

# STEEP SLOPES OVERLAY DISTRICT

## *At-A-Glance*

### Protect Hillsides and Property

There are a number of issues associated with development on steep slopes, hillsides, and ridgelines. Foremost among them are health, safety, and environmental considerations that arise when planning development in steep areas. Another factor is the aesthetic quality of hillsides and ridgelines that can be lost when they are developed. Development on steep slopes can also have an adverse effect on water quality as a result of increased erosion and sedimentation.

New Hampshire residents and visitors place great value on the state's natural resources. Protecting hillsides and steep slopes from development helps to preserve those unique environmental qualities that people value.



**Runoff from steep slope development causes erosion, problems on-site, and can affect neighboring homeowners.**

**A** Steep Slopes Overlay District can reduce negative impacts of hillside development:

1. Danger to public safety
2. Expensive infrastructure
3. Excessive cuts and fills
4. Unattractive aesthetics
5. Erosion and drainage problems
6. Inaccessible to emergency response equipment

**October 2007**

### Definition

*A Steep Slopes Overlay District includes all land that has a grade of 15% or greater, meaning that the elevation increases by 15 feet over a horizontal distance of 100 feet.*

### Characteristics

- *Steep Slopes > 25% may not be developed*
- *Steep Slopes 15-25% development is managed*
- *Decreased erosion and runoff*
- *Neighboring properties are protected*
- *Water resources are protected*



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This driveway is inaccessible to the Town's emergency response vehicles.

## A Steep Slope Overlay District is Based on 3 Principles:

1. *Slope/Density Provisions* – Reduce allowable densities on hillsides: the steeper the slope, the less the allowed density.
2. *Soil Overlays* – Provisions link development regulations to soil type, based on maps by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
3. *The Guiding Principles Approach* - Creates hillside overlay districts to cover all hillside lands in a jurisdiction.

## Framework for Creating a Steep Slopes Overlay District

### Obshansky Principles

Consider the ten topics outlined below prior to implementing a regulation. They can be used as a framework to build a solid justification for regulating steep slopes, hillsides, and ridgelines.

**Topography:** Define the slope.

**Slope Stability:** A change in the slope equilibrium can cause erosion or landslides.

**Drainage & Erosion:** Identify major watersheds, flood prone areas, downstream facilities, drainage patterns, and highly erodible soils.

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is difficult and expensive on steep slopes. Septic systems are difficult to construct and maintain, and are prone to higher failure rates.

**Access:** Long, curvy roads mean erosion and runoff, a higher potential for accidents, and difficulty for emergency vehicles to access the property.

**Aesthetics:** Identify scenic vistas and resources of special symbolic value to the community.

**Natural Qualities:** Identify vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, and corresponding threats.

**Fire Hazard:** Architecture and landscaping factor in fire safety. Evaluate the frequency and causes of wildfires.

**Recreational Values:** Identify trails and access points to existing and potential recreational opportunities.

**Open Space:** Open space, wildlife habitat preservation areas, and conservation areas can be a key component of hillside/steep slope regulations.

For more information on ordinance development, please contact LRPC at 279-8171.