

HORIZON 2025
THE BALDWIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008 - 2025
CHAPTER 8: HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES
OCTOBER, 2008

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Baldwin County is the third oldest county in Alabama, and was created in 1809 while still part of the Mississippi Territory. The County is named for Abraham Baldwin (1754-1807), founder of the University of Georgia, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and member of Congress. The County seat is located in the City of Bay Minette.

The Baldwin County Commission has taken several steps to promote and protect the County's historic resources. Act No. 80-497 as amended by Act No. 89-960 of the Legislature of Alabama authorizes Baldwin County to protect the historical architectural character of the County. The County Commission may designate a historic/preservation district in any section of the County containing buildings designated by the Historic American Buildings Survey. The Commission may also designate a historic/preservation district to preserve the distinctive architectural character of the County by recognizing neighborhoods that continue to grow and develop over the course of years and possess a unique character that merits recognition and protection.

As a result of the Act, the County established the Historic Resource Overlay District, as specified in the County's Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of this district is to ensure enforcement of the rules and ordinances adopted pursuant to the above referenced Act's. The overlay district does not replace the requirements of the underlying zoning district, but provides additional development requirements and standards which must be met by any development within the district. There are currently three historic/preservation districts designated by the County Commission, which are: Magnolia Springs Historic/Preservation District; Montrose Historic/Preservation District; and Battle's Wharf/Point Clear Historic/Preservation District. These areas are subject to the requirements of the Baldwin County Architectural and Preservation Review Board (ARB).

The various boards, commissions, and departments relating to historic issues of the County are provided below:

Architectural and Preservation Review Board (ARB)

The Baldwin County Architectural and Preservation Review Board (ARB) was created under the authority established by Section 45-2-221.11 of the Alabama Code 1975. The ARB's responsibilities are to approve or disapprove plans and landscaping for buildings to be erected or renovated which are located, or are to be located, within historic/preservation districts. The ARB authority shall extend only to the exterior of any structure.

Baldwin Historic Development Commission

The Baldwin County Historic Development Commission was created by the Baldwin County Commission under the authority established by Section 45-2-221.10 of the Alabama Code 1975. The Historic Development Commission's responsibilities include:

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- The preservation and protection of buildings of historic and architectural value in the historic districts (as defined in Section 45-2-221.01, Alabama Code 1975), and the maintenance of the distinctive character of such districts;
- The fostering and encouraging of the preservation, restoration, and utilization of buildings of historic and architectural value in the historic districts; and
- The development and promotion of historic districts, as major tourist attractions of historic and economic value.

In addition, under Section 45-2-221.10(d) of the Alabama Code, the Historic Development Commission shall have the power and authority to:

- To purchase, sell, contract to purchase, contract to sell, own, encumber, lease, mortgage, and insure real and personal property of all kinds and descriptions;
- To request, solicit, and accept gifts, donations, pledges, fees, bequests, devises, loans, or appropriations from any source whatsoever;
- To set up depositories within Baldwin County, as it may select, a "Revolving Fund for Historic Development" which shall be composed of the monies which may come into its hands, and used for the furtherance of its objectives and purposes; and
- Employ personnel as may be necessary for carrying out the Historic Development Commission's purposes.

Furthermore, under Section 45-2-221 of the Alabama Code, 1975, "the County Commission of Baldwin County may adopt ordinances to protect the historic architectural character of the county in the manner prescribed by the Code."

Baldwin County Department of Archives and History

The Baldwin County Department of Archives and History was created in 1998 by Act No. 98-579. The mission of this Department is:

- To collect, organize, describe, preserve, and make available Baldwin County, Alabama government records of permanent administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical value;
- To collect, organize, describe, preserve, and make available records of historical significance in the founding and continuing history of Baldwin County, Alabama including, but not limited to manuscripts, correspondence, photos, books, and personal memorabilia;
- To provide facilities for the retention, preservation, servicing, and research use of such records;
- To serve in a public relations capacity by promoting knowledge and understanding of the origins and continuing history of Baldwin County, Alabama, its government and residents;
- To facilitate the efficient management of the recorded information produced by the Baldwin County government offices.

