



DRAFT | 7/06/2022

OUR VISION

**A Citizen's Guide to
Growth in Baldwin County**



2300
Total Survey Responses

SURVEY #1 RESULTS SUMMARY

The first public survey helped to frame the plans vision and goals and gauge priorities. This survey was live on the website from January 2022 through February 2022.

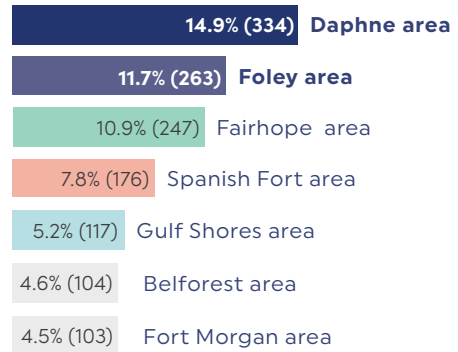
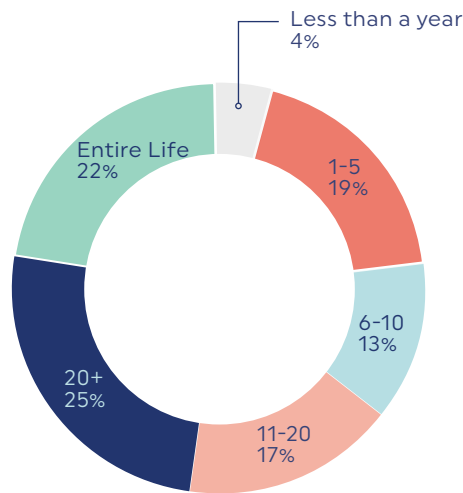


THIS PAGE SUMMARIZES SOME OF THE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS ARE FOUND THROUGHOUT THE DOCUMENT AND FOR THE FULL SURVEY RESPONSES, PLEASE VISIT THE PROJECT WEBSITE:

WWW.BALDWINOURVISION.COM

76.9% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAVE LIVED IN BALDWIN COUNTY MORE THAN 5 YEARS

RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY, REPRESENTING A DIVERSE CROSS-SECTION OF THE POPULATION:

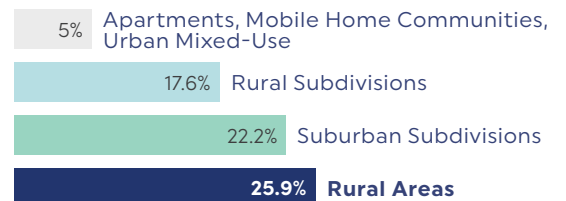
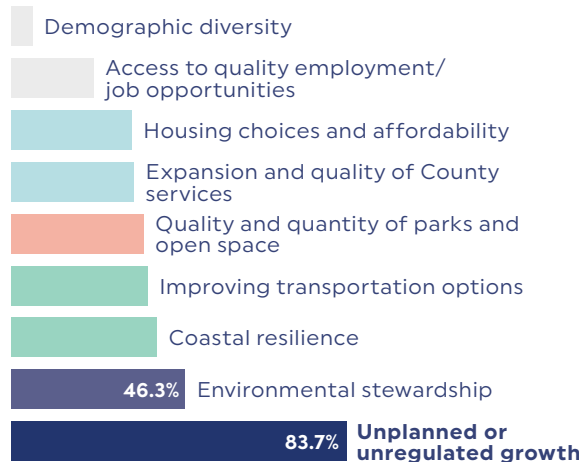


Remaining areas had fewer than 100 responses each, with the following areas having 5 or less responses:

- Seminole area
- Oyster Bay area
- Little River area
- Tensaw area

83.7% OF RESPONSES SAID UNPLANNED OR UNREGULATED GROWTH AS MOST IMPORTANT FOR BALDWIN COUNTY TO ACT ON, FOLLOWED BY 46.3% FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

25.9% OF RESPONDENTS LIVE IN RURAL AREAS. ANOTHER 17.6% LIVE IN RURAL SUBDIVISIONS AND 22.2% LIVE IN SUBURBAN SUBDIVISIONS. LESS THAN 5% OF RESPONDENTS LIVE IN APARTMENTS, MOBILE HOME COMMUNITIES, OR URBAN MIXED-USE.



