

**BALDWIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008 - 2025**  
**COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT**  
**DATA, INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**  
**SEPTEMBER, 2008**

**Community Design Guidelines:** The following principles represent the driving forces behind the Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan's Community Design element:

- **Visual, Physical Design:** A community that reflects a visually appealing and aesthetically planned orientation of development will thrive and evolve over time. In contrast, a developing community that appears disconnected and haphazardly planned will often degrade with time.
- **Regulatory Controls:** A community design that has in place its regulatory control mechanisms (i.e., land use and zoning maps, permitting procedures, etc.) will avoid litigation pitfalls as well as controversy and chaos among present and future community residents and local authorities.
- **Safety & Security:** Well planned community design elements incorporated into the local regulatory control mechanisms afford a sense of safety and security to present and future community residents. That is, with community design in place neighborhood families and residents need not worry that future development may adversely impact their communities.
- **Cultural & Entertainment:** Well planned community design allows the community and its surrounding neighborhoods to evolve as they culturally develop into aesthetically distinct attractions and places for hosting local events and entertainment.
- **Human Resources:** A connected community most effectively utilizes its human resources in forming and facilitating community groups and structured social occasions and events. A community's human resources serve as the core in keeping neighborhood residents involved and informed.
- **Business Development:** Connected communities support and enhance local businesses and generate greater economic development.
- **Natural Resources:** Well planned, community development that provides for greater density functions as a means to protect and preserve the community's natural resources.
- **Utilities and Infrastructure:** Well planned communities avoid redundancy in infrastructure and thus avoid substantial costs that adversely impact local government economy.
- **Recreation Parks and Sports:** Community designs should specifically preserve areas that serve as neighborhood parks and recreational open spaces. Such planning functions as a facilitator in generating quality neighborhood interactions among the community's families, children, and residents.
- **Neighborhood Development:** Well planned communities enhance neighborhoods, as well as prepare such neighborhoods for future growth.
- **Education:** Community development takes into consideration the regulations that must be in place to ensure quality education and school facilities for the community's children and student populations.

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**Community Design Mechanisms to Slow Traffic and Enhance Community Livability – Provided by the Baldwin County Trail Blazers**

- Apply striping margins to lane widths and excess paving to establish well marked bike lanes.
- Apply bold striping to establish conspicuous pedestrian cross-walks 30' before and after major intersections.
- Apply color coded crosswalks adjacent to school campuses to mark safe routes to school by the use of color. Furthermore, incorporate flashing lights automatically activated during school arrival and departure hours.
- Control stop-and-go traffic by restricting curb cuts to 20' wide in commercial and retail centers to thereby provide less interruption of sidewalks.
- Apply bold paths with landscape paint to reduce confusion for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists in areas found to be complex intersections having multiple entry points.
- Urge transportation officials to install ample shoulders in all new road construction and in resurfacing projects to accommodate safe bike lanes on both sides of the road. Four total feet should be sufficient, and can be accomplished by narrowing lanes slightly and marking the boundary between roadway and bike lane by conspicuous striping.
- Scored rumbled strips should be used with substantial discretion, taking into full consideration cyclist safety.
- Create and continue to make bike lane conspicuous through striping the boundary between roadway and bike lane.
- Urge planning officials to require developers to incorporate 5' minimum width of sidewalks throughout the community's neighborhoods. Developers should also be required to install sidewalks on the public right of way of streets that border and provide access to the subdivision with the minimum 5' requirement so as to produce within the community a seamless continuous pedestrian facility.
- Urge transportation designers and planning officials to take into consideration those cannot or prefer to avoid using automobiles as their sole source of transportation (i.e., young children, elderly, and handicapped individuals).
- Urge Community Officials to implement a zero tolerance policy for drunk and under-the-influence driving. This should include jail time if the violation results in serious pedestrian injury and/or a long term cancellation of the at-fault driver's license.

**Community Design Impact on Community Economy:** According to the Florida Center for Community Design and Research, communities with lower densities become more auto-dependent, and transportation costs consume nearly 1/3 of the typical American household. *See [www.fccdr.usf.edu](http://www.fccdr.usf.edu)*. Furthermore, a recent news report indicated that between twenty and thirty percent of all rush hour traffic is comprised of trips taking and picking up children from school. *Channel 47 News online reports*. Consequently, increasing residential or population density reduces the annual auto mileage per household by 20 to 30 percent. However, people often dislike density because of the traffic it brings. However, well planned communities can

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substantially decrease traffic and its inherently large costs if the ability to walk, bicycle, and/or use local transit to intended destinations is made available to its residents.

Therefore, implementing such community design standards serves to protect the environment, conservation of land, energy and natural resources, reduction in vehicular traffic congestion, more efficient use of public funds, health benefits of a pedestrian environment, historic preservation, education and recreation, reduction in sprawl development, and improvement of the built environment.

**Public Input:**

Citizens who attended the two Public Workshops (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007) ranked their list of County issues and comments by order of importance at the end of the each evening. Below are the results for this element, listed in order of importance:

**Community Design Element**

1. Protect natural/aesthetic beauty in future developments.
2. Create connectivity between regions, and create a network of urban trails throughout the County.
3. Address traffic problems and congestion in community design – e.g., traffic calming techniques
4. Prevent areas of dilapidation and abandoned buildings.
5. Implement Transferable Development Rights to Preserve Open Space and avoid Over-Development.
6. Incorporate Bi-Lingual Signs where needed.
7. Address Quality of Life and Environmental Issues in Community Design