

# BALDWIN INSIDER

## Baldwin County Sets Sustainability Standards with Cutting-Edge Recycling and Low-Carbon Footprint

Baldwin County has solidified its position as a sustainability leader with groundbreaking initiatives that raise the bar for environmental responsibility in Alabama. Thanks to the vision and dedication of the Baldwin County Solid Waste Disposal Authority, the region now boasts a state-of-the-art Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that is a transformative step toward a cleaner, greener future.

The more than \$28 million facility adjacent to the Magnolia Landfill in Summerdale can process up to 40,000 tons of materials annually, ensuring that paper, metals, and plastics are kept out of landfills and repurposed for continued use. The 60,000-square-foot MRF also boasts an additional 7,000-square-foot Waste and Recycling Adventure Center dedicated to educating the public, businesses, and industry leaders about the importance of recycling.



Terri Graham, Chief Executive Officer, Baldwin County Solid Waste Disposal Authority

“This facility is unlike anything else in the region,” Terri Graham, CEO of the Baldwin County Solid Waste Disposal Authority, said. “Recycling is a service every community should have access to, and now, all Baldwin County residents have that opportunity. The partnership between all 15 local government entities in Baldwin County made this possible, and I am excited about

the relationships we’ve built with municipalities and industries across the state.”

Equipped with four optical sorters, one fiber sorter, and three plastic sorters, the MRF ensures precision in recycling. The processed materials,

including paper, metals, and plastics, will be sold to manufacturers across Alabama that rely exclusively on recyclables, including Novelis, a global leader in sustainable aluminum production building a plant in Bay Minette at the South Alabama Megasite.

The Baldwin County Solid Waste Disposal Authority is furthering its environmental efforts with the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) launch. These manned drop-off centers in Summerdale, Fairhope, Spanish Fort, Orange Beach, and Bay Minette will provide residents a convenient way to dispose of batteries, electronics, glass, lightbulbs, tanks, extinguishers, and other household hazardous waste that often end up in landfills due to lack of proper disposal options.

Construction has already begun on the CHaRM facility in Summerdale and Fairhope, and plans for the other locations are underway. These centers will play a crucial role in contributing to a growing circular economy in which materials are continuously reused and repurposed instead of discarded. ▶



MRF at the Magnolia Landfill



CHaRM at the Magnolia Landfill

production, catering to the growing demand for sustainable beverage packaging and supporting the North American automotive and electrical vehicle industries.

At full capacity, Novelis Bay Minette will produce 1.32 billion pounds of finished aluminum goods annually while working toward carbon neutrality by minimizing direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions. A key element of Novelis’ sustainability strategy is its partnership with Alabama Power, a subsidiary of Southern Company, to supply the plant with renewable energy. Novelis provides direct financial support for two 80-megawatt solar power generation plants, ensuring the facility operates on carbon-free electricity.

Beyond clean energy, Novelis’ partnership with Alabama Power will leverage carbon capture technology to evaluate the best manufacturing environment practices to implement at Novelis Bay Minette and other global facilities. Novelis will also draw on Southern Company’s expertise in carbon sequestration, energy storage, electrification ▶

“The better job we do at keeping batteries and hazardous materials out of the waste stream, the safer and more efficient Baldwin County will be,” Graham said. “This is about protecting our environment, supporting economic growth, and providing real solutions for our residents.”

Baldwin County’s leadership in sustainability extends beyond recycling. The Novelis Bay Minette plant is pioneering low-carbon aluminum

# BALDWIN BY THE NUMBERS

## ALABAMA LARGE METRO AREAS CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS PER CAPITA

**Baldwin County has the No. 1 Lowest CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions per capita of all large metros in Alabama.**

Metropolitan Area	Total Emissions (Metric Tons)	Per Capita
<b>Daphne-Fairhope-Foley</b>	<b>2,865,135</b>	<b>11.9</b>
Gadsden	1,731,311	16.8
Montgomery	13,217,022	18.0
Anniston-Oxford-Jackson	2,451,923	21.1
Tuscaloosa	6,093,900	23.1
Dothan	1,564,715	30.6
Huntsville	7,438,576	31.0
Auburn-Opelika	6,244,462	35.1
Mobile	17,931,905	43.4
Florence-Muscle Shoals	3,339,728	49.2
Columbus, GA-AL	3,166,652	53.8
Decatur	7,860,068	75.2
Birmingham-Hoover	49,013,494	188.6

source: Crosswalk Labs

of thermal processes, and other promising advancements to further reduce emissions.