TOP AREAS OF SATISFACTION:

1. Relationship to outdoors
2. Feeling of safety and security
3. Feeling of community

TOP AREAS TO IMPROVE:

1. Traffic/limited transportation options
2. Population growth
3. Sprawling development

TOP AREAS OF CONCERN:

1. Loss of rural lifestyle/agriculture
2. Maintaining natural resources
3. Unplanned or unregulated growth

CRITICAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:

- #1 Loss of rural lifestyle/agriculture
- #2 Equal distribution of public facilities/services
- #3 Housing affordability

GROWTH ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:

- #1 Balance development with preservation
- #2 Less residential development
- #3 Consider growth management tools

CRITICAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:

- #1 Traffic congestion
- #2 Road connectivity
- #3 More trails and greenways

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:

- #1 Protect our waterways & water quality
- #2 Protect native forest & tree cover
- #3 Floodplain & wetland protection

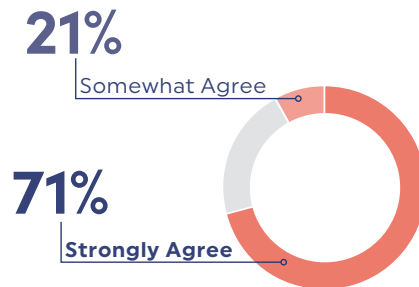
SURVEY #2 RESULTS SUMMARY



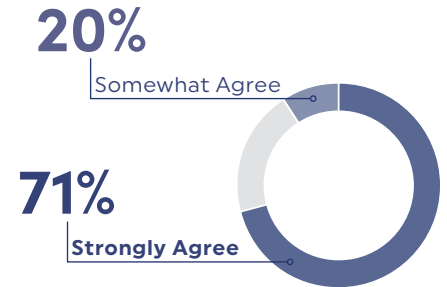
660
Total Survey Responses

The second public survey translated the visions and goals identified in the first survey into priorities for tools, policies, and regulations, and revealed the desired spatial distribution of areas of growth and protection. This survey was captured during the first round of community meetings via live polling as well as through an online format from March 2022 through mid June 2022.

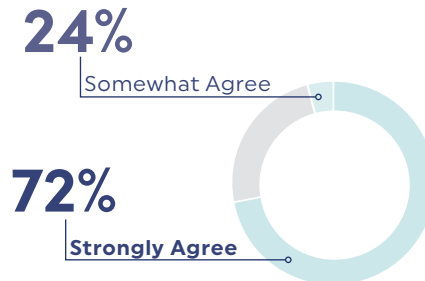
92% AGREE THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER TOOLS, POLICIES OR REGULATIONS THAT **PROTECT RURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTY**



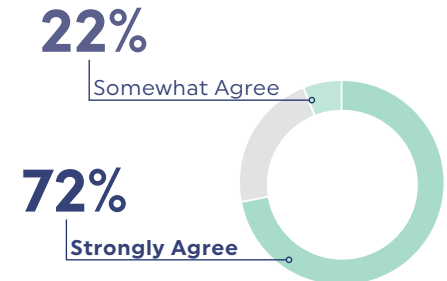
91% AGREE THERE SHOULD BE **GROWTH LIMITATIONS OR STANDARDS OF DEVELOPMENT** IN RURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTY



96% AGREE THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER TOOLS, POLICIES OR REGULATIONS THAT **CONTRIBUTE TO NATURAL RESOURCE LAND CONSERVATION**



94% AGREE THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER TOOLS, POLICIES OR REGULATIONS THAT **DEFINE THE CRITERIA FOR WHERE NEW DEVELOPMENT CAN OCCUR**

