarterly article to town residents. This could be published in the Westmorelander and the new town web page. See the survey data and written comments in Appendix C and E.

c. Although not specifically asked, these quarterly results could also include short updates by other town officers including the Planning and Zoning Board, the Conservation Commission and the School Board.

**Goal 4. Preserve historic areas and buildings.** Although these historic areas were not at the top of the need-to-preserve list in the survey, these buildings and scenic areas are key elements in the character of the town and are very worthy of protection.

Specific Objectives

a. The Planning Board should setup a subcommittee to look into the use of historic overlay districts. This committee would determine what sites are worthy and in need of protection, determine priorities, learn the available tools and make specific recommendations to the Planning Board. There are a number of sources of written information and technical assistance available from the state and SWRPC.

**Goal 5. Retain the quality of satisfaction with town services.** The survey response indicated a rather high level of satisfaction with town services.

- School system – 81% respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Fire/Rescue – 78% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Police/Safety – 38% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Town Government – 60% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Recreation – 44% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Roads – 55% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Waste Disposal – 60% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.
- Library Quality – 74% of respondents reported excellent or good quality.

See the survey data in Appendix C

#### Specific Objectives

- a. Police/Safety – A significant number of written comments from residents expressed concern about protocol for non-threatening police/safety issues. Some sort of communication seems to be needed explaining who and how to contact for assistance with non-threatening situations.
- b. Town Government – Communication seems to be a major issue. See Appendix C and E.
- c. Recreation – Written comments included concern about the quality of the school's playground, the upkeep of the tennis courts and the need for more walking trails. The survey shows a high percentage of retired people in the community (29%). There is much opportunity here; for improving the quality of life with volunteering effort from senior citizens. We recommend that the Planning Board put together a study team to see what needs exist, recommend a plan and hold public hearings about what might be done and supported by the Town. This document could then be used to update the Master Plan.
- d. Roads were considered generally good but there were a number of written comments concerning class V unpaved roads. The comments were about equally divided between wanting them paved and wanting them left unpaved. A more specific survey and public hearing by the residents along these roads and a cost/benefit study involving the town Road Agent might help resolve this issue.
- e. A second issue involving roads is to ensure that significant future development proposals include studies detailing the cost and impact to the Town's road system.
- f. Waste disposal involving the Town's transfer station was another issue that had divided feelings about keeping or closing the site. Using Keene's station seems to be a way of cutting town taxes and providing a wider range of recycling. On the other hand, many feel that our own station helps retain the rural character of the community. A study involving the alternatives and cost comparisons coupled with public hearings might be a way of resolving this issue. We recommend that the Selectmen appoint a citizens committee to put together a series of alternatives along with costs. Town meetings allowing public input and discussion should lead to a reasonable solution.

**Goal 6. Support a full range of quality housing needs while continuing to retain the rural character of the town.**

Specific Objectives

a. Consider town ordinances that would encourage alternative development methods such as conservation subdivisions. Here again a planning board sub-committee could, using SWRPC, generate some alternatives, see what is working in other local communities, present some public presentations and propose the necessary ordinance changes to the Planning Board.

b. Consider town ordinances that would encourage the upkeep of homes, land and businesses such that surrounding property values are not adversely affected.

**Goal 7. Support the efficient and effective operation of town services.**

Specific Objectives

a. Consider setting up a capital improvements plan that would allow for an orderly and cost effective program of updating infrastructure. This allows a town to understand its present operating costs and better understand the financial impact of new development.

b. Consider using impact fees to help alleviate the financial impact of new development to the infrastructure and our school system.



The Master Plan Committee using tax cards, the town data base, census data and the 1986 Master Plan developed the data in Table 1.

**AGRICULTURAL:** This is still, by far, the most predominant active use of land in Westmoreland. Farms, pastures, and fields for growing corn and hay are scattered throughout the town, with major concentrations along the Connecticut River and in the central and southern portions of town. Agriculture is perhaps the most difficult type of land use to categorize in a survey because acreage may remain idle for much of the time. The 1985 windshield survey indicated 2,557 acres of agricultural land use in Westmoreland. We elected to use the somewhat larger figure of 3,058 acres from the current use data in the town's data base system. We talked to a number of farm related individuals that reported they had seen very little change in agriculture acreage since 1986. They knew of only about 10 – 20 acres of land that had been taken out of use by home construction since 1986. The difference between these two acreage figures is very probably within the error margins of the data collection.

The conclusion seems to be that there has been little change in agricultural acreage since 1986. It would seem that the greatest threat to the town's farmland remains large scale development and, over a long period of time, incremental development. The Planning Board will want to have suitable ordinances in place to ensure that this development is done with minimum impact to the agriculture lands of Westmoreland.

**INDUSTRIAL:** This use represents the second largest land use category in Westmoreland. Included are a large crushed stone operation (1082 acres), the Hubbard Farms Research Center (102 acres) and several small manufacturing enterprises that account for a approximately 1,200 acres of the town's current land inventory. Other than the industrial park on Rt. 12, there seems to be very little change in land devoted to industrial use.

**RESIDENTIAL:** This is the next most predominant use of land in Westmoreland. The estimated 618 acres of residential land is, again, scattered throughout the town with major concentrations in and around the South Village, East Westmoreland, Westmoreland Depot and Park Hill areas. This estimate is based upon a 2000 Census figure of 618 housing units (576 occupied) and assuming a one acre average of yard per house. Residential land use is predominantly single-family homes, with virtually no multifamily development. Furthermore, there is little seasonal home development in Westmoreland. A more detailed description of the town's residential development is included in the Housing Section. The 618 acres figure indicates a 30.4% (144 acres) increase over the 1986 figure. This percent increase compared to no significant change in agriculture and industrial land use would indicate that the town is becoming more of a bedroom community.

**ROADS:** These also use a significant portion of Westmoreland's land. The 63.5 miles of town and state roads in Westmoreland account for an estimated 278 acres of land in the community. These road networks are described in detail in the Traffic and Transportation Section. A 38' average width was assumed for all roads.

**COMMERCIAL:** This activity accounts for an estimated 96 acres, and is concentrated in and around South Village and along the Route 12 corridor with other small-scale commercial uses scattered throughout the town. The source for this acreage is based upon a list (see Section 10) of 48 businesses provided by the town office. An average of two acres/business, as suggested by SWRPC, was then used to determine the acreage used by commercial businesses within Westmoreland. This estimate indicates a large increase from the 30 acres reported in 1986.

**INSTITUTIONAL and GOVERNMENTAL:** These land uses include churches, schools, cemeteries and town buildings, and are concentrated primarily in the town's villages. Together, these account for about 31 acres. The Maplewood Nursing Home and the Cheshire County Jail

are also included in this category; however the “County Farm” is considered an agricultural use. There appears to be no noticeable increase in these acres. Enlargement of the correctional institution is however being considered.

In total, approximately 5,003 acres, or 21.7 percent of Westmoreland’s area, is actively and regularly used for the above-mentioned categories of land use. This leaves some 18,097 acres, or 78 percent, open and potentially available for future development. Much of this land is probably unsuitable for future development for a variety of reasons. Large sections of Westmoreland are still remote and relative inaccessible due to a lack of roads. Other areas are incompatible with intensive development due to the physical constraints of the land itself to include steep slopes, wetlands, seasonal high water tables, floodplains, and shallow to bedrock soils. Finally, the future land use policies of the town itself may preclude the intensive development of certain areas. The preservation of farmland or major aquifers is possible examples of land that could be preserved under such a policy. In order to develop a realistic future Land Use Plan, each of these factors must be carefully considered.

**Analysis of Development Capability**

An essential element in the development of a Land Use Plan is consideration of the actual physical characteristics of the land and the extent to which these characteristics affect the land’s ability to accommodate future development.

One of the most practical methods for undertaking such an analysis entails the use of the National Cooperative Soil Survey of Westmoreland, prepared by the U.S.D.A.’s Soil Conservation Service (S.C.S.) and the Cheshire County Conservation District. This soil survey provides a wealth of information as to the actual characteristics of Westmoreland’s land as they pertain to its ability to safely support new development. A large map of these soils is available along with a copy of SOIL SURVEY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY NEW HAMPSHIRE in the town office.

Using a system of categorizing and rating various soils for their development potential, the S.C.S. and the Southwest Region Planning Commission have developed a series of maps indicating those areas which can most successfully accommodate new development, as well as those areas which pose considerable constraints to the development. In addition, these maps illustrate areas of land well suited to agriculture, of which Westmoreland has abundance. Of course, much of this prime agricultural land also has a very high potential for other types of development, making it vulnerable to conversion for other uses.

A summary of the data in terms of acreage from those soil potential studies follows:

| <b>Development Potential</b>       | <b>Approximate Acreage</b> | <b>Percent of Total Land</b> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Very High                          | 1,082                      | 5                            |
| High                               | 1,930                      | 8                            |
| Medium                             | 1,907                      | 8                            |
| Low                                | 2, 361                     | 10                           |
| Very Low                           | 7,343                      | 32                           |
| Wetlands, Floodplains, Agriculture | 8,476                      | 37                           |

**Table 2 Development Potential**

In addition, using more recent data, SWRPC created a Limitations to Development map located in the town office) and Table 3 shown below.

| <b>Potential Development Limitations</b>              | <b>Acreage</b> | <b>Percent of Total Land</b> |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Steep Slopes ( > 25° )                                | 4,907          | 20.8                         |
| Shallow to Bedrock ( < 40" )                          | 9,178          | 39.0                         |
| Shallow to Water Table ( < 1.5' )                     | 4,535.2        | 19.2                         |
| Flood Plain   | 343.1          | 1.5                          |
| USGS Wetland & Hydric soils (wetland Indicators)      | 1,284          | 5.4                          |
| Total Wetland Indicators including State/Town Buffers | 4,416          | 18.7                         |
| Conservation Lands                                    | 791            | 3.4                          |
| County Land   | 616            | 2.6                          |

**Table 3 Development Limitations**

Through thoughtful and intelligent planning and land use controls, the town can direct new growth into areas which are best suited to each type of land use. This advance knowledge of what areas of town can best support development will enable the town to plan in advance for roads, utilities and other municipal services.

## **Westmoreland’s Opportunities and Limitations for Development**

Three major factors were included in the development of the Opportunities and Limitations for Development Map – engineering characteristics of the soils, agriculturally important soils and terrain slopes.

The important soils characteristics are flooding, depth to bedrock, wetlands, and occurrence of a seasonal water table as interpreted from the SCS maps and data sheets for the town. In evaluating these data, the SCS slope information was ignored. The soils limitations data are mapped in detail on a separate map and presented on the combined map as limitations due to soils.

Agricultural soils data were derived from the SCS Agricultural soils Map prepared for the town. In place of the SCS slopes, interpreted data from USGS topographic maps have been substituted.

Factors considered under moderate limitations classification –

1. Agricultural soils of state-wide importance,
2. Slopes between 15 and 25%, and
3. Soils classified as gravel pits and fill.

Factors considered under moderate to severe limitations classification –

1. Soils with seasonal high water tables (wide site by site variability, a few days to more than half a year),
2. Agricultural soils of national importance.

Factors considered under severe limitations classification –

1. Slopes in excess of 25%,
2. Muck and Peat and Fresh Water Marsh,

3. Soils subject to flooding, and
4. Soils less than 1.5 feet to bedrock.

In using these maps, it must be remembered that the data have been interpreted from maps and have not been checked in the field. The maps serve as a guideline to represent general characteristics within an area but the conditions at a specific site within an area may be quite different.

The community survey that was conducted in the spring of 2002 clearly indicates that the town residents are concerned about the community's future. They indicated that it was Westmoreland's attractiveness that brought many here to live and they would like to see these attributes preserved.

If the community wishes to address the future properly, it must take into consideration not only its own wishes and desires, but those responsibilities placed upon a community by the State of New Hampshire. These require a community to provide for its future growth and development, and in doing so must accommodate such reasonable development patterns as can be expected in a community like Westmoreland.

The Land Use Plan deals initially with an overview of past developments that have shaped the town. Land use data, coupled with the Soils and Survey Report and its interpretation, provide significant information in the formulation of the town's development plan.

The present land use pattern in Westmoreland has evolved as a result of over 250 years of occupation of the town. People have sought livelihoods in the community and the various stages of these economic endeavors are all reflected in today's community patterns. Added to this are the creation of the railroad, the regional impact, and the growth of Keene as a major local job market.

Like most New England communities, the settlers of Westmoreland were initially interested in basic subsistence items such as water and waterpower, farm produce, flour and lumber, and many took advantage of natural attributes to support their livelihoods and endeavors. While initial settlement took place along the river, a road network soon brought about development throughout the community with houses built in the outlying sectors. This typical New England rural pattern lasted until the end of World War II. With the accessibility via the automobile and the affordability to commute, people then settled in Westmoreland, finding employment opportunities in nearby job centers.

These patterns show that the town has settled around the existing villages of East Westmoreland, Park Hill, South Village and the Westmoreland Depot.

## **Land Use Problems**

At the present time, there are two interrelated patterns occurring simultaneously in Westmoreland that are having a major impact upon the town. One is the tangible and affordable commuting pattern to nearby employment centers, and the other is the increased population the town is experiencing after the more than 100 years of population decline starting in the 1820's. This rise in population is a result of both the accessibility to nearby jobs and the attractiveness of the community itself.

Developments such as Owl's Hill are indicative of this phenomenon. As Westmoreland becomes more accessible through improved roads, there are sections of the town that are now, and should remain, isolated from development pressures. The impact of the town's topography and the established settlement patterns through the villages need to be considered in studying future land use patterns for the town.

## Future Development Patterns

All signs seem to indicate that Westmoreland is slated for continual growth. Pressures from the surrounding towns, and the community's attractiveness are dictating an increased use of land in the community. In spite of the fact that Westmoreland has many areas that are topographically and geologically unsuitable for development, there is adequate land available for future uses proposed. However, these can only provide for and maintain the town's present characteristics if proper planning has taken place.

The determination of land use patterns not only provides but also sets the pattern for the town to control its future growth. Because of the imminent possibility of more and larger subdivision developments, the town must take heed in planning for its future.

It is important that future development be so located as to be accessible to community facilities and highway networks without undue expense to the town. This is to say, for example, that school buses and fire department vehicles can have reasonable access to development densities that would require these town services frequently. Density patterns should be established based on soil suitability for development and the community's ability to provide services.

Many of Westmoreland's assets are a direct result of the natural setting and landscape. Its protection is one that present generations must strive for, if indeed, they desire to retain the community qualities that are present today. The hilltops, the large forested areas, the beautiful vistas such as the Partridge Brook Basin, the Connecticut River Valley, and the ridge created by Cass Hill and Bald Hill in the western portion of the town, are indeed, unique features that help make Westmoreland what it is today.

