

HORIZON 2025

The Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2025

Volume I: Goals, Objectives & Policies

October, 2008



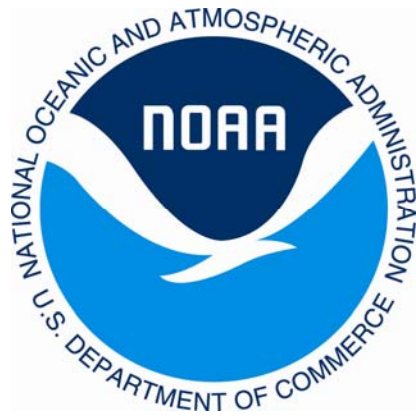
Horizon 2025 The Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2025

Prepared for the Baldwin County Commission

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Alabama Department of
Conservation & Natural Resources

Funding for this project is provided by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section, in part, by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, Award # NA07NOS4190175

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Horizon 2025, the Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan, was prepared to assist elected officials, planners and citizens in their efforts to guide the timing and quality of future development. The plan is intended to be used as a guide in undertaking initiatives and decisions related to future development based on key aspects of local resources, opportunities and issues. On August 8, 1991, the Baldwin County Planning and Zoning Act (Act No. 91-719), Code of Alabama §45-2-261 was passed by the Alabama State Legislature. This legislation, and its subsequent amendments, provide the basic framework for the County's growth management activities and required the development and maintenance of a "master plan" [or comprehensive plan] for the use and development of unincorporated Baldwin County.

The Horizon 2025 consists of two volumes: Volume I contains the Goals, Objectives and Policies, and Volume II contains the Data, Inventory and Analysis for which Volume I is based. Together, these two volumes address the following topics: Future Land Use; Housing; Conservation, Natural Resources and Open Space; Coastal Management; Parks and Recreation; Community and Cultural Facilities; Historic Resources; Community Design; Intergovernmental Coordination; and Implementation.

Comprehensive planning is not new to Baldwin County and its leaders. Through the combined efforts of the Baldwin County Commission, the Planning Commission, County Department administrators, Baldwin County United, the citizens of Baldwin County, and the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC), the "*Baldwin County Long Range Development and Management Plan: Situation Analysis (1993 Plan)*" was prepared in 1993 to promote the orderly development of the County and to provide the County leaders with a management tool. The document summarizes the major problems identified by the citizens; the major issues identified by the Officials, and the major findings identified by the County Planners.

In 2005, the Baldwin County Commission initiated a planning process that involved citizens, elected officials, department directors and other staff, which resulted in the *Baldwin County Strategic Plan: 2006-2016* (herein referred to as the *2006 Plan*). The *2006 Plan* identifies the following Strategic Objectives for the County: Managing Growth; Public Safety; Environment; Revenue Sources; Infrastructure; Economic Development and Workforce; and Governance. As stated in the Mission and Vision statements of the *2006 Plan*, the County's strengths include an excellent quality of life, southern hospitality, unique heritage, natural resources and family friendly community. The *2006 Plan* also includes strategic objectives which form the basis for the new Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan, Horizon 2025.

The creation of Horizon 2025 also began with a planning process including public input from the citizens, elected officials, planning commission, and other boards, agencies, and organizations in September 2007 to define the key issues of the County that would guide the future growth of Baldwin County. This document is intended to provide guidance for a planning horizon through 2025.

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Managing the Plan

To be a useful and influential tool in guiding growth and development in the future, and in ultimately realizing Baldwin County's vision for the future, the Plan must be kept current. Over time, changes will occur in the county that may not have been anticipated and over which the County may have no control—changing lifestyles, national or regional economic shifts, the impact of telecommuting or internet access on working and shopping patterns, etc. Monitoring these shifts against progress in Plan implementation may lead to the need for amendments to the Plan.

Consistency of Zoning Ordinances and Other Land use Regulatory Tools

Baldwin County should consider the merger of the County's zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations and other land use regulatory controls into a Unified Development Code (UDC). The UDC combines and consolidates all phases of the land development process from the zoning of a piece of property to the actual development of this property. Like its predecessor (the zoning ordinance), the UDC will continue to regulate the use of the lot, lot size, building bulk and height, and setbacks. In addition, it will regulate the manner in which land may be subdivided to ensure that each subdivision meets standards as to minimum block and lot sizes, streets, relationship to existing streets, and provisions for open space, schools, and other public facilities and the protection of natural resources. The UDC is a valuable and necessary tool for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and for the creation of quality developments within Baldwin County.

Incentives

The County can implement incentives to encourage certain types of private development that will contribute significantly to the public good. Several development options that promote good design and protection of natural resources and an overall streamlining of the regulatory process should be evaluated for inclusion into a UDC.

Goals and Strategies

The following goals reflect the assessment of existing conditions and desired future results discussed in the various chapters of this Plan, coupled with the advice and guidance generated through the public participation program. The underlying principle of the goals is to reach the vision of Baldwin County as addressed in the Introduction Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

Administration and Interpretation

It shall be the responsibility of the Baldwin County Planning Department to administer the Comprehensive Plan in a manner consistent with its intent. The Comprehensive Plan shall be construed broadly to accomplish its purpose and its intent. Terms not otherwise defined in the

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glossary shall be interpreted by reference to generally accepted planning, engineering or other professional terminology if technical in nature; and otherwise, according to common usage unless the content clearly indicates otherwise.

Conflicting Policies

Although care has been taken to avoid inconsistencies among goals, objectives, and policies, circumstances may arise in which the application of two or more statements result in a conflict or uncertainty as to which statement most appropriately applies. The problem may be resolved by County staff using the following methods in order of priority:

1. The more specific statement shall have preference over the more general.
2. The more stringent statement from the County's perspective shall have preference over the less stringent.

Where the goals, objectives, or policies of any element conflict with those of another element, the problem may be resolved by County staff as follows:

Irrespective of the Element in which a goal, objective, or policy appears, preference shall be given to statements whose subject matter pertains to the following listed in priority order: public health, public safety, expenditures, level of service, and administration.