

HORIZON 2025
THE BALDWIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008 - 2025
CHAPTER 3: HOUSING ELEMENT
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES
OCTOBER, 2008

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

One of society's most basic needs is shelter. How we as a society preserve our housing stock and how we plan to accommodate our future housing needs reflect upon the quality of life we enjoy or want to enjoy in the future. The issue is not just creating affordable housing, it also includes preserving existing affordable housing stock, rental housing, and older neighborhoods where a diversity of housing is in close proximity to public transit and human services.

The goals, objectives, and policies of this element are intended to provide County officials and the general public with the implementation strategies necessary to guide housing growth in the direction which best addresses the desires of not only Baldwin County's existing and anticipated residents, but those with special needs as well.

The goals, objectives, and policies should be followed by decision-makers involved in residential development in Baldwin County. These decision-makers include government officials charged with the review and approval of residential plans as well as the developers and builders who submit such plans and provide housing through the private market system. The objectives and policies are intended to serve as a guide for both public and private decisions, as well as provide a basis for new land development regulations.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL: Provide for the creation and preservation of adequate, safe, sanitary and affordable housing for all Baldwin County residents, particularly low and low-moderate-income households.

Objective 1: Provide affordable housing opportunities for low and low-moderate-income households throughout the County.

Policy 1.1: Baldwin County shall seek to distribute affordable-workforce housing equitably throughout the County.

Policy 1.2: Partnerships are encouraged between private developers, non-profit entities, local governments and other interested parties to ensure the development of housing that meets the needs of Baldwin County residents.

Policy 1.3: Baldwin County shall evaluate methods to facilitate the development of necessary affordable-workforce housing through programs including impact fee credits or deferrals.

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Policy 1.4: Baldwin County should conduct a comprehensive housing survey by the end of 2010 for the purpose of creating an inventory of affordable housing (rental and ownership).

Policy 1.5: Encourage residential infill - Baldwin County shall continue to encourage residential infill development on vacant land within established subdivisions where supporting infrastructures such as water and sewer lines and transportation systems are already in place, subject to compliance with the goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.6: Accessory Dwelling Units - Baldwin County shall explore new alternatives to create affordable housing and “aging in place” opportunities, outside the Coastal High Hazard Area, and allow accessory dwellings in appropriate districts.

Policy 1.7: Amend Land Development Regulations - Baldwin County shall review the land development code and building regulations, as necessary, to identify potential actions or programs that may be established to reduce the cost of compliance for affordable housing providers.

Policy 1.8: Streamline Permitting Process - Baldwin County shall continue to streamline the housing development and permitting process in order to minimize costs and delays in the provision of affordable housing by:

- a. Disseminating clear and concise information on affordable housing programs.
- b. Providing flexible and efficient development regulations and administrative procedures.
- c. Ensuring adequate staff for technical and administrative support.
- d. Expediting the review and permitting process for affordable housing proposals.

Policy 1.9: Siting Criteria - Baldwin County shall provide for the location of affordable housing for residential areas that meet the following criteria:

- a. Adequate public facilities are present.
- b. Adequate public services are present.
- c. The site is proximate to employment opportunities.
- d. The site is proximate to schools and recreation.
- e. The site is proximate to emergency medical facilities.
- f. The site is proximate to public transportation routes.
- g. The site is outside the outside the Coastal High Hazard Area.

Policy 1.10: Explore a program for housing bonus density through land development regulations, to stimulate the construction of affordable housing in Baldwin County.

Policy 1.11: Encourage a mix of residential types and designs on a countywide basis by providing for a wide variety of allowable housing densities and types through the planned development process.

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Objective 2: Baldwin County shall continue to promote the preservation of historically significant housing and encourage its utility for residential use.

Policy 2.1: By 2010, conduct a comprehensive survey to identify all residential structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places or which are identified by the State Historical Commission or designated by the Baldwin County Historical Development Commission.