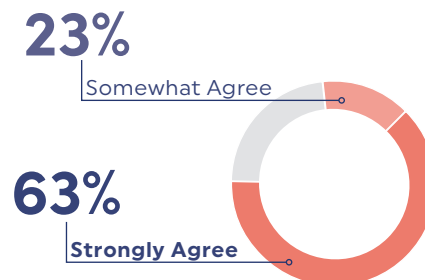


84%

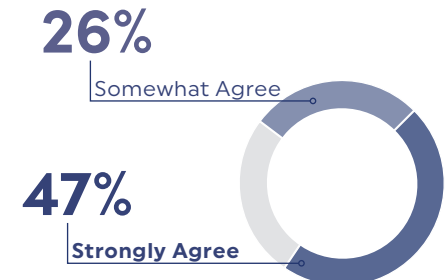
OF TOTAL SURVEY RESPONSES AGREED THAT THE DRAFT THEMES SHOULD REMAIN AS PRIORITIES FOR GUIDING THE VISION FOR FUTURE LAND USE.

These draft themes were further defined and incorporated into the organization of guide strategies and recommendations.

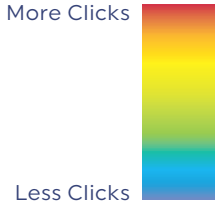
86% AGREE THE COUNTY SHOULD ESTABLISH **STANDARDS FOR ROADS AND STREETS** TO ACCOMMODATE ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE WALKING AND BIKING, AND PROMOTE SENSE OF PLACE



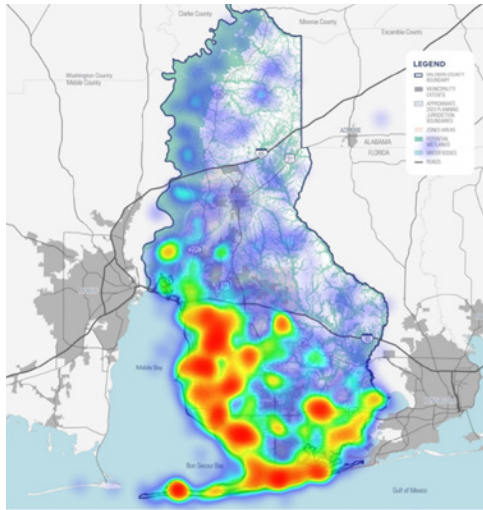
75% AGREE TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY SHOULD BE COORDINATED ACROSS THE COUNTY



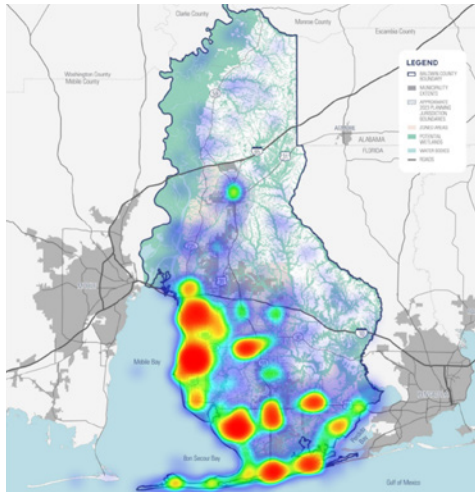
For the following questions, participants were asked to consider where they think various types of growth and natural and cultural resources protection should be accommodated in the County. Participants could click on the map to indicate up to 5 locations for each question. The maps below are the heat maps generated to summarize the responses. Red areas received the most "clicks" and blue areas received the least.



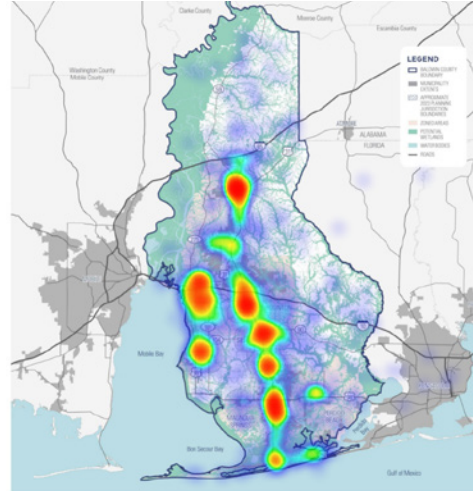
WHERE **RURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION** SHOULD OCCUR