Yet there is need for the accommodation of employment opportunities, such as industrial and commercial development in the community. These, however, should be so located that they can readily reach regional and interregional highway facilities.

Future growth should be in accordance with the Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan addresses the future needs of the individual in the community, the town, as well as its role as part of a regional entity, and makes provisions to retain desirable features while at the same time creating new assets as changes in growth take place.

## Land Use Plan

The recently completed survey (Spring 2002), conducted by the Master Plan Committee in conjunction with the Planning Board, resulted in a 35% return. The citizens indicated that the town's planning effort should continue to be geared towards the maintenance of a small, rural community that makes provision for growth and various land use activities in an orderly fashion. Our current zoning ordinances, in conjunction with New Hampshire state laws, are based on the following tenets:

1. Maintain the rural character of the town, both natural and man-made. Roads, stonewalls, brooks, woodlots, fields and swamps all contribute to the natural character. The fine older structures in Park Hill, East Westmoreland, and the South Village, as well as the extensive use of land for agriculture, and the scattering of individual homes throughout the hills and valleys, contribute to the man-made character of Westmoreland.
2. Protect swamps, brooks and wetlands both for their ecological features and for their ability to lessen flood potential, lessen soil erosion and preserve water quality. The State of New Hampshire has done much in this area since the last Master Plan was penned by providing detailed regulations regarding wetlands.
3. Protect fragile lands such as steep hillsides and areas of shallow or highly erosive soils.

4. Preserve woodlots and fields as resources for wildlife habitat, fuel production, etc.
5. Encourage the retention of agriculture as a major land use asset of the community.
6. Relate new development to the physical conditions of the land, by developing a land use plan based, in part, on soil mapping as part of the community's plan.
7. Encourage types of development that conserve land and preserve open space.
8. Use innovative mechanisms such as purchase of development rights and clustering housing to preserve open space of all types.
9. Avoid strip development, it being an inefficient use of land and expenditure of public funds for services.
10. Discourage proposals resulting in large development that cause a premature or unusual expenditure of public funds to provide new or expanded services.

Westmoreland's current zoning ordinances provide for five district types that are delineated on the zoning map (see last page). The following are the land use classifications:

#### Commercial / Industrial District

This district allows for the establishment of manufacturing employment opportunities in the community. An area must be provided for this type of development taking into consideration truck access and the availability of utilities. Research and development and other high-density employment, along with wholesale activities, should be concentrated in this area. Should public water and sewer ever be provided in Westmoreland, it is anticipated that this would be the area of highest priority. The maximum density of development permitted is one business per two acres.

#### Forestry / Residential District

This district allows for open space, conservation, forested areas, and occasional residential use. These are areas in the community without adequate facilities and utilities, of subsoil conditions that cause problems in development to the community and should be conserved because of their scenic values in order to obtain the community's goal by keeping this an attractive community allowing adequate open space. A maximum density of development is permitted with one family per ten acres.

#### Medium Density Residential District

This principal residential area is designated for land where no central water and sewer facilities are available, but where the installation of these facilities could become feasible. Residential and other compatible and complementing uses are permitted in this district. This district is intended to house the majority of the community's permanent residents in areas and at densities consistent with the utilities provided. The maximum density of development permitted is one family per two acres.

#### Rural Residential District

This area is limited to secondary agricultural, forestry, and certain other non-intensive land uses. Low-density residential and related uses are permitted in cases where it would not be inconsistent with the tenets of this Plan. The maximum density of development permitted is one family per five acres.

#### Village Center District

This is a district in the center of sub communities, and is designed to continue the New England character provided services and shopping opportunities to the residents of that sub community. It is a district that is designed to promote the pleasant residential characteristics of a neighborhood, the density of which is permitted at one family per acre.

## **Remaining Land Planning Issues**

The original Master Plan of 1986 was an excellent first edition, serving the community well for the last 16 years. There are, however, a number of issues that it outlined which were not

incorporated in the present zoning ordinances or the zoning district map and issues that were not fully captured in these ordinances:

1. An Agricultural district was proposed with the intention of protecting the prime agricultural lands primarily along the Connecticut River. The concern was that while this is excellent farmland due to its flat topography and rich soils, it is also land most easily developed as a large housing subdivision. The threat to these areas is now greater than ever, with the developable land within Keene quickly dwindling and the improvement in the highway networks making greater commuting distances possible. In these areas, non-agricultural activities should be permitted only in special instances where they could not interfere with the planned agricultural activities, and where they could not better be accommodated in other areas of the town, save for ancillary uses, including buildings ancillary to the prime agricultural activities. Conservation easements and other farmland protection strategies are much more available than in 1986. A Planning Board subcommittee dedicated to farmland protection would be a way to explore this issue and make recommendations to the Board. See **Goal 2 in Section 1** for details.
2. Hilltops were identified as a major contributor to the attractiveness of the town. To ensure that these hilltops remain attractive, the 1986 Plan suggested that the town attempt to obtain the development rights to these remote areas. Further research should be done in this area and also to see if the State of New Hampshire has a program that provides this function as it has with remote forested areas in other area towns. Here again, development easements, land memorials, possible overlay districts and bonding should be utilized to protect these areas. The survey clearly indicates the importance of protecting the rural character of the town. See **Goal 2 in Section 1** for details.
3. Village districts were proposed in East Westmoreland and the Depot areas, recognizing the closely clustered neighborhoods. The current zoning map has these areas defined as Commercial / Industrial, which, in time, will destroy the village qualities which the residents of these areas cherish as much as the residents in the current South Village District cherish theirs. Work should be done by the Planning Board to ensure the neighborhood characteristics of these areas are preserved. A historic district or overlay should be considered by the Planning Board. See **Goal 4 in Section 1** for details.
4. With the increase of commercial development within the designated Commercial/Industrial district, the Planning Board and Zoning Boards should seek input from the businesses as to their needs since many of our present zoning ordinances grew out of the needs of a mostly residential town. The Southwest Regional Planning Commission along with the experiences of other towns should serve as a basis for any revisions deemed desirable.
5. Now that Westmoreland is a member of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, it would seem appropriate to setup a review process of the town's present ordinances in order to ensure that the ordinances will allow development to proceed as our community would wish. Ordinances would then be modified as needed.

## **SECTION 3**

## **HOUSING**

This section analyzes existing housing resources, identifies factors affecting housing, examines trends and assesses future housing needs. Residents have recently indicated, via the Planning Board survey, that they are overwhelmingly in favor of preserving the rural character of the town. A majority envisioned integrating its rural features with residential or commercial/industrial uses. Few wished to see Westmoreland take on suburban features. This will provide a strong guide for those involved in planning and zoning.

Regulations to assure sound housing are already in place. The community has minimum requirements for housing construction, lot size, and sanitary waste disposal. In addition, local measures have been taken to assure that the community is able to provide adequate services to the areas designated for residential development. This includes such services as education, road network, recreation and municipal administrative functions, including public works. Within the past five years the town has constructed an addition to the library, purchased new equipment for road maintenance and rescue operations, and updated zoning regulations. It has also debated alternatives for waste disposal and will likely adopt a long-term solution soon.

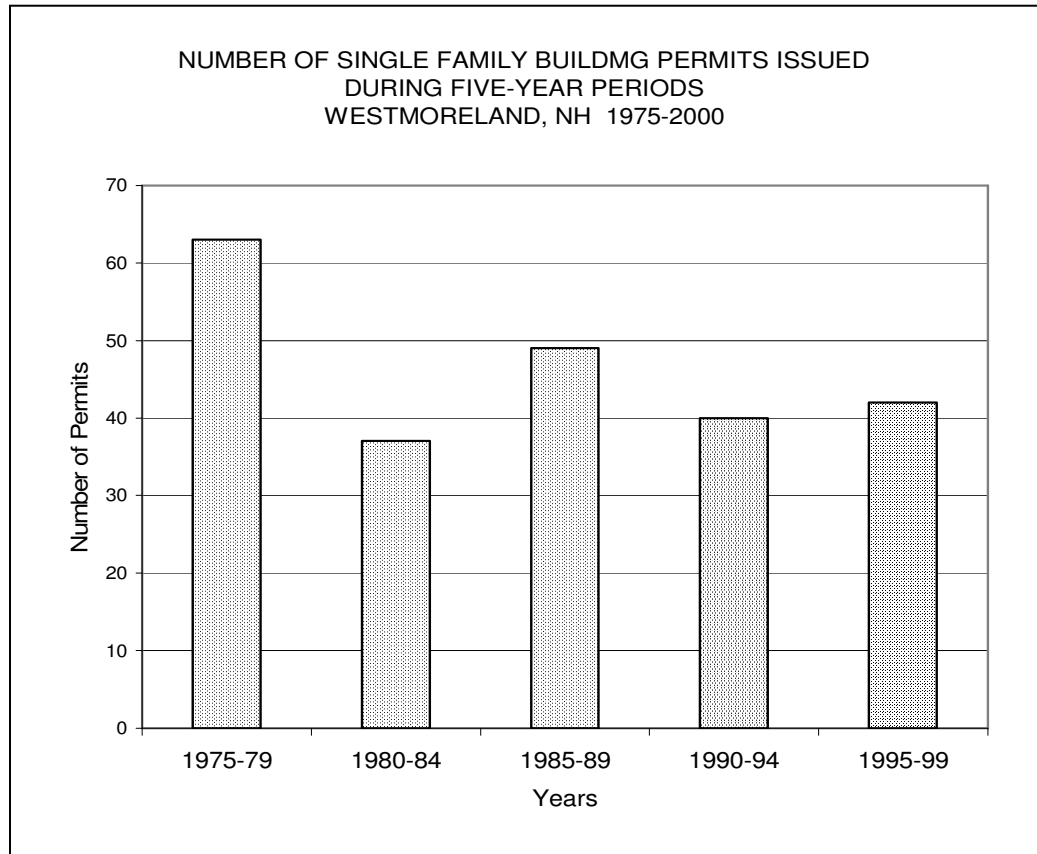
### **Background**

Westmoreland, like other Cheshire County towns, experienced a building boom in the late 1970's followed by a lesser one in the late 1980's as the economy recovered from the recession of the early eighties. Graph 1 on page 19 reflects these trends, as well as the slowdown that occurred in the 1990's, while surplus housing was being absorbed. The following table shows in detail the number of building permits issued during the past 17 years.

| <b>TOWN OF WESTMORELAND</b> |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Year</b>                 | <b>Building Permits Issued<br/>(Single Family)</b> |
| 1985                        | 10   |
| 1986                        | 12   |
| 1987                        | 9  |
| 1988                        | 9  |
| 1989                        | 9  |
| 1990                        | 9  |
| 1991                        | 8  |
| 1992                        | 4  |
| 1993                        | 7  |
| 1994                        | 12   |
| 1995                        | 8  |
| 1996                        | 3  |
| 1997                        | 6  |
| 1998                        | 3  |
| 1999                        | 6  |
| 2000                        | 10   |
| 2001                        | 6  |

**Table 4 Building Permits Issued**

Source: Westmoreland Town Reports



**Graph 1**

Source: Town Reports

During the last decade the demand for new housing in Cheshire County has risen, as job opportunities and the quality of life in the region have attracted new workers. Construction of new housing, especially multi-family rental housing has not kept up with the demand. The Southwest Region Planning Commission notes that in the 1990's construction of rental or multi-family units was uncommon in the region outside of Keene, Peterborough, Swanzey, Winchester, Marlborough, and Hinsdale. Low-income workers have found it particularly difficult to find affordable housing. An increase of families living in homeless shelters and campgrounds in Cheshire County has been the subject of recent reports and news items.

Housing construction in Westmoreland has followed this trend. Westmoreland has traditionally been a community composed largely of single family, owner-occupied homes, In the 1990's 66 single-family building permits were issued, but no permits for multi-family dwellings. The neighboring town of Chesterfield also issued no multi-family permits. Walpole issued one. Though there has been virtually no increase in the number of multi-family dwellings in the three towns, Westmoreland has long had a much lower percentage of such housing than either Chesterfield or Walpole. Increase in the total number of housing units in Westmoreland, which reached a whopping 62% between 1970 and 1980, fell to 27% in the eighties and 11% in the nineties. The vacancy rate, which had been 10% in 1970 and 8.5% in 1980, had dropped to 2.7% for owner-occupied housing and 1.3% for rental units, indicating that housing was in short supply by the year 2000.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows Westmoreland with 618 housing units, 576 of which were occupied, 86% by owners and 14% by renters. The ratio of owner-occupied to rental units has remained relatively steady since 1970. Increases in both population and housing in the last decade are similar to those in the neighboring towns of Walpole and Chesterfield. It should be noted, however, that Westmoreland differs from other Cheshire County towns in that it has a large institutional population (included in the total population figures issued by the U.S. Census Bureau since 1977). In 2000, in addition to the 1,483 people living in Westmoreland's 576 occupied housing units, the town had 264 residents in group quarters. 253 of these lived at Maplewood Nursing Home, the Cheshire County House of Corrections, or Hillcrest House.

Westmoreland is primarily a family community. In 2000, 77% of its 576 households were families while the remaining 23%, consisted of individuals or non-family groups. The average household size (outside of those living in group quarters) was 2.57. 32% of households had children under 18 and 8% of householders were people 65 or over living alone.

## **Future Considerations**

What does this mean in terms of future housing demands for the Town of Westmoreland? At the present rates of building activity (an average of 6 per year since 1995), Westmoreland's housing would increase by approximately 120 units from 2000 to 2020. With a household size of 2.57, these 120 units could accommodate 308 people. The NH Office of State Planning projects an increase of only 193 people during that same period, which would result in a net surplus of single-family housing. Population increase is already ahead of projections in Westmoreland, but it appears that the current rate of housing construction would be sufficient to accommodate Westmoreland's projected growth.

Whether the current rate and direction of construction would serve the needs of all sectors of the population seeking housing in the near future is another question. The expansion of the Maplewood Nursing Home in 1999 provided 20 assisted living units for the elderly. At least two of these are currently occupied by former Westmoreland householders. That there is still need for this kind of option for the region's elderly is indicated by a waiting list of 45. That the need for senior housing opportunities will increase is also clear if one considers that the baby boomer generation is nearing retirement. Options other than assisted living might be considered and encouraged through municipal incentives.

It is somewhat more difficult to determine whether the town is doing its fair share of providing low-to-moderate-income housing. Westmoreland is a relatively wealthy community, with the fourth highest median income in Cheshire County. Comparisons with neighboring towns and with Cheshire County in general can be seen in the following table, taken from Southwest Region Planning Commission data for 2001.