Policy 2.2: By 2012, a new Historical Survey for all of unincorporated Baldwin County will be completed. The survey shall review the current status of all previously identified historical structures and sites within the unincorporated County and shall make recommendations as to which of these sites or structures should be nominated to the National Register. The survey shall also review and make similar recommendations regarding any previously unidentified historic structures or sites.

Policy 2.3: Encourage the conservation, maintenance and rehabilitation of historically significant structures through the use of facade easements or other creative preservation methods.

Policy 2.4: Land development regulations should be reviewed for their effectiveness in protecting historic structures in the land development process.

Policy 2.5: The Baldwin County Planning Department shall coordinate with the Baldwin County Historical Commission, and any other historical society or board that may become active, to identify historically significant housing.

Policy 2.6: The County shall adopt incentives for developers to protect and preserve historically significant housing in the County Criteria for incentives may include, but are not limited to granting a tax abatement to developers who do not destructively modify designated historically significant housing.

Policy 2.7: The County shall establish and implement a Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Objective 3: Baldwin County shall provide appropriate land use categories and land development regulations to allow for a variety of housing types and values to meet the needs of the existing and anticipated residents.

Policy 3.1: Baldwin County shall increase minimum housing code enforcement activities in areas where high concentrations of substandard dwelling units are found. This will be accomplished through a systematic housing inspection program.

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Policy 3.2: Baldwin County shall continue to seek federal, state, and local funding at a level adequate to meet this objective.

Policy 3.3: Baldwin County shall commit, at a minimum, an amount equivalent to twenty-five percent of its Community Development Block Grant funds, when it begins to receive entitlement funds, to be spent directly for housing rehabilitation and demolition activities.

Policy 3.4: Baldwin County shall establish criteria for setting priorities among applicants when allocating rehabilitation funds. These criteria shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Income level;
- b. Age of applicant;
- c. Physical disability;
- d. Cases involving minimum housing code citations, and;
- e. Cases involving imminent threats to health and safety.

Policy 3.5: By the end of 2011, Baldwin County shall establish and implement a program designed to educate recipients of public rehabilitation funds concerning basic home repair and maintenance so that rehabilitation units remain in standard condition.

Policy 3.6: Baldwin County shall, through its housing rehabilitation programs, provide technical and financial assistance to leverage private sector financing of rehabilitation activities.

Policy 3.7: The County shall create, review and amend as necessary land development regulations, including subdivision regulations, zoning ordinance, building code ordinances and the like in order to identify and eliminate unnecessary requirements which may add to the cost of the housing delivery process.

Measure: Include in the development review procedures section of the County's unified Land Development Code provisions for one or more of the following:

- a. A "fast-tract" or "one-stop" permitting process
- b. A maximum time limit for the review of proposals
- c. A reduction or waiver of processing fees for affordable housing projects.
- d. Concurrent review of multiple permit applications.

Policy 3.8: The County shall review all proposed developments to ensure compatible buffering between single-family neighborhoods and higher density development including commercial and industrial and multi-family development.

Policy 3.9: Notwithstanding Policy 1.10, the County shall promote mixed-use developments within urban fringe areas that have or can support the required infrastructure.

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Policy 3.10: The County shall utilize locational criteria for residential, commercial and industrial developments in the land development regulations in order to avoid problems associated with “spot zonings” and incompatibilities between future land uses.

Objective 4: Baldwin County shall identify and reduce the degree of substandard housing by five percent (5%) per year of the 2008-2025 planning period and improve the structural and aesthetic conditions of existing housing.

Policy 4.1: By the end of 2010, an updated survey of housing conditions shall be conducted of all the unincorporated area to determine the number and general location of substandard dwelling units. This survey will be updated every five years.

Policy 4.2: By the end of 2008, establish the “Baldwin Housing Alliance” to educate and provide access to safe affordable housing by utilizing resources in government organizations, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic and private sectors.