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GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL: Identify, protect and enhance the important historical and cultural resources of Baldwin County.

Objective 1: Maintain existing programs to identify the historic and archaeological resources of Baldwin County; develop new identification programs including, but not limited to, a program to identify Baldwin County resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and make information available to the public and other public agencies.

Policy 1.1: By 2010, the Planning Department, in conjunction with the Baldwin County Archives and History Department, shall complete a Historic Inventory for all existing historic sites in unincorporated Baldwin County. The inventory shall be maintained in a spreadsheet with an annual update to include additions of previously unidentified historic structures or sites.

Policy 1.2: By 2015, the Baldwin County Archives and History Department shall complete a Historic Survey of all of unincorporated Baldwin County, to be completed by region, which would be researched with formal reports issued as to whether a site was located or not located. The survey shall review the current status of all previously identified historical structures and sites, including archaeological sites, within unincorporated Baldwin County and shall make recommendations as to which of these sites or structures should be nominated to the Baldwin County Historic Development Commission, the Alabama Historical Commission and the National Register of Historic Places. The survey shall also review and make similar recommendations regarding any previously unidentified historic structures or sites.

Policy 1.3: Require all applications for development review to identify the location and status of historic resources, including archaeological sites.

Policy 1.4: Maintain an automated data system regarding historically significant properties through the Baldwin County Planning & Zoning Department GIS system using parcel information.

Objective 2: Continue to evaluate the historic and archaeological resources of Baldwin County according to adopted criteria for significance.

Policy 2.1: Evaluate the historic resources of Baldwin County for eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and a local register of historic places.

Policy 2.2: Develop a public improvement program for each National Register Historic District that would include specific plans to enhance the public rights-of-way in each district through

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underground utilities, streetscape improvements, landscaping and other improvements. This should be interfaced with an aggressive public awareness program to engage grass-roots involvement.

Policy 2.3: Explore with the Baldwin County Historical Development Commission and Chambers of Commerce, the development of a local heritage tourism program that highlights historic resources in areas that are open and accessible to the public. To contribute to the protection of historic neighborhoods and private property, brochures, signage and other materials shall indicate when the resources are in private ownership. Tourism planning shall include consideration of adverse impacts due to increased traffic, noise and air pollution, litter and trespassing in order to minimize these impacts on historic neighborhoods and districts.

Objective 3: Recognize and protect historically significant sites and structures.

Policy 3.1: Encourage the placement of historical landmarks, photographs, markers, or plaques of historical interest or value.

Policy 3.2: Work cooperatively with property owners to avoid development impacts to historic and cultural resources. Where impacts cannot be entirely avoided, these should be mitigated whenever possible by the use of methods including, but not limited to:

1. Incorporating historic structures or sites into new development, including the planning and design of trails, parks and open areas.
2. Designing new development to fit with the historical architectural themes.
3. Preserving historic structures and sites in their existing location when possible and practical. Whenever it is not practical to retain historic structures in their original location, relocation should occur to another site within the development or within the area.

Policy 3.3: In cases where the use of a historic structure or site no longer serves the original purpose, the County shall work with the property owner and community for creative adaptive reuses that will maintain the integrity of the structure or site.

Policy 3.4: Variances for parking, lot size, or other zoning requirements in order to preserve significant historic resources may be granted without showing hardship as long as the granting of a variance will not injure the health, safety or welfare of the citizens.

Policy 3.5: When historic buildings are to be relocated by government action, the County shall study the impact and appropriateness of the move according to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

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Policy 3.6: The existence of significant historic resources and the mitigation of development impact will be factors considered by the Planning Commission and County Commission when reviewing a project for rezoning or subdivision development.