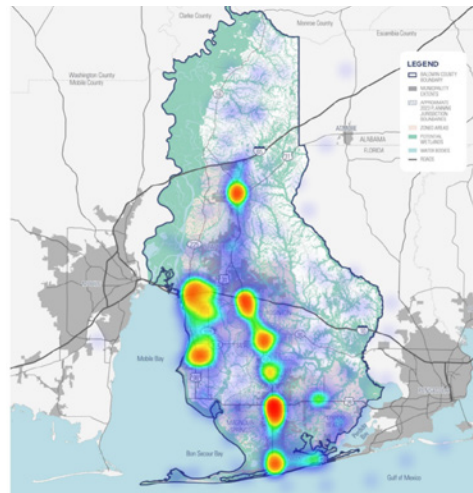
WHERE **CHARACTER** SHOULD BE MAINTAINED



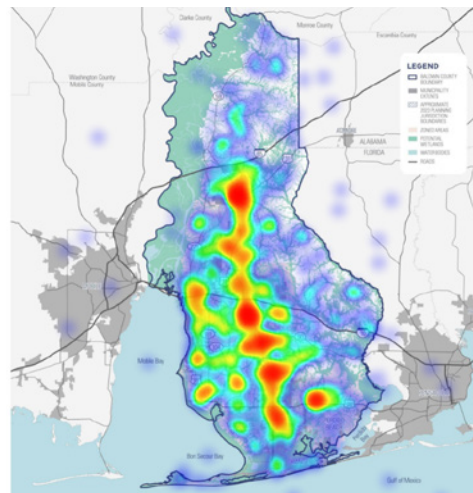
WHERE **EMPLOYMENT GROWTH** SHOULD OCCUR



WHERE **ACTIVITY NODES OR CENTERS** SHOULD OCCUR



WHERE **HOUSING GROWTH** SHOULD OCCUR



FUTURE VISION, THEMES AND GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

Baldwin County is a diverse community built upon our shared and strong values for the natural environment; our rural and agricultural heritage; use of property; small town character; recreation; the quality of our neighborhoods; public access to the water; and our unique image and sense of place.

KEY GOALS

1. A high quality of life shared by all residents
2. An appreciation of and protection for our rural way of life
3. A sense of belonging, inclusivity, fairness, and equity
4. Protection of our unique and cherished natural and cultural resources
5. Protection of our water resources and water quality
6. Accessible community facilities, parks, schools, and open spaces
7. High-quality neighborhoods with diverse housing opportunities
8. Attractive to people of all income levels, life stages, and personal abilities
9. High levels of social, environmental, economic, and cultural connectivity
10. Safety, security, health, and wellbeing for all its citizens
11. High quality schools shared by all our students

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage development and growth on land that can support it environmentally and protect natural resources and agricultural lands.
2. Work collaboratively and continuously with the Municipalities on growth management guidance strategies, criteria, definitions, and standards to reduce conflicts and to mutually retain quality of life, economy, environment, and sense of place within the entire County.
3. In the absence of zoning, strengthen subdivision regulations to reduce impacts on farmland, farm operations, natural resources, community character, scenic resources, and access.
4. Continue to encourage zoning through ongoing dialogue and engagement with the community to protect and preserve agriculture and natural resources.
5. Create collaboration between school system, utility providers, and municipalities on smarter growth management policies that respect investment in cost of service, reduction in sprawl, and cost of maintenance.
6. Protect the scenic qualities of the roadways that bisect the County as cultural resources and protect the development qualities of crossroads of these roadways to encourage more pedestrian oriented places of character and value to the communities that they sit next to.
7. Work with regional partners on roadway designs that include pedestrian and bike infrastructure, promote access management, provide connectivity, and limit the size and scale of the roadways so that they reflect the places that they are traveling through.