Policy 4.3: The County shall update the inventory of substandard housing every five years, based upon securing adequate local, state, or federal funding sources through a Housing Authority or other agency, to identify those housing units suitable for rehabilitation and those appropriate for demolition. The inventory shall be based upon the following evaluation criteria:

- a. Standard (to be conserved) – structure appeared to provide safe and adequate shelter and has no defects or only slight defects which are normally corrected during the course of regular maintenance.
- b. Substandard (to be rehabilitated) – structure requires more than routine or minor repairs or improvements. Typical deficiencies include foundation defects indicated by sagging or leaning, extensive rotting of eaves or porch flooring, numerous holes or cracks in walls, broken screens or windows, and similar defects which can be economically repaired relative to the overall value of the structure.
- c. Substandard Warranting Clearance – structure appears unsafe for occupancy or dilapidated to the point that it would not be economically prudent to repair relative to its overall value and, therefore, may warrant clearance.

Policy 4.4: The County shall initiate neighborhood upgrading projects by providing assistance to property owners in meeting code requirements and prioritizing neighborhood level capital improvement projects in neighborhoods lacking such facilities as paved streets, sidewalks, and streetlights.

Policy 4.5: The County shall establish a local relocation assistance policy pursuant to the Federal Relocation Act (Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970). Public dissemination of relocation policy information will be provided through the Baldwin Housing Alliance, or other appropriate agency.

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Policy 4.6: The County shall authorize and appropriate sufficient funds to establish a revolving low interest loan program for the purpose of rehabilitating sound but deteriorated housing in the County. The program shall be implemented by an appropriate entity to be determined by the Baldwin County Commission.

Policy 4.7: The County shall cause a separate zoning category or overlay zone to be created to address necessary flexibility in the unique housing areas that have developed as independent communities historically. In order to avoid displacement and hardships, flexibility is needed from some provisions. Any flexibility created must still meet the spirit and intent of the ordinance.

Policy 4.8: Baldwin County shall prioritize and target funding efforts to identify substandard housing units where rehabilitation is found to be feasible. The Building Department shall target those units deemed not feasible for rehabilitation and order condemnation.

Objective 5: Baldwin County shall make a consistent effort to implement development and redevelopment activities that do not require displacement. If displacement, as a result of public action, should occur, Baldwin County shall ensure that standard, affordable relocation housing is available prior to displacement.

Policy 5.1: Baldwin County shall provide relocation assistance to displaced persons consistent with the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, and implementing regulations at 49 CFR 24, and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and implementing regulations at 24 CFR 570.606.

Objective 6: The County shall act in coordination with the private sector, to provide for adequate and affordable housing to meet the housing needs of the County's very low, low and moderate income households.

Policy 6.1: The County shall maintain an inventory of vacant or underutilized public lands and real property to determine which land can be deemed surplus, and make appropriate surplus land available to stimulate the development of affordable housing.

Policy 6.2: The Baldwin Housing Alliance or other agency shall monitor affordable projects and advise the County government with respect to procedures and regulations affecting the development of affordable housing.

Policy 6.3: The County shall encourage community based organizations dedicated to the provision of affordable housing for very low and low income households by donating publicly

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owned land and or buildings identified in the public land survey, when deemed appropriate to such organizations.

Policy 6.4: The Housing Finance Authority in coordination with Baldwin Housing Alliance or other appropriate agency shall identify and promote local, state and federal funding sources and implantation programs to aid in the provision of affordable housing and relocation housing for lower and moderate income households and make such information available to the public, residential developers and interested organizations on an annual basis.

Policy 6.5: A maximum density of 20 units per acre shall be allowed on no more than 100 acres within the Urban/High Intensity District of the Future Land Use Map for the provision of housing for the elderly, or handicapped and housing for very low, low and moderate income households. Location shall be based on need and criteria, assessing proximity to the following: employment, mass transit, health care, parks, commercial services and central utility services.