**TABLE 5**  
**MEDIAN INCOMES AND HOME VALUES**  
**2000**

| <u>Locale</u>       | <u>Unemployment<br/>Rate</u> | <u>Median<br/>HH Income</u> | <u>Median<br/>Home Value</u> |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cheshire County     | 3.2                          | \$42,382                    | \$105,000                    |
| Chesterfield        | 1.7                          | 51,351                      | 129,700                      |
| <b>Westmoreland</b> | <b>1.9</b>                   | <b>55,875</b>               | <b>128,500</b>               |
| Walpole             | 1.8                          | 44,673                      | 118,400                      |

Source: SWRPC

Although the percentage of the population living in poverty has been low (4.9% in 1989), the town will need to determine how much of the region's poor it will undertake to provide for and whether enough low-income housing is available. Asked whether Westmoreland should encourage growth in the number of single-family homes, over 70% of respondents to the Planning Board survey said they preferred no change or increased activity. 71% urged decreased activity or holding the line on the number of multi-family homes. Only 3 respondents favored increasing the number of mobile homes. It seems, then, that if low-income housing is to be built in Westmoreland, residents would prefer that it be single-family housing. There was some degree of support for cluster housing, but types of housing not mentioned in the survey could also be explored.

As the community considers future directions for the types and locations of housing it wishes to encourage, new options should be considered. The Southwest Region Planning Commission, to which Westmoreland now belongs, can be of assistance in examining trends, identifying an appropriate range of housing opportunities and selecting residential development patterns consistent with NH law and the community's wishes.

**Introduction**

A community's transportation system is very important to its development and growth. Westmoreland's initial settlers came northward via the Connecticut River and settled along the shoreline. Later, overland travel by road and rail arrived from Keene and points east. Even today settlement often follows these earlier patterns, with some areas more accessible than others. Business activity is also strongly affected by the traffic movement.

From a transportation aspect, Westmoreland is a triangular-shaped island. As one leg, the Connecticut River acts as a limiting factor to growth and development. The second side of the triangle is Route 12, which traverses the northern section of town. The third leg is Route 9, which is accessed via a portion of Chesterfield. Basically, Routes 9 and 12 create a bypass pattern for Westmoreland and, coupled with the Connecticut River limitation, are the most significant factors contributing to the town's relatively unspoiled and undeveloped interior.

Westmoreland's image is reflected in part by its road network, much of which pre-dates the automobile. The condition of the roads often affects the condition of buildings and land use along their route. Good, well-maintained roads provide an incentive to keep up private properties, while poor streets and roadways are a deterrent to improving them.

Westmoreland's road and street network has been a determining factor in the town's growth in the past, and will be in the future. It will provide access to new interior development and important access to the Route 12 corridor. The following report inventories the existing conditions and makes recommendations for the future road network.

**Street Classification**

There are basically two classification systems used in Westmoreland today. One is the state classification, or governmental responsibility breakdown. The second is the present functional classification as roads are now being used.

**1. State Classification**

According to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, in the town of Westmoreland there are a total of 63.487 miles of roadway. Of these, 6.193 miles are trunk lines (Routes 9 and 12), and 7.40 miles (Route 63) are Class Two highway. The balance consists of 40.22 miles of Class Five town roads and 9.63 miles of Class Six roads subject to gates and bars. Current ordinances require frontage on a class 5 or better road for development in order to provide for appropriate access to town services. The town road mileage has increased by very little since the original Master Plan was created. Only ¼ mile of Class Five roadway has been added along with 3.6 miles of Class Six. It is believed most of the increase in Class Six was due to the implementation of the Emergency 911 system.

**2. Functional Classification**

Presently, the road network in Westmoreland falls into three categories, i.e., major highways, collector roads, and service roads. It is this classification that has definite implications for highway recommendations to serve future development.

The major highways are Route 63, Route 12, and Route 9 (via Chesterfield).

Collector roads serve as links between the various populated areas and the major highways. These include River Road, Spofford Road, Glebe Road, South Village Road, and Hurricane Road. Although Poocham-Paine-Butterfield Hill Road is listed as a collector road, most traffic transiting Route 63 to River Road uses Partridge Brook Road. Hurricane Road also serves as an alternate to Route 12, going into Keene. Both Glebe Road and South Village Road are major connectors between the South Village area and Routes 9 and 12, respectively.

The remainder of the roads in Westmoreland, such as McAdam Road, Pierce Lane, Sewall Road and others are identified as service roads primarily performing the function of serving adjacent properties. Both collector and service roads are under the auspices of the town.

## **Traffic volumes**

As expected, Routes 9 and 12 are the primary traffic carriers for Westmoreland. Both arteries have experienced dramatic growth in traffic in the past fifteen years. Route 9 routinely carries well over 11,000 vehicles per day between Keene and the Connecticut River, while Route 12 carries 8,000 vehicles into and out of Keene from the north. As pointed out in the original Master Plan, the traffic counts for these two roads emphasize how important they are to the future of our town. Directly or indirectly, they are the only transportation link Westmoreland has with the outside world. Within Westmoreland, Route 63 has also seen an increase in daily traffic counts, rising from 600 vehicles per day to as much as 1,100 in some areas.

There have also been some traffic counts taken on some of our connector and local roads in the past few years. They show that traffic originating locally is probably a significant factor in the increased use of both Routes 9 and 12. For example, South Village Road carries as much as 1,100 vehicles per day, and Glebe Road carries 700 vehicles a day.

We can reasonably anticipate further dramatic growth in volume on our connector roads as changes and growth occur at the County Complex and demand for housing increases. In East Westmoreland, pressure will also come from growth in Keene's Black Brook industrial area. Where significant development is being planned or upgraded, the Planning Board should consider traffic impacts and include the costs of upgrading town infrastructure as part of the development costs to the developer.

## **Street and Highway Conditions**

According to the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, there are no plans to improve or expand either Route 9 or Route 12 in the foreseeable future. However, with increasing traffic flows, it seems logical to expect that pressure to develop the Route 12 corridor through Westmoreland will increase. In assessing any future development along the corridor, the Planning Board should anticipate an eventual widening or relocation of the road.

The local road network, which is the responsibility of the town, is in good to excellent condition thanks to an effective road construction and maintenance program. The town's emphasis on developer responsibility for good roads as part of any development proposal must be an important element to assure a minimal cost to the town for capital improvements. It will also serve to reduce the ongoing costs of maintenance and rebuilding.

## **Transportation Recommendations**

With South Village Road becoming an increasingly important link between the Village and Route 12, the Town should target it for reconstruction as a major artery. Within the next few years, the status of Glebe Road should also be reviewed for possible upgrading. Based upon the strong desire to retain the rural character of our town, road reconstruction or upgrading projects should be focused upon pedestrian and vehicle safety. Multiple lanes with fewer curves that promote higher speeds raise concern about safety for residents along those routes. Traffic calming techniques that can lead to lower driving speeds and improved safety should be encouraged. When appropriate, pedestrian and bike use should also be considered as a part of future road improvement.

## **Public Transportation**

With major state routes running through it, and its distance from Keene and Brattleboro, Westmoreland should give serious consideration to participation in a public transportation system, if an opportunity arises. As the cost of travel continues to rise and our population ages, it might make sense to develop some form of public transportation system unique to our town. At present, there is no practical alternative to the automobile in the area. The Maplewood complex does include transportation to its residents including the Assisted Living Section.

## **SECTION 5**

## **UTILITY AND PUBLIC SERVICES SECTION**

### **Sewage**

Westmoreland, with the exception of the Cheshire County Complex, relies on individual treatment of sanitary waste. The County Complex has a self-contained treatment facility that handles sanitary waste from all the county-owned facilities at the River Road location. In the rest of Westmoreland population densities are still low enough that individual septic systems can provide adequate treatment of sewage.

In East Westmoreland, densities and quality of liquid waste is reaching a point where care must be taken to assure the continued protection of the surface water of Mill Brook. As development continues to take place, the Town of Westmoreland should consider East Westmoreland as a potential location for a common treatment facility with appropriate interceptor and collector systems. With the continued development of Keene's northwest side, an alternative might be to connect to the Keene system.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan referenced in the 1986 Master Plan referred to East Westmoreland as an area designated for industrial and commercial growth, as well as higher density housing. This type of development justifies consideration of some sort of organized sewage disposal system. Since the benefit of such a system would be limited to specific development projects, it is logical to expect the developer to bear the expense. They could do this through revenue bond financing or through tax incremental funding. It is urged that the Town of Westmoreland initiate early action for engineering studies on feasibility and appropriateness of a public utility system in that area of the community.

### **Water**

The Town of Westmoreland does not have any public water distribution system. The Cheshire County Complex has its own water treatment facility that only handles the farm, House of Correction and the Nursing Home. In addition there are number of registered public wells providing water for public facilities such as the public middle school and the industrial park. For all practical purposes town and private users rely on individual water supply systems. Again, the East Westmoreland area should be considered as a prime prospect for a public water supply system, either by hooking into the Keene system or developing a source within the village. As commercial and industrial development occurs it will no longer be possible to rely on private sources.

Water for fire protection is usually obtained through access to fire ponds, which are mostly farm ponds that are accessible in case of emergency. Water is also available in the larger streams in the town.

Without a common water system, the town is dependent on groundwater availability. For this reason, it is important that the town protect its underground water resources by making provisions to protect wetlands, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas.

### **Telephone and Electric**

Although Westmoreland is a rural area, both electric and telephone service is reasonably reliable. When repairs are needed, they are done promptly. The town still suffers occasional problems from localized power outages when trees or limbs knock down utility lines. Although the

consequences are currently minimal, the increasingly sophisticated communications needs of residents should be considered as part of any future planning within the community. Requiring any new or updated utilities construction to be underground should be a consideration.

At present, the town has four operating cellular phone towers with two located on Hyland Hill , one on Aldrich Rd and one on Lincoln Hill Rd. Recently the Planning Board adopted Section 453 Telecommunications Facilities Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. This was done in order to establish general guidelines for the siting of towers and antennas.

## **Television**

At present the town's television coverage is limited to either satellite service from two sources or directly off-the-air. Off-the-air service is somewhat limited due to the hilly terrain. Cable television service is available from one company in limited areas.

## **Broadband Internet Service**

At present broadband internet service is limited to the satellite companies. The cable television company serving Westmoreland has plans to provide broadband service in the near future.

## **SECTION 6**

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

A community's self-image is reflected in its public and semi-public facilities. This includes town buildings, common areas, churches and other publicly owned and operated facilities. In the Town of Westmoreland those in existence are from years past, and many of them are historic sites with recent additions to meet modern demands. The needs of public facilities are acted upon at Town Meeting. Generally, residents are satisfied with the scope and condition of our town's facilities, although vigilance is needed to maintain satisfaction.

### **Existing Facilities**

#### **1.Schools**

Westmoreland provides educational services through two public institutions, the Westmoreland Town School District and the regional district in Keene (SAU 29). The local school district covers grades 1 through 8, while grades 9 through 12 are educated at Keene High School by SAU 29. The elementary school is the responsibility of the Westmoreland School District, while grades 9 through 12 are handled by assessment from SAU 29. Budgets for the Westmoreland School District are acted on at annual School District meetings. Volunteer time and donations has traditionally helped fund upgrades of school equipment. In 2002 the PTO raised funds and erected a new school yard recreational facility.

The elementary school was constructed in the 1960's and expanded in the 1990's. It continues to render good service to the town and is used for some town functions, such as the annual Town Meeting. The aesthetics of the facility are geared toward the functional and are not really in keeping with other South Village buildings. It does not appear any expansion will be necessary over the next five years. However, the Planning Board and Board of Education should anticipate the need for expansion or a new facility at some point in the future, especially in view of the continued residential growth in the community. Although the current site of the school is adequate, it incorporates playgrounds and sports facilities. Any expansion other than the purchase of adjacent land would reduce these recreation areas.

The town schools also include Pioneer Junior Academy on Mount Gilboa Rd.

#### **2.Town Hall**

The Town Hall is an historic building that houses town government offices and the post office. It is also a multi-purpose facility used for social and governmental gatherings. Although the outside appearance of the building may not change, there is a need to modernize and change the interior of the building. The original Master Plan recommended that a study committee be appointed to develop ideas and plans for improvements in the building. In addition, the neighborhood surrounding Town Hall could be considered as a historic district as mentioned in Section 1, Goal 4, Preserve historic areas and buildings on page 7.

#### **3. Public Safety**

The volunteer fire department continues to do an outstanding job in keeping up with the needs of the community. In the Master Plan survey, 78% of respondents reported good or excellent quality of coverage. As the mission and needs of the department grow, particularly with respect to industrial and commercial growth, they will need the continued support of the Town and community.

Currently, Westmoreland has only a part time constable to cover police-related issues. Immediate needs are covered by the State Police through the Emergency 911 System. As a result, only 38% of the respondents to the Master Plan survey felt that police coverage of the town was adequate. Specifically, concern was raised about the lack of contact for assistance in

non-threatening situations. With increasing population and increasing traffic on town and state highways, the need for a more active police role should be explored. At the very least, residents need some sort of information regarding who and how to contact for non-emergency needs.

#### 4. Solid Waste Disposal

Westmoreland continues to use the London Road transfer station, although the site has been greatly improved from the date of the first Master Plan. The Town also continues to use a private hauler to remove the trash and recyclables. Recent price increases by the operator of the Keene facility has given new impetus to find a long term solution to our solid waste disposal problems. The citizens, in public hearings and at the ballot box, have consistently said that they want to retain the transfer station for various reasons. Although some alternatives have been put forth, there have been no specific plans put in place. As solid waste issues continue to evolve throughout the region, it is important that Westmoreland develop a workable plan for the transfer station.

#### 5. Public Works Garage

The Town Garage off McAdam Road is centrally located and continues to serve the community well. The building has served the Public Works Department for a number of years and should be considered for upgrading or replacement. At some point, it may also be necessary to expand the staff and equipment as development of the town continues. As put forth in the earlier Master Plan, the town should also consider acquisition of a gravel source for its long range needs.

#### 6. Cheshire County Complex

The County complex is located at the foot of Partridge Brook Road, on River Road and houses the County Department of Corrections and the Maplewood (county-owned) Nursing Home. The Maplewood facility, with a staff of 225 employees, includes a 148 bed nursing home and 20 assisted living apartments. The Department of Corrections facility designed to serve 73 inmates has an average daily population of 89. The complex also includes an active farming/dairying establishment as well as hiking trails.

Source: Cheshire County website and Cheshire County annual report.

In hosting this facility, the town is rendering a valuable service to its larger region. The complex, under the jurisdiction of the County, is located within the town and takes advantage of town services such as the roads and road network, education, recreation, and fire protection.