“Sustainability is at the core of everything we do,” Callie Cox, Communications and Government Affairs Lead at Novelis Bay Minette, said. “We are building the Bay Minette facility with the future in mind, incorporating efficient processes that reduce our carbon footprint and drive a more circular economy. From maximizing recycled content to increasing energy efficiency, we’re setting a new standard for sustainable aluminum production. This investment reinforces our commitment to innovation, our customers, and a greener future.”

Baldwin County’s forward-thinking initiatives are

already making a measurable impact. In 2023, Crosswalk Labs ranked Baldwin County as Alabama’s No. 1 large metro with the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita. As the area continues to grow and as Novelis Bay Minette becomes operational, Baldwin County will ensure it remains one of the lowest-carbon regions in the state.

With the combined efforts of the new MRF, CHaRM centers, and Novelis’ low-carbon aluminum production, Baldwin County is setting an example of environmental stewardship for communities nationwide. These efforts not only preserve the county’s natural beauty but also position it as a leader in innovation, sustainability, and economic growth.

## ▶ From Classrooms to Courtrooms: The City of Gulf Shores’ Strategic Growth Investments

The City of Gulf Shores, the fifth fastest-growing city in Alabama, is strategically investing in community development to enhance public services, education, and quality of life for residents and visitors.

Recognizing the importance of modern public safety infrastructure, Gulf Shores is advancing with its Justice Center project, consolidating the police department, jail, and municipal courts at the former Sacred Heart Hospital building. This cost-effective solution will deliver modern, up-to-date facilities to meet the growing community’s needs.



Mayor Robert Craft,  
City of Gulf Shores

“Public safety is our top priority,” Mayor Robert Craft said. “Our current police station is outdated and does not provide the modern facilities or resources our officers deserve. This new Justice Center demonstrates our unwavering commitment to those who protect and serve our community.”

This investment ensures Gulf Shores remains a safe and secure place to live, work, and visit—an essential foundation for continued economic success.

Gulf Shores is also making bold strides in education by constructing a new, state-of-the-art high school, scheduled to open in Fall 2026. Strategically located at the intersection of the Foley Beach Express and Coastal Gateway Boulevard, this 287,000-square-foot campus will initially accommodate 1,000 students, with room to expand as the community continues to grow.

“We’re not just building classrooms - we’re creating a foundation for our children’s future and our city’s growth,” Craft said.

The new high school will feature innovative learning environments for biomedical studies, marine biology, culinary arts, finance, music production, broadcasting, and the arts, ensuring the future workforce will have the tools to explore their passions and graduate with the skills needed to achieve success.

Sustainability is also at the forefront of Gulf Shores’ economic strategy with the upcoming Eco Center, a collaboration between the City of Gulf Shores and the Gulf Coast Center for Ecotourism and Sustainability. Opening in Spring 2025, this innovative facility will serve as a hub for environmental education and sustainable tourism initiatives, reinforcing Gulf Shores’ commitment to preserving its natural resources for future generations. ▶



Gulf Coast Eco Center



The Eco Center plans to offer community programs, including youth camps, field studies, public classes, workshops, and recreational programs. The campus is designed to meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification, the internationally recognized standard for green buildings. It will feature a farm and garden complex, art center, habitat restoration demonstrations, bicycle hub, wetland lab, event space, and a challenge course.

“Our beaches and waterways aren’t just precious natural resources – they’re the foundation of our economy and way of life,” Craft said. “Through this new Eco Center, we’re investing in the next

generation’s understanding of environmental stewardship.”

Infrastructure investments are transforming Gulf Shores into a connected community, with the ambitious Waterway Village pedestrian bridge project well underway. Rising 75 feet above the Intracoastal Waterway, this iconic landmark will connect the north and south sides of the Waterway District.

“This pedestrian bridge is more than just infrastructure – it represents our vision for Gulf Shores as a connected, vibrant city,” Craft said. “The Waterway District will serve as our ‘Second Coast,’ complementing our world-famous beaches with a thriving inland destination.” By creating a walkable downtown, Gulf Shores is unlocking new opportunities for restaurants, entertainment venues, and public spaces to make the area an increasingly attractive destination for residents and visitors.

These strategic investments reflect Gulf Shores’ dedication to balanced growth, combining essential infrastructure improvements with quality-of-life enhancements that will serve the community for generations to come.