All proposed developments for very low, low and moderate income housing or elderly or handicapped housing shall be reviewed based on the following:

- a. Need for the type and amount of housing proposed
- b. Mandatory provision of water and sewer services
- c. Compatibility with adjacent land uses
- d. Evaluation using the weighted points system described below.

The low and moderate income categories to be served by the proposed development shall be defined by HUD standards.

Policy 6.6: Weighted Point System: Low and Moderate Income Housing

Housing developments for very low, low and moderate income occupants will be evaluated for the appropriateness of increased density based upon their proximity to the following: employment, commercial services, mass transit, parks and schools. Location relative to commercial and industrial centers will be considered an indication of proximity to employment.

- a. Proximity to commercial and industrial services and employment. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn within one and one half (1 ½) mile radii from the nearest existing (active) commercial or industrial use within a municipal boundary, the Urban/Low Intensity District (ULD), or Urban/High Intensity District (UHD) shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Allow a maximum of 20 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest commercial or industrial use. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 1 mile or transportation provided by development (20 points); 1 to 1.5 miles (10 points).

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- b. Proximity to mass transit routes (such as BRATS). Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn with one and one half mile radii from the nearest mass transit stop.

Allow a maximum of 20 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest mass transit stop. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 1 mile or transportation provided by development (20) points: 1.1 to 1.5 miles (10 points).

- c. Proximity to parks. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn by neighborhood or community park.

Allow a maximum of 10 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest neighborhood or community park. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to .5 miles or park provided on site (10) points: .6 to 1 mile (5 points).

- d. Location within walking distance of a public school, as indicated by a radius drawn from the nearest public school. Baldwin County School Board standards for walking distance will be used for the radii (1.5 miles for grades K-6; two miles for grades 7-12). Where the School Board has modified the standard due to hazardous conditions, such modifications will prevail.

Allow a maximum of 10 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest public school. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 1.5 miles to an elementary school or zero to two miles to a junior high school (10 points). No points for location outside the walking distance. Developments for very low and low income occupants which also incorporate at least 25 percent of total housing units for elderly or handicapped occupants shall be evaluated based on the criteria described for the provision of elderly and handicapped housing. In order to proceed with development of increased density housing for very low – low and moderate income households in the ULD and UHD districts of the Future Land Use Map, the development must achieve a minimum of 30 out of a possible 60 points available as set forth in the Weighted Point System for Low and Moderate Income Housing above.

Policy 6.7: Weighted Point System: Elderly and Handicapped Housing

Developments which incorporate at least 25 percent of total housing units for the use of elderly and or handicapped occupants will be evaluated for the appropriateness of increased density based upon their proximity to the following: commercial services, mass transit, park and health care.

- a. Proximity to commercial services. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries with one-half and one-mile radii from the

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nearest existing (active) commercial use within a municipal boundary, the Urban/Low Intensity District (ULD), or the Urban/High Intensity District (UHD) shown on the Future Land Use Map.

- b. Allow a maximum of 20 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest existing commercial use. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 5 miles or transportation provided by development (20 points): 0.6 to 1 mile (10 points).
- c. Proximity to mass transit routes. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn with one and one half mile radii from the nearest mass transit stop.

Allow a maximum of 20 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest transit stop. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 0.5 mile or transportation provided by development (20 points): .6 to 1 mile (10 points).

- d. Proximity to parks. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn with one half and one mile radii from the nearest neighborhood or community park.

Allow a maximum of 10 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest neighborhood or community park. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to .5 miles or park provided on site (10) points: 0.6 to 1 mile (5 points).

- e. Proximity to hospital facilities. Proximity shall be determined by the proposed development's location relative to boundaries drawn with three and six mile radii from the nearest hospital.