Recently, the County has proposed expanding the jail to accommodate roughly twice as many inmates as now there. The proposal has stirred a great deal of controversy within the town. A non-binding referendum at a Town Meeting showed the citizens overwhelmingly against such expansion.

Another proposal to grant a conservation easement to the majority of the county complex property is being pursued and should be encouraged by the town.

## **SECTION 7                      RECREATION FACILITIES**

According to the 1986 Master Plan, there were two recreation facilities in Westmoreland, one adjacent to the school and the other in East Westmoreland off Route 12. Today, the main recreation area is adjacent to the school, housing a playground, soccer/baseball field, and tennis courts. The second ball field off of Rt. 12 and on Mt. Gilboa Rd. is presently used by town teams for baseball and soccer. There are also hiking trails on County property next to the County Farm as well as on the Warwick Preserve on Rt. 63. The abandoned railroad right-of-way, roughly parallel to Rt. 12, is also used as an off road biking, hiking, snowmobiling and cross country skiing trail. The town also has snowmobile trails on public and private lands approved by the State and maintained by Westmoreland Snowbelters. This year private donations and much volunteer effort were used to replace the public schools playground equipment.

Westmoreland is considered a very desirable community in which to live. To maintain this desirability, adequate recreation opportunities must be offered. The large number of retirees living here suggests that more opportunities aimed at mature adults might be appropriate. This could include park areas or walking trails. The old Boston and Maine rail bed might offer some additional possibilities, as well as areas nearer the river. The trails might also offer some bicycling or horseback riding possibilities. The ball fields next to the school and in East Westmoreland should also be given more attention. Using one for baseball and the other for soccer might be appropriate. Such an approach would enable the baseball field to be properly fenced, with lighting and bleachers to eventually follow. Another potential site for ball fields lies beyond the tennis courts, in the pasture where the horse ring now stands.

We recommend that the Planning Board take note of the need for increased recreation opportunity within the community by putting together a study committee to look at short- and long-term recreation needs. Part of such a study might include use of County properties and possibly a riverfront park with boat launch facilities.

## **SECTION 8**

## **CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION**

Westmoreland remains a rural community with small town character and abundant natural resources. While it is a bedroom community like many of the towns surrounding Keene it retains a rural character and supports a diversity of natural resources. Among these are the working farms, forests, wetlands and abundant wildlife habitat.

As expressed by citizens prior to preparation of the 1986 Master Plan and reaffirmed in a 2002 survey, retaining the rural character and the natural resource components that make it so are of utmost importance. Town zoning regulations, including the adoption of local wetland and floodplain regulations in 1998, have helped to guide residential and industrial growth. It's important for local enforcement of the regulations to insure the intent of the regulations is met. More can be done using available natural resource data to define specific areas and resources that warrant special attention and conservation. Soils, floodplain, water resource, wetland and updated zoning maps have been recently prepared and should be kept updated and used for any decision making involving land use in town.

The land base of Westmoreland is about 23,100 acres (not including surface waters), with approximately 80% forested with the rest in open land including working and abandoned farmland and wetlands, roads, commercial, residential, industrial and institutional/governmental uses.

### **Use of Resource Maps**

There have been a number of digital resource maps prepared for the town and its various boards including zoning, soils (as prepared by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service), wetlands, hydric soils, critical soils, aquifers, limits to development, etc. The maps were prepared in 2000-2002 by the Conservation Commission and are available in the town office. The maps are for use of the various town boards and the general public.

The first step of any request for development or land use change requiring town approval should be to refer to the resource maps for any potential problems and to see if the proposed use is appropriate for the site. A digital tax map would facilitate the process.

Approximately 79% of the soils in town have low development potential due to wetlands and/or hydric soils and special considerations. Included in the special considerations are the agricultural soils that should be protected from development. Discouraging development on agricultural soils helps retain the diverse agricultural land that is part of the local economy and rural scenic appeal of much of the town.

### **Scenic Resources**

Scenic resources of a community are important to its character and beauty and are often overlooked as a resource. It is the kind of attribute that is taken for granted until it is no longer there. An example might be the breathtaking view looking across Windyhurst Farm from route 12 towards VT. The farm, fields, woodland, river valley and distant hills are beautiful and diverse in its visual pleasure. Fortunately, the farm and surrounding land has been permanently protected and will remain a scenic resource. Conversely, the land in VT across the river is not protected from development and over time one can see the subtle but steady encroachment of new buildings showing up on the slopes and hilltops.

Heading west on route 12 just over the Westmoreland town line coming from Keene is very scenic and River road has a number of very scenic areas with the mix of fields, woods and the River.

More examples of our scenic resources include the open fields looking up towards Butterfield Hill, Cass Hill area from River Road, the expanse of open fields on the Old Spofford Road, sections of Hurricane and South Village Road.

It's recommended that a survey/inventory be made of scenic areas/vistas in town in order to take steps to protect those that are important to save. Once a list is made and prioritized perhaps town policy, easements, tax breaks, gifts, donations or purchase can be pursued to help retain the areas. Recognizing and protecting scenic resources help retain the character of a town that folks enjoy and help maintain property values.

## **Scenic Roads**

The establishment of a Scenic Road System would help preserve the rural character of many of the town roads. Authorized by the NH RSA 231:157 & 158 towns may vote to designate any of their local roads (excluding Class I and II) as scenic. The effect of this designation is to require a public hearing by the planning board before any repair, maintenance, reconstruction or paving work is done within the right-of-way by either the Town itself or any public utility. The designation doesn't affect the rights of any landowner to do work on his/her property. The law allows planning boards to adopt regulations specific to scenic roads. At present, only Paine Rd. has been designated a scenic road. It's recommended that all roads in town be considered and those worthy be proposed for scenic road designation. While current maps identify all the roads, citizen input, a public education process and input from official town boards should be considered.

There might also be some roads such as River Road that might be considered as part of the scenic byway system. Scenic Byways, The New Hampshire Scenic and Cultural Byways Program, was established in 1992 under RSA 238:19, "... to provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to travel a system of byways which feature the scenic and cultural qualities of the State within the existing highway system, promote retention of rural and urban scenic byways, support the cultural, recreational and historic attributes along these byways and expose the unique elements of the state's beauty, culture and history."

## **Historical/Cultural Heritage**

Westmoreland is rich in cultural and historical resources worthy of affording some protection and conservation efforts. The village area of town is certainly an historic area, is still sustainable and retains the character of the town, as it was 200 years ago. It has a definitive boundary and provides the kinds of mixed, densely developed uses associated with a typical New England village. The Town Hall, general store, church and the private architecturally historical homes make up the fabric of the rural setting and should be retained. Park Hill is also an area of significance and worthy of preservation. Other possibilities might be the old school house on River Road, town cemeteries, "Sheep Rock", native American sites along the River and any number of historical homes, farms and buildings in town are worthy of recognition and consideration for preservation for their cultural, historical or architectural importance. While some work has already been done in this regard a recommendation would be to have a coalition of interested citizens, groups and representatives of town boards do a survey of special places and structures of historical significance.

A specific plan should be developed to help preserve the places identified. In addition to grants, there are number of statewide initiatives that can help communities. Some examples are Discretionary Preservation Easements (RSA 79-D) where a town can grant tax relief for historic agricultural structures, also the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) is available with a source of matching funds to help communities with a number of projects including land preservation and conservation and the preservation and restoration of historical sites and buildings. The Park Hill Meeting House received such a grant in 2003. State agencies, the NH

Municipal Association, Regional Planning Commission and the NH Preservation Alliance are some of the sources of help available to communities in these and other efforts.

## **Elevation/Slope**

There is a wide range of elevations from a high of 1,510 feet above sea level of Highland Hill to the Connecticut River at 216.5 feet. There are 11 peaks in excess of 600 ft elevation. These should be considered for permanent protection and any development discouraged on these landmarks. The town has a wide mixture of steep and rolling wooded and open hillsides and flat land which is located mostly on the west side of town adjacent to the Connecticut river. Development should be discouraged within areas of slope gradients of 25% or more. Disturbance on these slopes has the potential for serious erosion problems. To avoid the often detrimental affects, erosion control and storm water management plans should be considered for any development on these slopes if allowed at all. These slopes are defined on the Limitations for Development Map available at the town office.

## **Water Resources Protection**

While Westmoreland does not have any major ponds or lakes, it is bounded on the West by over nine miles of the Connecticut River, a rich historical and natural heritage resource. It has a number of streams that wind their way through the town and empty into the Connecticut. Two such streams are Mill Brook along Rt. 12 and Partridge Brook that empties out of Lake Spofford and meanders down along the Old Spofford Road, through the village and through the Cheshire County Complex on River Road. Land use along the Connecticut River and Partridge Brook (the only fourth order stream in Westmoreland) and setbacks are regulated by the NH Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-B). Additionally the land along the Connecticut River is in the Special Flood Hazard Area as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and subject to special regulation.

In addition to state regulations, Westmoreland has a wetland ordinance, Section 452 that adds an additional layer of protection.

Most recently, 2002, the Connecticut River was included in the protection of RSA 483B, the Comprehensive Shoreland Act. This act sets minimum shoreland protection standards for septic system and building setbacks, cutting of woodland buffers, building density, and non-agriculture use of fertilizer next to the River, and prohibits establishment or expansion of salt storage yards, auto junk yards, solid waste, and hazardous waste facilities close to the River. This protection extends up to 250 feet from the ordinary high water mark. This same level of protection also extends to Partridge Brook because of it's fourth order category.

In 1992, the NH Legislature designated the Connecticut River into the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program (NH RSA 483). Through the Joint Rivers Commission, subcommittees of representatives from both sides of the River were established. Westmoreland has two representatives on the Wantastiquet area subcommittee. The committee and the Joint Rivers Commission developed a Corridor and Management Plan for the River in 1997. The Westmoreland Conservation Commission reviewed the plan and modified it to meet the needs of Westmoreland. The modification endorses the conservation of the River and its adjacent landscape while maintaining appropriate economic activity necessary to keep it vital.

The Westmoreland Conservation Commission recommends that the Town of Westmoreland adopt the principles and ideology of the 1997 Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan. The plan was prepared and presented to the town by the Wantastiquet Subcommittee as part of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions to provide local diverse input in planning the sound use and

conservation of the river resources. The 1992 designation of the Connecticut River into the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program and the provisions of NH RSA 483 empower each community along the Connecticut River to adopt locally designed means of caring for the river and its shoreland.

The plan addresses the issues of:

- Scenic and recreational attributes of the River
- Water quality
- Fisheries and aquatic habitat
- Shoreland and upland wildlife habitat
- Agriculture and natural resource management, and
- Historical and archeological features.

Emphasis is placed on future land use and the balance of retention and/or encouragement of appropriate economic activity and development. The plan and recommendations recognize the importance of respecting the interests of individual communities and not preempting the land zoning authority already granted to the towns.

In concept, the Westmoreland Conservation Commission endorses the conservation of the character of the River and its adjacent landscape while maintaining appropriate economic activity necessary to keep it vital. To this end, we recommend that the Westmoreland Planning Board adopt the principles of the plan as an adjunct to the town's Master Plan.

Additionally, the Westmoreland Conservation Commission recommends the following provisions of the Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan and specific modifications adapted for the Town of Westmoreland. Upon approval by the Westmoreland Planning Board, the Conservation Commission further recommends that the provisions of this plan be incorporated into the town's Master Plan and if necessary, brought before the Westmoreland voters for their review and approval.

### **Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan For The Town of Westmoreland**

1. Enforce setback requirements and the permitting approval process as set forth in the NH Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-B) and authorized for the Connecticut River by SB 583 (effective 7/2/02). Any more restrictive Westmoreland ordinances shall take precedence.
2. Prohibit establishment of solid waste landfill and/or hazardous waste facility within 500 year floodplain or within 500 feet of any of the River's contributory waterways or watershed.
3. Continue to update and correlate zoning, building, and subdivision ordinances as needed using updated maps and other data.
4. Empower existing board (s) or a new committee(s) to work as needed in cooperation with various local, state and federal agencies and organizations such as UNH Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cheshire County Conservation District, SW Region Planning Commission, Monadnock Conservancy, NH Fish and Game, NH

Department of Agriculture, NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, Historical societies, schools and colleges to:

- a. Increase awareness of and appreciation for the river corridor. Maintain and update a resource file on current legislation and activities pertinent to river management.
- b. Recommend and encourage Best Management Practices for agricultural, forestry and road maintenance activities.
- c. Educate landowners on bank stabilization, steep slope maintenance, and buffer zone management and make guidelines available for public use.
- d. Encourage establishment of a boat landing in Westmoreland, possibly on County property, to promote people's enjoyment of the River.
- e. Encourage and support public and private landowners to establish conservation easements on property within the river corridor.
- f. Designate, by plaque or documentation, landmarks of historic importance located within or adjacent to the river corridor.
- g. Encourage water quality monitoring to ensure that Class B water quality of the River is maintained.

## **Water supplies**

While most homes in town have private water sources, there are currently 10 wells in town that are considered public water supplies, defined by RSA 485:1-a (as supplying 25 or more individuals or families). These are identified on the 2002 digital resource map prepared for the Conservation Commission. They include Maplewood Nursing Home, Westmoreland Elementary School, Pioneer Christian School, Town Hall and others. While the state recognizes watershed protection areas, efforts should be made to help protect the watersheds that feed these public sources when change/development is being considered around them.

## **Prime Wetlands**

A prime wetland is an area of "substantial significance due to its size, unspoiled character, fragile condition or other relevant factors". Under NH enabling statutes, towns are authorized to adopt wetland ordinances that could require setbacks for other structures or uses besides just septic systems. While Westmoreland adopted wetland ordinances in 1998, the Conservation Commission should identify and the town should officially designate prime wetlands. Once an area is designated a prime wetland, the authority to regulate that area is in the hands of the NH Wetlands Board.

## **Aquifers**

Aquifers are a concentration of subsurface water, occurring in saturated soils and geological formations. Water is supplied through precipitation and surface water discharge. It infiltrates the ground through an aerated zone where impurities are filtered out. The water then moves to a saturated zone where the pore spaces between soil particles are filled by water, thus creating a saturated zone, called aquifers. It is very important that the earth's surface be able to transmit water so that a certain percentage can be stored underground as "groundwater". If excessive

compaction or covering of the earth's surface occurs, the amount of water that can reach the saturated zone and become groundwater is reduced. As shown on the Wetlands Resources map in the town office there are a number of aquifers in town that have been identified. They might prove to be future public water supplies and are worthy of protection and special consideration when development is considered.

## **Special/Endangered Areas**

A rare and endangered species inventory should be completed with the assistance of the NH Heritage Inventory. Any areas of special concern should be noted and protected.