GUIDE THEMES

This Guide is influenced by a compelling vision that is reflective of what the community aspires to become. Through collaboration with the community and planning staff, strategies and recommendations are organized under the following six themes:



**PROTECTING
AGRICULTURAL LANDS
AND OUR RURAL
COMMUNITIES**



**PROTECTING OUR
UNIQUE NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT AND
MITIGATING FLOODS**



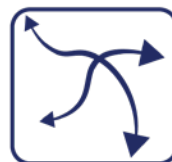
**IMPROVING
TRANSPORTATION
OPTIONS AND
CONNECTIVITY**



**MAINTAINING THE
CHARACTER OF OUR
COMMUNITIES AND
QUALITY OF LIFE**



**EQUITABLE
DISTRIBUTION OF
PUBLIC SERVICES**



**REGIONAL
COOPERATION**

PROTECTING AGRICULTURE LANDS AND OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES

VISION STATEMENT



Baldwin County's rural and agricultural landscapes are fundamental to its image, character and quality of life. The community clearly expressed a powerful desire to protect agricultural lands from suburban development, which impacts farm operations and the rural character of the County.

STRATEGIES

1. Create a simple and clear educational program for the community on the value of rural protection and natural resource conservation
2. Engage the community in a discussion of what "rural lands" mean to Baldwin County and what the vision for those lands are
3. Describe the link and benefit with zoning or land use controls
4. Reflect rural character and conservation in the Guide based on environmental priority mapping and community input
5. Encourage zoning that contributes to agriculture and rural protection, and the ability to continue to farm, in those places that want it
6. Create a voluntary agricultural district or enhanced volunteer agricultural district



Highlight From the Community Survey

TOP AREAS OF CONCERN:

1. Loss of rural lifestyle / agriculture
2. Maintaining natural resources
3. Unplanned or regulated growth



PROTECTING OUR UNIQUE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND MITIGATING FLOODING

VISION STATEMENT



Baldwin County's natural resources are fundamental to our lifestyle, economy, well-being and protection against flooding. Protecting and maintaining natural resources are a primary objective within planning for growth and maintaining our character.

STRATEGIES

1. Link environmental resource planning with zoning, growth management, subdivision regulations, land use planning, development standards and hazard mitigation planning to promote:
 - Natural resource protection
 - Maintaining water quality
 - Protecting the floodplain
 - Protecting critical habitat
 - Maintaining tree cover
2. Create an open space strategy that describes land areas that would be good ones to target for public recreation access, habitat protection, environmental protection
3. Allow wetland mitigation banking, open space natural parks, and similar uses in agricultural zone districts
4. Consider the use of overlays to protect natural resource areas, such as critical locations within a watershed
5. Promote conservation-based development in areas of high natural resource



Highlight From
the Community
Survey

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:



1. Protect our waterways and water quality
2. Protect native forest and tree cover
3. Floodplain and wetland protection

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND CONNECTIVITY

VISION STATEMENT



Key to maintaining community character is the design of roadways. Roadways are the way that we experience the County, and they provide the opportunity to experience the natural and rural landscape, towns and villages, and views to waterways. Committing to the design of roadways, along with trails for bikes and pedestrians, is crucial as it relates to growth management and quality of life.

STRATEGIES

1. Design street cross sections that fit with the lands and communities that they travel through, such as urban streets, neighborhood streets, rural streets
2. Include sidewalks, street trees, crosswalks, bike lanes on streets that support pedestrian and bike connectivity
3. Over time, develop bus transit services into rural areas to connect them with employment centers
4. Create a comprehensive trails and greenways plan, in collaboration with the municipalities, that links communities to each other, and to parks, regional destinations, cultural assets, and the natural environment
5. Create a future connectivity plan that describes where future roadway connections could be located to enhance connectivity and to avoid having roads becoming too large
6. Coordinate street standards and influence over street design with departments of transportation



Highlight From the Community Survey

CRITICAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED:



1. Traffic congestion
2. Road connectivity
3. More trails and greenways

MAINTAINING THE CHARACTER OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

VISION STATEMENT



Baldwin County's neighborhoods and communities can promote connectivity, sense of place, character, and quality of life. This is accomplished by providing walkable and bikeable places for living, working, shopping, recreation, and interacting for diverse age groups, income levels, and abilities. Community character is something that doesn't happen by accident; it requires a commitment and a shared vision.