Policy 3.7: To strengthen Baldwin County's historic preservation efforts, the County shall achieve Certified Local Government status with the State of Alabama and the United States Department of the Interior by 2011.

Policy 3.8: Establish a public information program that provides information to owners of historic resources on available sources of tax relief.

Policy 3.9: Upon the purchase of the proposed National Cemetery annex site, the County shall seek to obtain federal VA designation, develop a site plan meeting federal guidelines, and seek Congressional support for funding and designation.

Objective 4: Encourage and facilitate the creation of historic districts and preservation districts in areas of the County having architectural or historic distinction.

Policy 4.1: For the creation of historic and preservation districts, the County should encourage the use of Alabama Local Act 80-497, codified as §45-2-221, Local Laws, Code of Alabama 1975.

Policy 4.2: New construction and renovation in historic and preservation districts created pursuant Act 80-497, shall continue to be evaluated by the Architectural Review Board using the *Standards for Architectural Review and Development in Baldwin County Historic Districts*.

Policy 4.3: Land use planning should give special attention to preserving the historic district from disruptive change.

Objective 5: Enhance the Historic Districts with improvements to historic district entrance points.

Policy 5.1: Consider special signage and landscape improvements to areas that may serve as formal entrances to a historic district.

Policy 5.2: Consider special street signs within historic district that will distinguish areas within the district from those without.

Policy 5.3: Utility providers are encouraged to place underground utilities in historic districts to protect the aesthetic character of the resources.

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Objective 6: Coordinate with the Baldwin County Archives and History Department to ensure that all historical records are maintained and made available to the public.

Policy 6.1: By 2011, all County historic documents shall be physically located in the Archives Building, catalogued, and accessible to the public.

Policy 6.2: By 2011, all County historic documents shall be preserved subject to the statewide records retention schedule, and shall be maintained on an annual basis.

Policy 6.3: By 2009, the County shall plan and implement a successful Bicentennial Celebration with a series of events and activities including the establishment of Bicentennial Park and Village in order to celebrate the County's 200th birthday; by 2010, the Archives and History Department shall coordinate with the Bicentennial Advisory Committee and other county department for maintenance of and additions to the park.

Objective 7: Baldwin County shall recognize and support the Alabama Scenic Byway Program. Currently, this program includes recommendations for Alabama's Coastal Connection: the "Coastal Connection Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan." The Tensaw Trail is a second Baldwin County byway proposed for inclusion in the Program.

Policy 7.1: Inform new development and businesses within the corridor of Alabama's Coastal Connection of the Corridor Vision, and encourage businesses to build on the area's historic and cultural character.

Policy 7.2: Develop and implement resource protection, maintenance, preservation and enhancement initiatives for historic areas within the corridor of Alabama's Coastal Connection.

Policy 7.3: Work with and support the efforts of the Chambers of Commerce to produce a marketing plan for Alabama's Coastal Connection that highlights historic and cultural features.

Policy 7.4: Work with and support the efforts of the Baldwin County Archives and History Department, the Alabama Scenic Byways Program, and the Alabama Association of Regional Councils in designating the Tensaw Trail as an Alabama Scenic Byway. Encourage this designation to be in place by the end of 2009 to correspond with the Bicentennial Celebration. The goal of this designation shall be to highlight the historical, natural, and cultural sights along the trail in an effort to bring more attention statewide for the attractions offered along this stretch of highway.

Policy 7.5: The County Planning Department and the Archives Department, in conjunction with the Historic Development Commission, shall identify scenic rural roads that are not currently

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designated as Scenic Byways, and develop proposals to preserve native and natural vegetation and discourage invasive species along those roads.

Policy 7.6: Through the zoning ordinance, protect scenic vistas through viewshed protection measures, such as expanded rural frontage setback requirements.

Policy 7.7: Through the zoning ordinance, protect Baldwin County's Scenic Byways, through viewshed protection measures such as expanded rural frontage setback requirements.