## **Water Resource Management/Protection Plan**

The town should prepare and adopt a local water resource management and protection plan as provided for in RSA 4-C:22 Local Water Resources Management and Protection Plans. – Which states that “Implementation of local water plans shall be through the adoption and enforcement of municipal ordinances consistent with the plan and through such other measures as are appropriate and legally available to municipal government as tools to further the water protection objectives set forth in the plan. Assistance shall be available through the water protection assistance program established in RSA 4-C:19 and programs of the Department of Environmental Services as provided in RSA 21-O:3, IX, to advise municipalities on appropriate implementation measures.

## **Natural Resource Inventory**

While the Conservation Commission has done some preliminary work, a complete natural resource inventory should be completed. It should identify resources and areas including farmlands, forest resources, geologic resources, groundwater, historic sites, protected lands, recreation lands, scenic areas, topography, watersheds and surface waters, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and any unique or endangered habitat or special areas. A public awareness program should be adopted to inform the townspeople of the natural resources and what steps might be necessary to keep them intact.

## **Protected Lands**

There are currently 791 acres of land in town that are permanently protected from development. While individual deed restrictions, and to a limited extent, current use assessment provides some conservation and preservation of lands, outright purchase or conservation easements are a permanent solution to keep land from development.

While there are some areas that should be preserved or management activity very limited, conservation refers to the sound use of the resources. This includes the appropriate farming and forestry practices to keep the land productive. Owners should be encouraged to manage their property using best management practices developed by any number of public natural resource groups such as UNH Cooperative Extension or the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Should any formal adoption of practices be considered, these published practices should be used as guidelines and in line with any state or federal regulations that might be appropriate.

Permanent protection of tracts from future development can be achieved through a number of methods including:

- Deed restrictions when title is passed
- Provisions in a bequest
- Fee simple purchase - which simply means acquiring the property through negotiated purchase by the Town or other public or private organization.
- Acquisition of development rights through conservation easements.

Under this concept, the landowner gives up their right to develop the property but is able to use the land for various permitted purposes (which are negotiable) that are compatible with conservation and preservation practices. Acquisition of development rights is either through purchase of them or donation of the right or a combination. There are a number of individual tax strategies that will help determine which method is best. The development rights will be held and activity monitored by whomever is the easement holder. This could be the Town or a qualifying organization such as the Monadnock Conservancy, SPNHF, Nature Conservancy, Audubon or other trust or conservation organization.

The methods above each have their own advantages to the current or future owner of the property including different tax considerations and should be examined closely.

## **Open Space and Land Protection Techniques**

In NH, a recent study shows the economic impact of open space based activities contribute about 25% of the states gross product. In addition, about 16% of the workforce relies on open space. These include agriculture, forest related and tourism and recreation based activities. A “Cost of Community Services” analysis for the town, which tracks dollars received for various taxable properties in town with dollars expended for same, would be of assistance in seeing what might be appropriate for Westmoreland. The analysis basically assigns town expenditures to the various public responsibilities and compares them with the property tax revenue generated from it.

## **Current Use Assessment**

Current use assessment (RSA 79A) is a property tax strategy that allows land to be taxed at its current use rather than its potential highest and best use. About 80% of the eligible land in Westmoreland is enrolled in current-use. Of the 17,634.242 acres currently enrolled, 3,060.9 are in farmland, 14,356.502 in forestland and 216.84 acres in wetland/unproductive land. While it is not a permanent solution to keep open space, it does allow some development protection, as it discourages development by providing for a penalty of 10% of the advalorem value at the time the land no longer qualifies for current use. Current use assessment helps owners afford to retain and manage their land for agricultural, forestry and other natural habitat purposes. Landowners who are not in current-use for whatever reason should be encouraged to participate. Open space is what gives the town its visual diversity and character that are important to residents, as confirmed in the survey.

For special areas that do not qualify for current use that are under the minimum 10 acre requirement the town should consider granting a discretionary easement (RSA 79-C) which will tax the area at current use rates and keep it open for ten years. This process involves planning board approval.

## **Conservation Fund**

At the 2002 Town Meeting, the voters adopted a conservation fund as provided for by RSA 36A:5.1. The prime purpose of the fund, which is currently funded by 50% of the current use penalties, is for permanent protection efforts including but not limited to conservation easement assistance, land acquisition and as a match for appropriate conservation grants. The fund also provides a vehicle to accept donations, gifts and bequests for conservation purposes. The town treasurer administers the fund with authorization needed from the Conservation Commission for expenditures. The Conservation Commission should consider increasing the percent of the penalty for the fund to as much as 100%. The Conservation should also, as many other towns have done, consider municipal bonding for land conservation purposes.

The Conservation Commission should establish a land protection and preservation subcommittee of the members and other individuals to spearhead an effort to assist with the identification and review of special places and lands in town that should be permanently protected.

## **SECTION- 9      CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

In 1989 the New Hampshire Legislature amended the statute that addresses the purpose and description of a Master Plan: RSA 674:2, VIII-a calls for a ***"construction materials section which summarizes known sources of construction materials which are available for future construction needs, including, at a minimum, the location and estimated extent of excavations which have been granted permits under RSA 155-E, as well as reports filed pursuant to RSA 155-E: 2, 1 (d) with respect to non-permitted excavations."***<sup>1</sup>

The statute does not define **"construction materials"**, nor does it specify what the **"construction needs"** might be; however, since the statute addressing earth excavations is referenced (RSA 155-E), it is logical to assume that, at a minimum, sand and gravel are intended.

The primary source for identifying sand and gravel resources is the Soil Survey of Cheshire County, which was completed in 1984' by the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The document includes a table entitled "Construction Materials" that lists four types of material by soil category; these are roadfill, sand, gravel, and topsoil.

The purpose of this section of the Master Plan is to identify such materials that may be located in Westmoreland. The soil types are listed in tables and the boundaries of the soil units are illustrated on maps. These maps were created by the Southwest Region Planning Commission using computer technology known as the Geographic Information System (GIS). The soil information from the SCS Survey was digitized, and the maps printed out at 11"x17" size. These are available in the town office.

This section addresses Westmoreland's opportunities for earth excavation as defined by RSA 155-E. Amendments made to this law in 1989 and 1991 made it incumbent on towns to ensure that their zoning ordinances provide for excavation. Otherwise ***"excavation shall be deemed to be a use allowed by special exception . . . in any nonresidential area of the municipality, . . ."*** and the zoning board of adjustment shall grant the special exception upon a finding by the board that the excavation would not diminish property values, unreasonably change the character of the neighborhood, create traffic hazards, or create any health or safety hazards.

### **The Soil Survey**

Soil categories are identified in the Soil Survey of Cheshire County by number and letter; the number represents the composition of the soil, and the letter designates the steepness - "A" being the flattest and "E" the steepest. Note that the maps developed for this report show the soil unit boundaries but not the identifying number and letter, as the scale of the maps would render this information illegible. The complete designation is, however, provided in the following tables.

The classifications used to designate the construction materials are based on a number of factors, including observed performance of the soil, soil properties, and site features that affect the removal of the material and its use as a construction material.

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<sup>1</sup> NH RSA 674:2 was again amended in 2002. The suggested construction materials section has been eliminated. It is still a good idea to include this section.

## Description of Materials

### ▪ Roadfill

Roadfill is defined by the Survey as soil material that is excavated in one place and used in road embankments in another place. Only soils suitable for low embankments (under six feet) were rated by the Survey.

Roadfill is rated as being “good”, “fair” or “poor”. “Good” soils are those that are comprised of significant amounts of sand or gravel or both, and slopes of 15% or less. “Fair” soils have in excess of 35% silt and clay-sized particles, and slopes of 15-25%. “Poor” soils contain many stones, or slopes of more than 25%.

### ▪ Topsoil

Topsoil is defined in the Survey as material used to cover an area in order to establish and maintain vegetation. For the purposes of the Survey, only the upper 40 inches of soil were evaluated for its use as topsoil.

Topsoil is also rated as being “good”, “fair” or “poor”. Soils rated as “good” contain no stones or cobbles, have little or no gravel, and slopes of less than 8%. “Fair” soils are sandy, have considerable amounts of gravel or stone, or slopes of 8-15%. “Poor” soils are comprised of a lot of sand or clay, have a large amount of gravel or stone, and slopes of more than 15%.

### ▪ Sand and Gravel

Sand and gravel are defined in the Survey as natural aggregates suitable for commercial use with a minimum of processing. The Survey evaluated only the probability of finding materials in quantities large enough as to be suitable for removal.

The properties used to evaluate sand and gravel soils include the thickness of the material, the size of the grain, and the content of rock fragment. A soil rated as “probable” has either a layer of clean sand or gravel, or a layer of sand or gravel with up to 12% silty fines. In addition, the material must be at least three feet thick and have less than 50%, by weight, large stones.

## Construction Materials by Type and Acreage

The table below presents the calculated acreages for all four construction material types.

| <b>CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL</b> | <b>AREA (in acres)</b> | <b>% OF TOTAL LAND AREA</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Roadfill</b>              |                        |                             |
| Good                         | 1,882                  | 8%                          |
| Fair                         | 8,762                  | 38%                         |
| Poor                         | 12,244                 | 53%                         |
| <b>Topsoil</b>               |                        |                             |
| Good                         | 234                    | 1%                          |

|                           |               |     |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Fair                      | 1,817         | 8%  |
| Poor                      | 20,837        | 91% |
| <b>Sand</b>               |               |     |
| Probable                  | 2,018         | 9%  |
| Improbable                | 20,870        | 91% |
| <b>Gravel</b>             |               |     |
| Probable                  | 824           | 4%  |
| Improbable                | 22,064        | 96% |
| <b>Total Land Area: *</b> | <b>22,987</b> |     |

Sources: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, US Department of Agriculture, 1989  
\* Office of State Planning, "Selected Characteristics of New Hampshire Municipalities."

**Table 6 Construction Materials**

| <b>Roadfill by Soil Name and Soil Rating</b> |                              |                                |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>GOOD</b>                                  | <b>FAIR</b>                  | <b>POOR</b>                    |
| 2 SUNCOOK                                    | 4 POOTATUCK                  | 5 RIPPOWAM                     |
| 10B MERRIMAC                                 | 9 WINOOSKI                   | 26E WINDSOR                    |
| 22B COLTON                                   | 73D BERKSHIRE                | 6 SACO                         |
| 24A,B,C AGAWAM                               | 77D MARLOW                   | 60B,C,D TUNBRIDGE-BERKSHIRE    |
| 26A,B,C WINDSOR                              | 78B /79B PERU                | 61C,D TUNBRIDGE-LYMAN-ROCK     |
| 30A,B,C UNADILLA                             | 108 HADLEY                   | 107 RIPPOWAM-SACO              |
| 73B,C BERKSHIRE                              | 143D MONADNOCK               | 109 LIMERICK                   |
| 6B,C /77B,C MARLOW                           | 168B /169B SUNAPEE           | 161E LYMAN-TURNBRIDGE-ROCK     |
| 143C MONADNOCK                               | 330B,C,D /331C,D BERNARDSTON | 214 NAUMBURG                   |
| 365C BERKSHIRE-MONADNOCK                     | 334B,C /336B,C PITTSTOWN     | 230E POOCHAM                   |
| 401 OCCUM                                    | 365D BERKSHIRE-MONADNOCK     | 295 GREENWOOD                  |
| 410A,B,C HAVEN                               | 366B,C,D DUTCHESS            | 331E BERNARDSTON               |
| 510B,C HOOSIC                                | 367C,D DUTCHESS              | 340B /341B STISSING            |
| 526A CAESAR                                  | 513A,B NINIGRET              | 347B LYME-MOOSILAUKE           |
|  | 531A SCIO                    | 360B,C,D CARDIGAN-KEARSARGE    |
|  | 613B CROGHAN                 | 361C,D CARDIGAN-KEARSARGE-ROCK |
|  |                              | 362E KEARSARGE-CARDIGAN-ROCK   |
|  |                              | 365E BERKSHIRE-MONADNOCK       |
|  |                              | 367E DUTCHESS                  |
|  |                              | 395 CHOCORUA                   |
|  |                              | 414 MOOSILAUKE                 |
|  |                              | 495 OSSIPEE                    |
|  |                              | 510E HOOSIC                    |
|  |                              | 533 RAYNHAM                    |
|  |                              | 647B PILLSBURY                 |

**Table 7 Road Fill**

| <b>Topsoil by Soil Name and Soil Rating</b> |                           |                                |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>GOOD</b>                                 | <b>FAIR</b>               | <b>POOR</b>                    |
| 9 WINOOSKI                                  | 4 POOTATUCK               | 2 SUNCOOK                      |
| 108 HADLEY                                  | 30A,B,C UNADILLA          | 5 RIPPOWAM                     |
|   | 360B,C CARDIGAN-KEARSARGE | 6 SACO                         |
|   | 401 OCCUM                 | 10B MERRIMAC                   |
|   | 526A CAESAR               | 22B COLTON                     |
|   | 531A SCIO                 | 24A,B,C AGAWAM                 |
|   | 613B CROGHAN              | 26A,B,C,E WINDSOR              |
|   |                           | 60B,C,D TUNBRIDGE-BERKSHIRE    |
|   |                           | 61C,D TUNBRIDGE-LYMAN-ROCK     |
|   |                           | 647B PILLSBURY                 |
|   |                           | 73B,C,D BERKSHIRE              |
|   |                           | 76B,C /77B,C,D MARLOW          |
|   |                           | 78B /79B PERU                  |
|   |                           | 107 RIPPOWAM-SACO              |
|   |                           | 109 LIMERICK                   |
|   |                           | 143C,D MONADNOCK               |
|   |                           | 161E LYMAN-TURNBRIDGE-ROCK     |
|   |                           | 168B /169B SUNAPEE             |
|   |                           | 214 NAUMBURG                   |
|   |                           | 230E POOCHAM                   |
|   |                           | 295 GREENWOOD                  |
|   |                           | 330B,C,D /331C,D,E BERNARDSTON |
|   |                           | 334B,C /336C PITTSTOWN         |
|   |                           | 340B/341B STISSING             |
|   |                           | 347B LYME-MOOSILAUKE           |
|   |                           | 360D CARDIGAN-KEARSARGE        |
|   |                           | 361C,D CARDIGAN-KEARSARGE-ROCK |
|   |                           | 362E KEARSARGE-CARDIGAN-ROCK   |
|   |                           | 365C,D,E BERKSHIRE-MONADNOCK   |
|   |                           | 366B,C,D / 367C,E DUTCHESS     |
|   |                           | 395 CHOCORUA                   |
|   |                           | 410A,B,C HAVEN                 |
|   |                           | 414 MOOSILAUKE                 |
|   |                           | 495 OSSIPPEE                   |
|   |                           | 510B,C,E HOOSIC                |
|   |                           | 513A,B NINIGRET                |
|   |                           | 533 RAYNHAM                    |

: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, US Department of Agriculture, 1989.