STRATEGIES

1. Consider expanding buffers between incompatible uses and against sensitive environments within subdivision ordinance; create landscape standards for rural roadway edges, buffer dimensions, clearing restrictions, fencing/wall/signage guidance to promote and reflect rural character
2. Consider creating specific subdivision ordinances based on specific use types, such as rural subdivisions, suburban subdivisions, Neo-traditional communities
3. Work with municipalities on a common approach and standards for rural and agricultural preservation and conservation
4. Revise subdivision regulations to create a distinct regulation for rural subdivisions, or lands that have been targeted for agricultural or environmental conservation purposes
5. Utilize the mechanism that allows County to zone areas "prone to flooding"
6. Establish task to consider the benefits of design guidelines and/or form-based codes for potential testing in one or two well established zoned Planning Districts
7. Consider the creation of "floating zones" that allow compatible nodal developments or community types at compatible locations, such as at key crossroads, or adjacent to existing community developments
8. Add to the number of roads designated as scenic highways and establish design standards for buildings, parking, signage, and landscape along the frontage of these roadways
9. Control curb cuts along rural roads and create "access management" considerations to avoid random curb cuts along major roadways and highways
10. Establish larger building setbacks for rural roadways

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

VISION STATEMENT



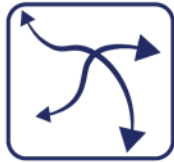
Public health, safety and education are valued by providing access to housing choices, high quality schools, libraries, healthy foods, parks and recreation, health care, safe neighborhoods, art and culture. This plan for organized growth can guide communities as they provide services to maintain a high quality of life across the County.

STRATEGIES

1. Conduct regular coordination meetings with the school board to coordinate school construction in locations of desirable growth
2. Work with water and sewer providers to coordinate utility service extension to areas of preferred growth and expansion, focusing on areas that have county or municipal zoning and located adjacent to already served areas
3. Work with municipalities on limiting receiving of waste-water from areas that do not have County zoning or areas that are not adjacent to previously developed areas
4. Consider not accepting roadways and roadway maintenance responsibility from developments that are not within jurisdictional planning areas or areas that do not have zoning
5. Consider ways to share costs for infrastructure extensions with developers so that the County doesn't bare the entire burden
6. Ensure that new developments provide parks and open spaces based on National Parks and Recreation Association standards or greater
7. Create standards, based on population, and a long-term plan for the location of libraries, schools, support services, fire, police, EMT, etc. and coordinate with future land use guides
8. Consider locating community services adjacent to other community services to create support nodes across the county
9. Ensure safe multimodal access to adequate neighborhood and community park space, open space and trails, good schools, health care, healthy food choices and community services are woven into the planning of each new neighborhood or community
10. Consider incentives for the development of affordable workforce housing

REGIONAL COOPERATION

VISION
STATEMENT



Community character, economic success, natural and cultural resource protection, and transportation connectivity do not always correspond to property lines and political boundaries. Cooperation and collaboration at the regional scale can create a tide that lifts all boats and provide benefits that are expansive to the people who live and visit there. As was learned in the community engagement process, the vision and values that shape this guide are shared by the municipalities and citizens across the County.

OPPORTUNITY

1. Create a shared vision for growth management. Integrate land use mapping and policies with municipalities and create shared principles and values around growth management
2. Schedule and conduct regular meetings to coordinate policy planning.
3. Create consistent street cross sections that create context sensitive streets and complete streets
4. Integrate environmental systems mapping between County and municipalities
5. Integrate future land use mapping between municipalities and the County during comprehensive plan and land use plan revision processes
6. Create shared objectives around municipalities acceptance sewer effluent, the requirement to be serviced by water and sewer, and the acceptance of roadways to keep up with growth challenges
7. Allow municipalities to manage subdivision regulations within the municipal planning areas so long as they are consistent with County vision, principles and values
8. Consider having the County focus mostly on rural protection, natural resource conservation, and supporting smaller municipalities in their growth management planning
9. Consider the creation of a Unified Development Ordinance that includes the Municipalities

BALDWIN COUNTY

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OUR VISION

A Citizen's Guide to Growth in Baldwin County

prepared by

DESIGNWORKSHOP
www.designworkshop.com