Allow a maximum of 20 points based on the distance in miles to the nearest hospital. Points will be awarded as follows: 0 to 3 miles to health care facility and health care staff provided on site (20 points). 3.1 to 6 miles (10 points). In order to proceed with development of increased density housing for elderly and handicapped persons in the Urban/Low Intensity District (ULD) or the Urban/High Intensity District (UHD) of the Future Land Use Map, the development must achieve a minimum of 35 out of a possible 70 points available as set forth in the Weighted Point System for Elderly and Handicapped above.

Objective 7: The County shall provide for adequate sites and infrastructure for single family homes, group homes, foster care facilities, the elderly, handicapped and rural farm workers households in order to meet the needs of persons requiring this type of housing.

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Policy 7.1: The County shall review and amend, as appropriate, its land development regulations to provide the means for integrating group living and foster care facilities into appropriate residential areas to provide for a variety of rural and urban locations and to allow deinstitutionalization and foster non-discrimination.

Policy 7.2: The County shall adopt and enforce a fair housing ordinance, based upon HUD standards, in order to provide housing opportunities to all residents desiring housing regardless of age, race, handicap, disability, sex or family size. Enforcement shall be provided through the County's Planning and Zoning Department.

Policy 7.3: The County shall provide adequate supporting infrastructure for mobile homes, manufactured homes, group homes, foster care facilities by specifying routine maintenance expenditures in Baldwin County's annual budget. Expenditures for public facilities and services for neighborhood improvements shall also be specified.

Objective 8: Baldwin County shall work in cooperation with private and non-profit participants involved in housing production to provide the dwelling units to meet the projected 2025 housing need for the population by:

- a. The designation of adequate areas for new residential development on the Future Land Use Map Series.**
- b. The establishment of location and development criteria applicable to residential development, including rural and farm-worker housing, low-income housing, and mobile homes, and**
- c. The improvement of the local development review process.**

Policy 8.1: Farm-worker housing shall be allowed in rural areas when in conformance with applicable rules and regulations, and upon approval of a special-use permit by the County.

Policy 8.2: Baldwin County shall establish, through its land development regulations, criteria for locating publicly assisted housing for low-income households to locate such units in areas other than where there may now be a disproportionate concentration. Criteria shall include, but not be limited to: accessibility to shopping, services, and employment.

Policy 8.3: Baldwin County shall review, and amend its development review and approval process, as necessary, for the purposes of increasing efficiency and eliminating unnecessary requirements in order to increase private sector participation in meeting the identified housing needs while continuing to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of residents. Improvements to this process shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Improving communication between developers and County agencies through printed guidelines for development review and pre-application meetings.

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- b. Coordinating development review by County agencies through the County's Development Review Committee.
- c. Establishing a maximum time limit for review of development proposals, and
- d. Eliminating unnecessary public hearings.

Policy 8.4: Baldwin County shall discourage the use of recreational vehicles as year round permanent housing by prohibiting permanent additions to recreational vehicles.

Objective 9: Baldwin County shall implement the objectives and policies of the Housing Element through appropriate techniques and mechanisms. Baldwin County shall implement adopted objectives and policies by: designating responsible County agencies or departments to execute appropriate strategies and programs; adopting and enforcing applicable development regulations; evaluating all development proposals for conformance to policies and compliance with regulations; and considering all objectives and policies when making growth management decisions.

Policy 9.1: The Planning Director, or designee, shall be responsible for implementing the housing objectives and policies included within the Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 9.2: Baldwin County shall adopt development regulations that implement the objectives and policies of the Housing Element.

Policy 9.3: Baldwin County shall seek federal, state, and local funding sources at levels adequate to meet the objectives and policies of the Housing Element for the following activities:

- a. Minimum housing code enforcement
- b. Rehabilitation and demolition of substandard housing units
- c. Construction of low-income housing units
- d. Housing for the homeless

Policy 9.4: By the end of 2010, the Baldwin County Board of County Commissioners shall approve the "Baldwin Housing Alliance", to assess low-income housing needs in Baldwin County, and by end of 2008, recommend programs for action by the Board of County Commissioners to implement the County's affordable housing objectives and policies.