**Table 8 Top Soil**

**Sandy Soils by Soil Name and Soil Rating Probable**

2 SUNCOOK  
 4 POOTATUCK  
 5 RIPPOWAM  
 6 SACO  
 10B MERRIMAC  
 22B COLTON  
 24A,B,C AGAWAM  
 26A,B,C,E WINDSOR  
 613B CROGHAN  
 107 RIPPOWAM-SACO  
 143C,D MONADNOCK  
 214 NAUMBURG  
 395 CHOCORUA  
 401 OCCUM  
 414 MOOSILAUKE  
 510B,C,E HOOSIC  
 513A,B NINIGRET

I

**Gravel Soils by Soil Name and Soil Rating Probable**

10B MERRIMAC  
 22B COLTON  
 414 MOOSILAUKE  
 510B,C,E HOOSIC  
 513A,B NINIGRET

**Table 10 Gravel Soils**

*Source: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, US Department of Agriculture, 1989.*

**Table 9 Sandy Soils**

**Excavation Operations in Westmoreland**

At present there are two registered excavation sites in Westmoreland.

Cersosimo Industries Corporation on River Rd.  
 Lane Construction Corporation (Cold River Material )on Rt. 12

**Opportunities in Westmoreland for Excavation**

The information on construction materials in this report is intended to be used for land use planning. Locations of sand, gravel, roadfill and topsoil have been identified and the Planning Board can make informed decisions regarding the appropriate locations for the excavation of these materials. Maps of these materials are available in the town offices. As noted earlier, RSA 155-E requires towns to allow some opportunity for earth excavation. The law also allows towns that have adopted a Water Resource Management and Protection Plan consistent with RSA 674:2,VIII to include in their local excavation regulations provisions that are aimed at protecting water resources.

**Conclusion**

At present the town does not limit "removal of soil, sand, or gravel for sale" (Section 441) in any specific zone. All excavations of construction materials for sale, except when

incidental; to construction of a building on the same premises, are subject to approval of a plan for the rehabilitation of the site by the Planning Board. Section 441.1 lists the requirements necessary before approval of any new or extension of removal of natural material. Two recommendations are made to the Planning Board.

1.0. Adopt a Water Resource Management and Protection Plan consistent with RSA 674:2,VIII. This will allow the Town to include in their local excavation regulations provisions that are aimed at protecting water resources.

2.0 The Planning Board might consider updating the Extraction of Soil, Sand or Gravel Ordinance – Section 441 in order to more clearly define the Town requirements including the excavation plan, the reclamation plan, the filling procedure and enforcement. Both Dublin and Walpole have regulations that might be applicable.

## **SECTION 10**

## **ECONOMIC BASE**

### **Overview**

Still today, Westmoreland is a small farming and residential community participating largely in the Keene, NH and Brattleboro, VT labor market area. Due to the limited commercial enterprises in town, most residents are shopping outside, particularly in Keene. Residents working in Westmoreland are either employed in farming, for a large crushed stone operation, for the Hubbard Farm Research Center, for smaller manufacturing companies or for institutions such as Maplewood Nursing Home and the County jail.

Thus, Westmoreland has some diversification of employment opportunities in town. However, most needs are being met outside in other communities. Many families also include two wage earners who are commuting outside Westmoreland.

It is always difficult to assess the contribution of agricultural activity to the local economic base. Certainly, the value of products produced, such as milk, grain, hay, beef and other products should be considered, although such a detailed analysis is not available on the local level. In addition, the land alone as open space pasture and woodland has value in helping to create the pastoral character of the community that so many wish to maintain. Agriculture has remained relatively stable with larger farms left on the most fertile lands, and with much open space still being used for farming purposes.

Slow growth in commercial or industrial development will help support the local tax base, a burden that is currently borne primarily by residents and farmers. Communities that rely primarily on residential development for tax base support are hit doubly hard with expenses for providing services, such as school, police, and fire protection. Westmoreland has an opportunity to broaden its tax base and provide some additional employment opportunities to local residents.

**Table 11**  
**Income Trends in Local Communities**

Comparing median household incomes

|              | <b>1989</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>10-year gain</b> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Acworth      | 33,661      | 37,386      | 11.07%              |
| Alstead      | 30,956      | 43,191      | 39.52%              |
| Antrim       | 37,246      | 45,677      | 22.64%              |
| Bennington   | 34,375      | 46,150      | 34.25%              |
| Charlestown  | 26,400      | 38,024      | 44.03%              |
| Chesterfield | 38,000      | 51,351      | 35.13%              |
| Dublin       | 41,917      | 52,150      | 24.41%              |
| Fitzwilliam  | 35,988      | 48,125      | 33.73%              |
| Gilsum       | 34,821      | 43,359      | 24.52%              |
| Greenfield   | 40,057      | 48,833      | 21.91%              |
| Hancock      | 41,318      | 55,000      | 33.11%              |
| Harrisville  | 35,000      | 48,625      | 38.93%              |
| Hinsdale     | 26,753      | 36,124      | 35.03%              |
| Jaffrey      | 32,549      | 45,033      | 38.35%              |
| Keene        | 31,235      | 37,033      | 18.56%              |
| Langdon      | 34,205      | 42,083      | 23.03%              |
| Marlborough  | 31,383      | 44,904      | 43.08%              |
| Marlow       | 32,212      | 45,000      | 39.70%              |
| Nelson       | 34,750      | 41,250      | 18.71%              |

|                     |               |               |               |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Peterborough        | 40,179        | 47,381        | 17.92%        |
| Richmond            | 36,328        | 49,141        | 35.27%        |
| Rindge              | 33,538        | 50,494        | 50.56%        |
| Roxbury             | 40,500        | 49,375        | 21.91%        |
| Stoddard            | 31,705        | 37,639        | 18.72%        |
| Sullivan            | 31,083        | 51,058        | 64.26%        |
| Surry               | 41,364        | 56,964        | 37.71%        |
| Swanzy              | 29,747        | 44,819        | 50.67%        |
| Troy                | 29,511        | 41,875        | 41.90%        |
| Walpole             | 27,679        | 44,673        | 61.40%        |
| <b>Westmoreland</b> | <b>38,583</b> | <b>55,875</b> | <b>44.82%</b> |
| Winchester          | 28,196        | 37,364        | 32.52%        |

**Counties**

|               |        |        |        |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Hillsborough  | 40,404 | 53,384 | 32.13% |
| Cheshire      | 31,648 | 42,382 | 33.92% |
| Sullivan      | 29,053 | 40,938 | 40.91% |
| <br>          |        |        |        |
| New Hampshire | 36,329 | 49,467 | 36.16% |
| United States | 30,056 | 41,994 | 39.72% |

Source: US Census Comparing Median Household Incomes

**Table 12 Economic Census**

Zip Code statistics

| Description   | <u>Estab-<br/>lish<br/>ments</u> | <u>Sales or<br/>receipts<br/>(\$1,000)</u> | <u>Annual<br/>payroll<br/>(\$1,000)</u> | <u>Paid<br/>em-<br/>ployees</u> |
|---|----------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Mining (not published for Zip codes)                          | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Utilities (not published for Zip codes)                       | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Construction (not published for Zip codes)                    | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Manufacturing   | 8                                | M  | M                                       | M                               |
| Wholesale trade (not published for Zip codes)                 | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Retail Trade  | 7                                | 1000 - 2499                                | 100-249                                 | 20-49                           |
| Transportation & Warehousing<br>(not published for zip codes) | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Information (not published for Zip codes)                     | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Finance & insurance (not published For zip codes)             | N                                | N  | N                                       | N                               |
| Real Estate & rental leasing (not                             |                                  |  |   |                                 |

|  |         |   |           |           |       |
|--|---------|---|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Published for zip codes)   |         | N | N         | N         | N     |
| Professional, scientific, & technical Services   | Taxable | 2 | 250-499   | 50-99     | 1-4   |
| Management of companies & enterprises (not published for zip codes)                    |         | N | N         | N         | N     |
| Administrative & support & waste Management & remediation services                     |         | 2 | 5000-9999 | 1000-2499 | 50-99 |
| Educational services   | Taxable | 0 | N         | N         | N     |
| Health care & social assistance  | Taxable | 1 | 100-249   | 25-49     | 5-9   |
| Arts, entertainment, & Recreation  | Taxable | 0 | N         | N         | N     |
| Accommodation & food services  |         | 2 | 100-249   | 25-49     | 1-4   |
| Other services (except public Administration Auxiliaries (not published For zip codes) | Taxable | 1 | 50-99     | 10-24     | 1-4   |
|  |         | N | N         | N         | N     |

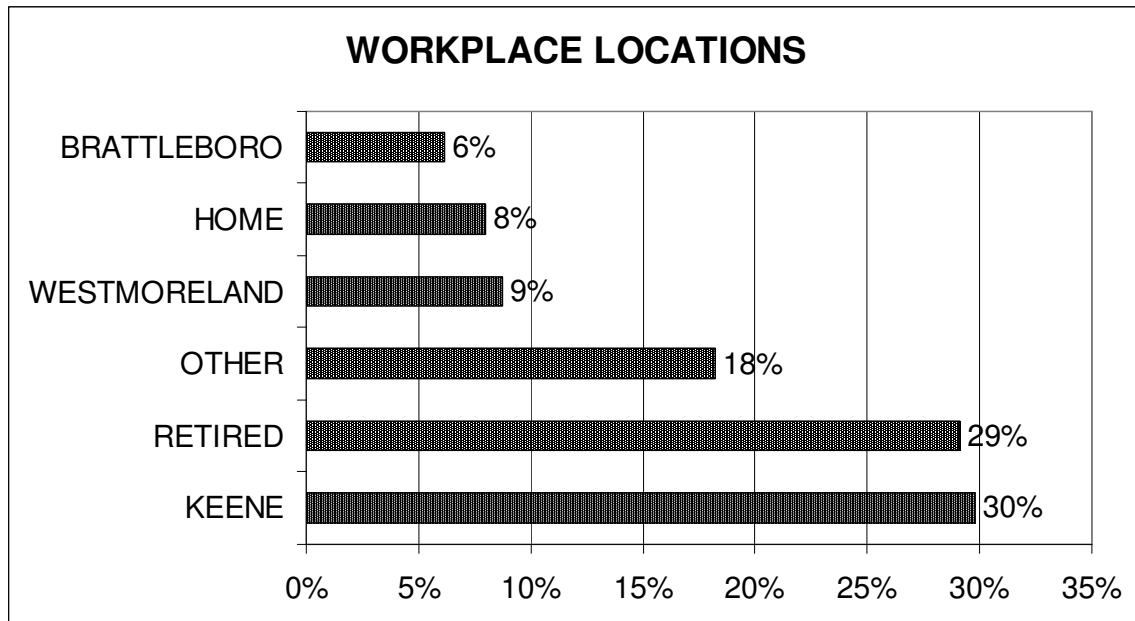
N=Not available; M=Not published for manufacturing; where ranges are shown, K=thousands, m=millions (sales and payroll figures are already in thousands)

Establishments by zip code by detailed industry by size class:

Census 2000 by ZCTA

Source: 1997 Economic Census

**Graph 2**



Source: 2002 Town Survey

## The Components of Westmoreland's Economy

Westmoreland's economy consists of three basic industries, agriculture/mining, service/retail and governmental/educational. Recreation and tourism play a small role in the economy. The use of the Connecticut River has been expanded somewhat in last few years for recreational use.

Detailed information on the individual components of Westmoreland's economy is generally not available because of disclosure regulation and the community's size. An understanding of income characteristics as well as occupations can help Westmoreland plan for slow expansion of commercial and industrial opportunities. Income characteristics also allow a comparison between communities. Income figures indicate that Westmoreland has a median household income, which is higher than the Cheshire County and State of New Hampshire averages. For planning purposes, these statistics indicate Westmoreland residents are in the middle to upper income brackets. Any introduction of new commercial establishment should be able to successfully market quality products to Westmoreland's residents.

Westmoreland is not of such a size to have individual manufacturing, retail/trade, or wholesale enterprises listed in the US Census. Yet, for its small population, Westmoreland does have some diversity in its manufacturing industry.

The state of New Hampshire, Department of Employment Security does not issue estimated and projected non-agricultural wage and salary employment of the Keene labor market. However, continued growth in employment opportunity for the Southwest Region is anticipated. To meet desires of residents for slow growth in commercial and industrial development, Westmoreland should plan to allocate areas where this growth could occur, such as in an industrial park.

Due to disclosure regulation, retail trade statistics are not available for Westmoreland. Several small retail and service businesses are spread throughout the town with most located near Village Centers.

It is difficult to assess the economic value of Westmoreland's agricultural base. There are several active dairy farms in Westmoreland, including the County Farm. They are located along the Connecticut River. Other Westmoreland's lands also support a few beef and sheep operations. Other products from these farms include the sale of grain and maple syrup. There are several orchards and a greenhouse. No large wood product or logging operations are located in Westmoreland. By sheer number of enterprises and acreage in active use, it is clear that agricultural and related operations play an important role in Westmoreland's economy.

**Table 13 List of Current Businesses**

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 3R Realty & Investment Co Inc/Cell Tower | Lincoln Hill Rd  |
| Alternative Clinic                       | Rt. 12           |
| Belluscio Construction                   | Rt. 12           |
| Britton's Country Gardens                | Mt Gilbo Rd      |
| Cadatt Enterprises                       | Rt. 12           |
| Captured Light Studio                    | 66 Carriage Lane |

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Cersosimo Industries Corporation              | River Rd.                 |
| Cheshire County correctional facility         | River Rd                  |
| Cox Woodworking                               | Rt. 63                    |
| Don's Rt. 12 auto service center              | Rt. 12                    |
| Elaine & Rolland Hall – Cell tower            | Aldrich Rd.               |
| Emile Bergeron - Cell tower                   | Rt. 9                     |
| Fissett Floor Sanding                         | P. O. Box 172             |
| Gateway Natural Healing                       | 1661 Rt. 12               |
| High Hopes Orchard                            | Glebe Rd                  |
| Hillcrest Home                                | Aldrich Rd.               |
| Hubbard ISA LLC                               | Hurricane Rd. & River RD. |
| Hurley Books                                  | 1752 Rt. 12               |
| Jingles Xmas shop                             | Rt. 12                    |
| Keith Plumbing & Heating                      | South Village Rd          |
| Lane Construction Corp. (Cold River Material) | Rt. 12                    |
| Lighthouse Restaurant                         | Rt. 12                    |
| Maplewood Nursing Home                        | River Rd                  |
| M. E. Matthews Inc.                           | 109 South Village Rd.     |
| Mike's Auto repair                            | Old Mill Brook Rd         |
| Mini Mart & Gas Station                       | Rt. 12                    |
| Natural Building Systems                      | Old Rt. 12 North          |
| Natural Style Hair Design                     | Rt. 12                    |
| New England Telephone                         | Rt. 63                    |
| Nursery                                       | Wentworth Rd              |
| Putter's Family Fun Center                    | Rt. 12                    |
| Scotty's Auto repair                          | South Village Rd          |
| Servpro                                       | Old Rt. 12 east           |
| Stan's Discount Groceries                     | Rt. 12                    |
| State of NH DOT garage                        | RT. 12                    |
| State of NH - Hyland Hill Tower               | Hyland Hill               |
| Steve's Equipment repair                      | River Rd                  |
| Stuart & John's Sugar House                   | Rt. 63                    |
| TC Mark & Son Auto Repair                     | Rt. 12                    |
| Tectonics                                     | Rt. 12                    |
| The Antique Shops                             | Rt. 12                    |
| Treehugger Farms                              | Rt. 12                    |
| Type Master Services                          | 867 Rt. 12, Unit 8        |
| Westmoreland Auto Sales                       | Rt. 12                    |
| Westmoreland Village Store                    | Rt. 63                    |
| Westmoreland Wood products                    | McAdam Rd                 |
| Wilkes Bros Development, Wstmrlnd Ind. Park   | Rt. 12                    |
| Wood Turning                                  | McAdam Rd                 |
| Woods Of The World, Wstmrlnd Ind. Park        | Rt. 12                    |
| Yankee Traveler Motel                         | Rt. 12                    |

Source: Town Office

## Summary

Westmoreland is likely to continue its role as an agricultural and residential community. Some expanded commercial and industrial growth could create additional in-town jobs for Westmoreland residents. However employment opportunity is likely to remain small as Keene supplies the majority of jobs. Any expansion of light industrial or commercial activity in Westmoreland should only be undertaken in concert with goals to preserve the rural character.

Future planning in Westmoreland can assure that adequate services are provided to economic sectors in locations where development is desired. It is important to maintain strict regulations that will assure the protection of Westmoreland's character, and natural resources.

Any future economic development should be minimal. The small town atmosphere should be kept. The rural character of the town should be kept by limiting development. A modest growth of businesses appears acceptable if they are limited primarily to areas along Rt. 12. They should have limited visibility to Rt. 12 and limit the number of access roads by using park clusters away from the road with a minimum of signs and lighting. A good example of this is the present industrial park already off Rt. 12. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) should be considered if new development is requested. It will encourage quality development for the community.

## **SECTION 11                    POPULATIONS**

If the Master Plan for a community is to serve and meet the needs of existing and future populations, it is important to have an accurate description of those populations and how they are changing. This section will provide that description and analyze population change as it is occurring in Westmoreland.

Through time, Westmoreland has maintained a rural, agricultural character, despite a common border with Keene. The particularly fertile resource of Connecticut River bottom lands has made it an attractive community for those engaged in farming and related services while easy access to Keene, Brattleboro, and (in recent years) Interstate 91 have appealed to retirees and families with employment in nearby locales. Westmoreland's scenic beauty also draws people to or back to this area.

Some factors influencing Westmoreland's growth are not within the community's control. These include geographic proximity to Keene, with its employment opportunities, and the availability of prime agricultural land. Others, however, can be governed using such techniques as ordinance development to direct growth where the community wants it to occur and master planning to determine the needs of a growing population and to protect sensitive areas and historic properties. There is little doubt Westmoreland will continue to grow, as suggested by both national and state trends.

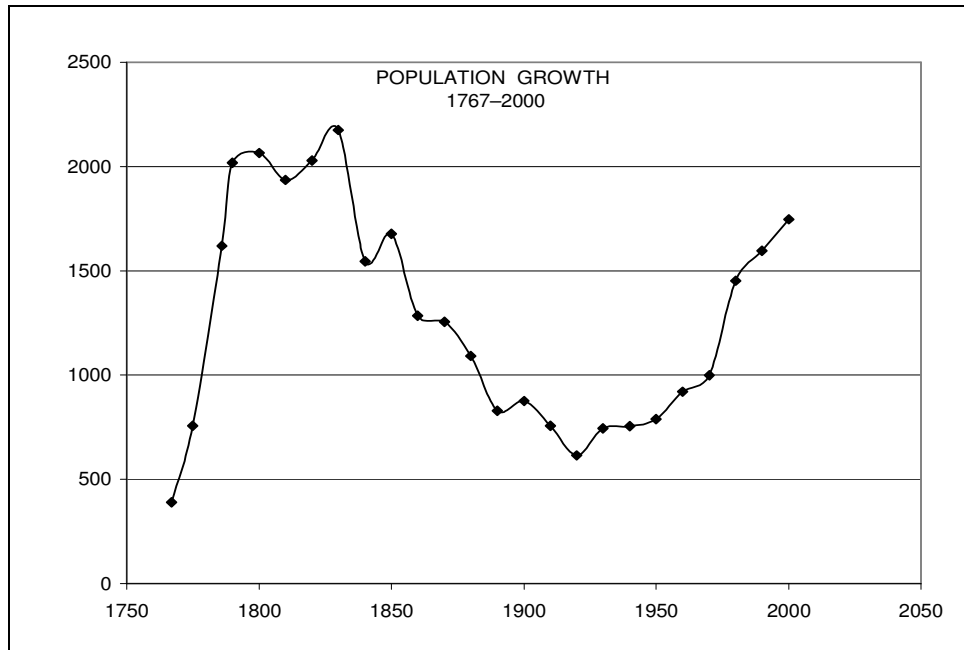
### **Population Growth**

Westmoreland's lands were granted in 1735 and 1752. Settlement began in 1741. The town was incorporated in 1752, with a portion allocated to Surry in 1769 when the current boundaries were established. Graph 3 on page 51 shows population change over time in Westmoreland. It is interesting to note the historic highs of 2,066 in 1800 and 2,176 in 1830, a period that corresponds to the peak of hill farming in New England. A slight population increase occurred in 1850, then a nearly continuous decline until 1930. Since this time, population has risen steadily, but has never reached the numbers of inhabitants seen in the early 1800's. There was a growth spurt between 1970 and 1980, when population seems to have increased by 45%. In fact the increase was about half that percentage since Westmoreland's institutional population was counted as residents of Westmoreland rather than their home communities for the first time in the 1980 census. Since 1980 the growth rate has slowed, leveling off to about 10% through the 1980's and 1990's.

The population bubble between 1970 and 1980 was similar to that experienced by many New Hampshire communities during that period because of accessibility to Massachusetts and the overall attractiveness of the state. In Cheshire County some communities grew much more rapidly than Westmoreland in the seventies; some, less. Stoddard reported the greatest growth rate: 99.2%. Keene grew only 4.8% in that same period. In the 1980's Westmoreland's growth rate fell below the county median, but in the 1990's it again ranked above the median in rate of growth. Over the thirty year period from 1970 to 2000, Westmoreland gradually absorbed more and more of the county's population, going from 1.9% of the total, to 2.4% in 2000.

Westmoreland's institutional population (mainly those living in the Cheshire County House of Corrections, Maplewood Nursing Home, or Hillcrest House) is shown in the Census to have been 217 in 1990 and 264 in 2000. Subtracting these numbers from the total shows the non-institutional population to have been 1379 in 1990 and 1483 in 2000. The higher number has been used in Tables 14 and 15 on pages 52 and 53 to allow comparison with other census data.

### Graph 3 Population Growth



Source: Census Reports

### Population Distribution

The concentration of population in Westmoreland has followed a pattern established in many other rural New England farming communities. During the 1800's, many farms were scattered throughout the community. As hill farms declined and mills and industrial activity spurred the local economy, supplying the outlying farms, population tended to concentrate in villages. Today, developed area, including agricultural land, covers approximately 23% of the total land area. Agricultural activity is concentrated along the Connecticut River, in central Westmoreland, and in scattered areas of town. Population or residential land uses are concentrated in an area around the South Village, East Westmoreland, Westmoreland Depot, and Park Hill. There is little multi-family or seasonal development.

Population density continues to increase. Westmoreland had a population density of approximately 50 people per square mile in 2000. Outside Westmoreland's institutions, the density is closer to 41 people per square mile. This compares to a density of 28 in 1970 and 38 in 1990. In Cheshire County, Stoddard has the smallest population density (18) and Keene, the largest (605). Another way to look at this is to note that the number of acres per family has changed from 100 in 1970 to 52 in 2000.

Despite the still large acreage per family in Westmoreland, the halving of this figure between 1970 and 2000 indicates that Westmoreland is losing some of its rural isolation. As noted earlier in this report, citizens have asked that the town's character and features such as wildlife habitats, existing farmlands, forested areas and river shorelands be preserved. As anticipated growth continues, it is important to describe where development can best be accommodated at least expense to Westmoreland when future services are provided; and at minimal impact on the natural environment. Master planning can help Westmoreland accommodate desired slow

growth, in concert with community goals and protection of the farmlands and open spaces that are an important part of the town character.

**TABLE 14**  
**WESTMORELAND POPULATION AND**  
**PROJECTED POPULATION 1767 TO 2020**

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>Gain or Loss</u> | <u>% Change</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1767        | 391               | 0                   | 0               |
| 1775        | 758               | 367                 | +94             |
| 1786        | 1621              | 863                 | +114            |
| 1790        | 2018              | 397                 | +24             |
| 1800        | 2066              | 48                  | +2              |
| 1810        | 1937              | 129                 | - 6             |
| 1820        | 2029              | 92                  | +5              |
| 1830        | 2176              | 147                 | +7              |
| 1840        | 1546              | 630                 | - 29            |
| 1850        | 1678              | 132                 | +9              |
| 1860        | 1285              | 393                 | - 23            |
| 1870        | 1256              | 29                  | - 2             |
| 1880        | 1093              | 163                 | - 13            |
| 1890        | 830               | 263                 | - 24            |
| 1900        | 875               | 45                  | +5              |
| 1910        | 758               | 117                 | +13             |
| 1920        | 615               | 143                 | - 19            |
| 1930        | 745               | 130                 | +21             |
| 1940        | 755               | 10                  | +1              |
| 1950        | 789               | 34                  | +5              |
| 1960        | 921               | 132                 | +17             |
| 1970        | 998               | 77                  | +8              |
| 1980        | 1452              | 454                 | +45             |
| 1990        | 1596              | 144                 | +10             |
| 2000        | 1747              | 151                 | +9              |
| <hr/>       |                   |                     |                 |
| 2005        | 1767*             |                     |                 |
| 2010        | 1791*             |                     |                 |
| 2015        | 1839*             |                     |                 |
| 2020        | 1898*             |                     |                 |

\*1997 New Hampshire Office of State Planning projections, based on 1996 estimate  
Source: Census reports

**TABLE 15  
POPULATION CHANGE FOR CHESHIRE COUNTY TOWNS**

| TOWNS                | 1980         | 1990         | 2000         | CHANGE      |             |             |            |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
|                      |              |              |              | 1980-90     | %           | 1990-00     | %          |
| Alstead              | 1461         | 1721         | 1944         | 260         | 17.8        | 223         | 13.0       |
| Chesterfield         | 2561         | 3112         | 3542         | 551         | 21.5        | 430         | 13.7       |
| Dublin               | 1303         | 1474         | 1476         | 171         | 13.1        | 2           | .1         |
| Fitzwilliam          | 1795         | 2011         | 2141         | 216         | 12.0        | 130         | 6.5        |
| Gilsum               | 652          | 745          | 777          | 93          | 14.3        | 32          | 4.3        |
| Harrisville          | 860          | 981          | 1075         | 121         | 14.1        | 94          | 9.6        |
| Hinsdale             | 3631         | 3936         | 4082         | 305         | 8.4         | 146         | 3.7        |
| Jaffrey              | 4349         | 5361         | 5476         | 1012        | 23.3        | 115         | 2.1        |
| Keene                | 21449        | 22430        | 22563        | 981         | 4.6         | 133         | .6         |
| Marlborough          | 1846         | 1927         | 2009         | 81          | 4.4         | 82          | 4.3        |
| Marlow               | 542          | 650          | 747          | 108         | 19.9        | 97          | 14.9       |
| Nelson               | 442          | 535          | 634          | 93          | 21.0        | 99          | 18.5       |
| Richmond             | 518          | 877          | 1077         | 359         | 69.3        | 200         | 22.8       |
| Rindge               | 3375         | 4941         | 5451         | 1566        | 46.4        | 510         | 10.3       |
| Roxbury              | 190          | 248          | 237          | 58          | 30.5        | -11         | -4.4       |
| Stoddard             | 482          | 622          | 926          | 140         | 29.0        | 306         | 49.2       |
| Sullivan             | 585          | 706          | 746          | 121         | 20.7        | 40          | 5.7        |
| Surry                | 656          | 667          | 673          | 11          | 1.7         | 6           | .9         |
| Swanzy               | 5183         | 6236         | 6800         | 1053        | 20.3        | 564         | 9.0        |
| Troy                 | 2131         | 2097         | 1962         | -34         | -1.6        | -135        | -6.4       |
| Walpole              | 3188         | 3210         | 3594         | 22          | .7          | 384         | 12.0       |
| <b>Westmoreland</b>  | <b>1452</b>  | <b>1596</b>  | <b>1747</b>  | <b>144</b>  | <b>9.9</b>  | <b>151</b>  | <b>9.5</b> |
| Winchester           | 3465         | 4038         | 4144         | 573         | 16.5        | 1.6         | 2.6        |
| <b>County Totals</b> | <b>62116</b> | <b>70121</b> | <b>73825</b> | <b>8005</b> | <b>12.9</b> | <b>3704</b> | <b>5.3</b> |

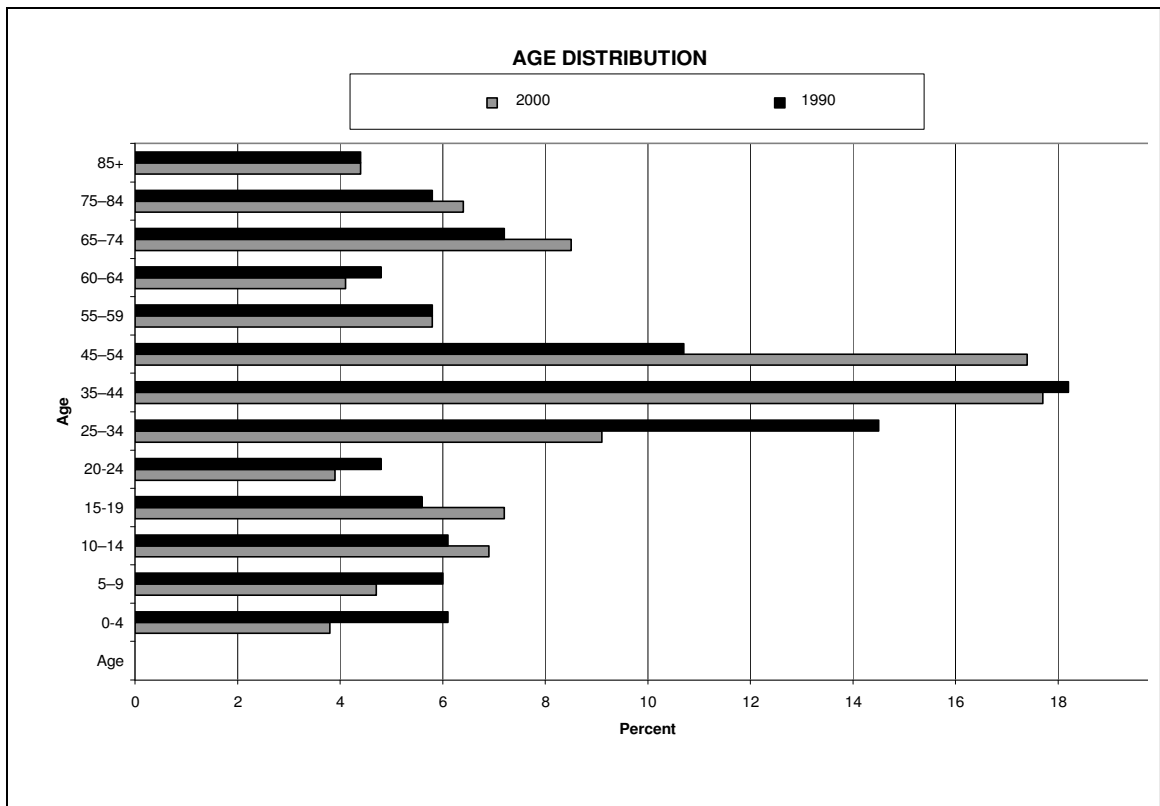
### Age Distribution

Population distribution by age for Westmoreland is shown on Graph 4. This graph indicates that Westmoreland has followed national trends, with an aging population. Increases in the middle ranges in recent years are most likely the result of immigration of child-bearing age families who are taking advantage of employment opportunities in the Keene area and nearby Vermont.

Table 16 on the next page shows the numbers of households and families in Westmoreland and the trend toward smaller sizes of both. The trend toward smaller family size with fewer children per household is evident in Westmoreland if we consider that in 1970, the family size in Westmoreland averaged 3.8 persons, while in 2000 this had declined to 3.36 persons. Persons per residence also declined.

# Graph 4

Source: Census data



**Table 16**

**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY SIZE IN WESTMORELAND  
1990 CENSUS AND 2000 CENSUS**

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Persons (not in<br/>Institutions)</u> | <u>Households</u> | <u>Families</u> | <u>1990-2000<br/>Change in<br/>Population</u> | <u>Persons/<br/>Families per<br/>Household</u> |
|-------------|--|-------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| 1990        | 1379                                     | 502               | 399             | 144   | 2.74/3.46                                      |
| 2000        | 1494                                     | 576               | 445             | 151   | 2.59/3.36                                      |

**Population Trends**

These population characteristics and trends have implications for Westmoreland's future planning. A population that is dominated by persons in the childbearing and working years will make different demands on community services than will a younger or older population. Westmoreland has a number of women in their childbearing years, which may result in an increasing school population for future years, despite a national trend toward smaller families. 74% of Westmoreland's working force commutes elsewhere for work. When a large percentage of the population is commuting outside of town to work, there are greater needs expressed for better access roads to major highways and improved road maintenance.

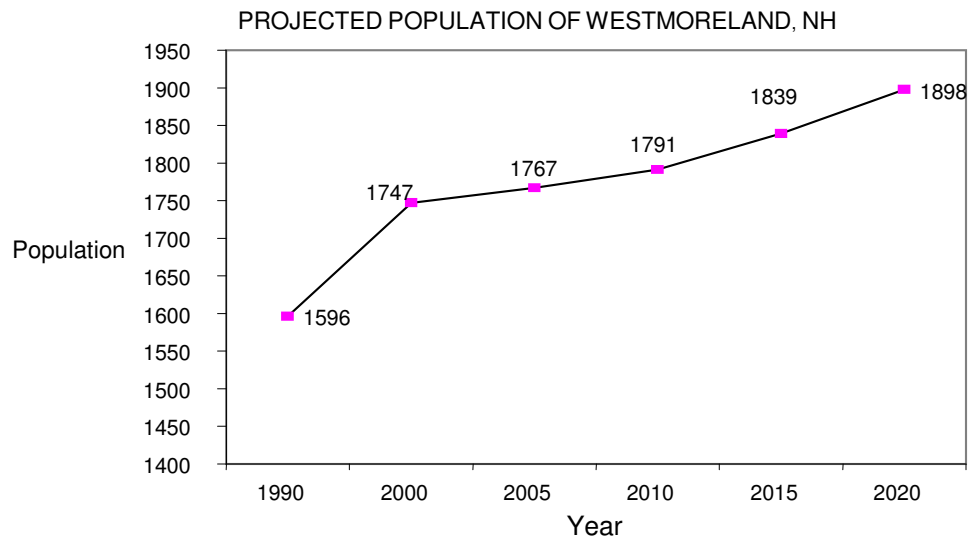
While the percent change in population growth appears to have slowed, Westmoreland should still plan for further increases and the changing demands of the population for services. Designating where growth should occur and discouraging scattered development will help meet the needs of an expanding population with minimal financial and environmental cost.

**Population Projections**

The population projections depicted on Graph 5 show a slowing of the growth rate after 2000. This condition is also occurring in the State of New Hampshire as a whole and in Cheshire County. In Cheshire County the population is projected by the NH Office of State Planning to grow 16% between 2000 and 2010, and 13% between 2010 and 2020. Population increase in Westmoreland is already a bit above these projections.

Westmoreland residents have called for slow growth in housing, business, and industrial uses. If controls are instituted to direct future growth to areas near Village Centers as suggested in the Land Use Section, then a population of 1898 by the year 2020 can be accommodated with little infringement on the rural character. Important amenities such as Westmoreland's Connecticut River shoreline, agricultural land, and open spaces can also be protected from scattered development.

**Graph 5**



Source: Office of State Planning. The 1990 and 2000 numbers are from census data and include Maplewood and correctional institute populations.

## **SECTION 12**

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Westmoreland's history is not only rich in stories and narratives, but it is still rich in tangible areas that have survived the encroachment of modern technology in New England towns. As indicated earlier, this survival is partly due to circuitous travel routes around the town.

Westmoreland has been fortunate in not being degraded, as so many of the communities in major growth areas of New England's communities have been. This is, in part, due to the fact that people in Westmoreland, down through the generations, have cared for and maintained their individual properties, and have collectively cared for their churches and common buildings. They have maintained an overall quality that reflects, in many instances, a very rich, historical background. But as we enter the twenty-first century, change has taken place. Westmoreland has become a very desirable "bedroom community," and for the most part has attracted upscale building and development. The zoning and planning boards have kept this movement under control, and are to be highly commended for their actions.

Recognizing what has happened in so many other towns, Westmoreland should support historic preservation efforts. The identification of historically significant areas is an initial measure for the retention and preservation of such local characteristics that richly contribute to the town's history.

### **The Town's historic areas include:**

1. Canoe Meadows off River Road in the southwest corner of the Town - including the Works Cemetery to the north and Old Fort #2 site to the south.
2. The area surrounding the Poocham Road-River Road intersection including the old "Bedbug Point" area.
3. The Park Hill (also known as Federal Hill) section.
4. The South Village, sometimes referred to as the Shag.
5. The Mutton Hill area, the original land route settlement in East Westmoreland; the area surrounding the Iron Kettle; and the original site of the first grist mill.
6. The area at the second bridge surrounding Britton's Ferry.
7. The multitude of cemeteries that tell the story of the old Westmoreland and its residents.

The Town of Westmoreland, under the auspices of the State of New Hampshire, may adopt the provisions under the Historic District legislation. Once identified, historic areas and sites may be protected through a Historic District Commission that can undertake research authenticating the significance of historic areas, and establish regulations for their preservation. It is the Master Plan's purpose to identify these areas and set the groundwork for such measures, should the general public of Westmoreland decide to protect its heritage, so well preserved up to this point in time.

## Westmoreland History

In 1733, Massachusetts granted a township lying to the northeast of Northfield named Arlington. Pending the King's decision concerning the dividing line between this and other provinces, the General Court of Massachusetts, in the fall of 1736, granted 30+ townships - between the Merrimac and Connecticut River. Of these townships, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4 lined the banks of the Connecticut River, just north of Arlington and were nearly identical. They later became Chesterfield, Westmoreland, Walpole and Charlestown.

On February 2, 1737, No. 2 (later Westmoreland) was placed in Hampshire County "in order to have their title recorded, the King's peace preserved and common justice done".

The only inhabitants until then were a few Abenaki Indians, a small sub-branch of the Five Nations tribes. Their wigwams were in the north part of town along Wigwam Brook. They remained in the area for a short time and seemed friendly.

In the spring of 1736 settlers began arriving, and in 1741 a blockhouse was erected for protection against the Indians. This blockhouse was later strengthened by palisades because of Indian trouble and was known as Great Meadow.

After the French & Indian War broke out in 1744, homes were considered unsafe, and settlers from No. 2, Putney and Westminster crossed the river to the Putney Meadows, where they constructed a stockade fort. Although the war officially ended in October, 1748, the Indians had become so enraged that they kept up their forays through the next season.

In the meantime, the New Hampshire and Massachusetts boundaries under dispute were finally decided. A large section of land (including No. 2, or Great Meadow) was taken from Massachusetts and given to New Hampshire. More settlers started moving into the area, and by 1752 there were 300 people living here.

In 1752, a charter for the No. 2 settlement was granted by Governor Wentworth, and was incorporated under the name of Westmoreland, in honor of Lord Westmoreland, an intimate friend of the governor. Owing to the unsettled times, the grantees were unable to fulfill the conditions of the charter and, upon petition, the grant was extended to June 11, 1760. To fulfill the conditions of the charter and secure their title, the town was subdivided into lots. Each of the 72 proprietors had a 100 acre pitch lot, a meadow lot, a 20 acre house lot, and 150 acres of common land, plus lots were set aside for Governor Wentworth, his son, the Anglican Church, the minister, and the school.

The town was surveyed, a plan drawn up and completed, and on March 30, 1752 the first Town Meeting was held. One of the first problems to be dealt with was the necessity of a grist mill. The townspeople decided to set aside 50 acres of land for anyone who would build a mill and run it for 10 years. Thomas Chamberlain and Samuel Minot accepted the offer and built the first grist mill at Granger Hollow. Mills were also established along Partridge Brook, and are described in *The History of Westmoreland*. Ruins may still be seen along the brook, and a series of photos are available through the Westmoreland Historical Society.

As soon as the town was chartered, it was required to provide schools and teachers. This responsibility was carried out under the auspices of the Selectmen (until 1805), and schools were located according to population densities. In 1748, the town voted to divide into four districts called squadrons. In 1794, the town was divided into eight districts. In 1798, the town was again divided, this time into eleven districts. Two school buildings remain. The Corner School, now part of the Historical Society, and another building on Poocham Road, owned by Mame Odette and Steve Robbins. The owners have taken steps

to preserve this original schoolhouse that in the distant past served the residents of Poocham as far as the Chesterfield line. The remaining schoolhouses have been turned into houses, torn down or as in one case used as a storage shop.

In 1779, Vermont territory was claimed by both New Hampshire and New York, with duplicate grants being issued from these two states for the same areas. New Hampshire Grants settlers were badly treated by New York governing bodies, and a long battle was fought for this territory to be admitted to the Union as a state. New Hampshire, along with some towns on the east side of the Connecticut River south of Claremont, withdrew and organized as Washington County on January 16, 1781. In August, 1781, the General Assembly passed an act obliging each town to provide monthly installments of beef and rum for the Continental Army. Along with other revolting towns, Westmoreland refused to do this. A warrant was served on the town and a fine imposed. To prevent an impending civil war, General Washington intervened and asked Vermont to give up her eastern Connecticut River towns and join the Union as its 14th state. On February 23, 1782, the western bank of the Connecticut River, as designated by Congress, became the boundary line dividing New Hampshire and Vermont. Westmoreland was back under the jurisdiction of New Hampshire.

Water transportation played quite an important role in the settling of Westmoreland. People used the River to settle the town, as a means of escape from Indian raids, and to bring their corn to be ground at the Westmoreland Grist Mills.

The first planned county road ran from the Walpole town line, over Park Hill, down to a bridge, then over Cass Hill, along Poocham Road to Hunt Road to the Hunt residence. The first town road was Canoe Meadow Road (now River Road). Boston Post Road went over Park Hill, over Farr Hill and branched off over Dagget Hill.

Overland transportation, mainly stage lines and horse power, was very slow, and the town's major industries during the early 1800's were at a distinct disadvantage because of this. The woolen and cotton mills, as well as the woodenware industry, therefore, benefited greatly after the second half of the extension of the Cheshire Railroad from South Ashburnham to Bellows Falls became operational on January 1, 1849. Two railroad stations were built in Westmoreland, the first at Gilboa (in East Westmoreland), and the second at Westmoreland Depot.

Westmoreland's fine agricultural land has always been a matter of record. At its peak, around 1885, it was one of the most fertile and productive towns in the State of New Hampshire. In 1866, about 200 acres of this prime farmland was purchased by the County for the County Poor Farm, and today is still a working and productive farm. The new Nursing Home was built around 1974 and the old buildings at the bottom of the hill were demolished a few years later with the hopes that someone would buy it and turn it into something, but the complex needed so much work there were no buyers. There is today; however, significant concern by local people that a proposed enlargement of the correctional institute will degrade the area and the image of the town.

The topography of Westmoreland is not quite as hilly as most of the neighboring townships and, combined with a very pleasing landscape overall, draws an increasing number of visitors every summer. The resident population grew from 300 in 1752 to 1,094 in 1880, and by April 1967 it was 1,003. Allowing for slight fluctuation, the town is steadily growing. Today's population, less the nursing home and correctional institute, is 1462.

Source: Article written by Dorothy Dunn, 6/19/69 and updated by Bill Hunter and Bill Howland, 9/2002