

Baldwin County Historic Development Commission (BCHDC)

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I contact the Baldwin County Historic Development Commission?

The Baldwin County Historic Development Commission (BCHDC) is a volunteer board appointed by the Baldwin County Commission.

The primary method of contacting the BCHDC is by using the **Contact Us** form located on the **Archives and History** page of the Baldwin County Commission website. Alternatively, you may email your request to archivalrecords@baldwincountyal.gov. Please note that emails sent to this address will be forwarded to the BCHDC, and a representative will respond within 1–3 business days.

How do I obtain a historical shield and banner for my historic home, and whom should I contact?

- You must submit a Shield and Banner Application

How do I obtain an application to apply for a shield and banner?

To access the application:

- Visit the **Baldwin County Commission** website
- Navigate to **Departments > Archives and History > Baldwin County Historic Development Commission**
- Download and print the shield and banner application form.

Completed applications should be mailed to:

Baldwin County Historic Development Commission

c/o Baldwin County Archives & History

312 Courthouse Square, Suite 26

Bay Minette, AL 36507

How much does it cost to apply for a shield and banner?

The current processing fee to apply for a shield and banner is **\$150.00**. Checks should be made payable to **Baldwin County Historic Development Commission**.

Can I make renovations to a historic home?

Renovating a historic home can add great value, but it must be done with care to preserve the character of the property and comply with local guidelines.

If your property is located within a **designated historic district**, you **must** contact the following offices **before** starting any renovations:


1. Baldwin County Architectural Review Board (ARB)

The ARB reviews proposed exterior changes to properties located in local historic districts to ensure compliance with historic preservation standards.

- **Contact:**

Baldwin County Planning & Zoning Department

22251 Palmer Street, Robertsdale, AL 36567

 (251) 580-1655

 planning@baldwincountyal.gov

 <https://baldwincountyal.gov>

Baldwin County Planning & Zoning Department

Planning & Zoning will help determine your property's zoning classification and whether a **Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)** is required before you proceed.

- They can also verify if your property lies within a regulated historic overlay district.

Criteria to Consider Before Renovation

- Is your home within a **historic district**?
- Are you making **exterior changes**, including windows, roofing, siding, or porches?
- Are you planning **additions** or structural alterations?
- Are you altering elements that contribute to the **architectural character**?

If you answered **yes** to any of these, a review and approval process is likely required.

You may also contact the **Baldwin County Department of Archives and History** for guidance or referrals.

Swift-Coles Historic Home – Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the Swift-Coles Historic Home located?

The home is located at:

17424 Swift-Coles Lane, Bon Secour, AL 36511

What are the public hours of operation?

The home is open to the public on:

Tuesdays and Fridays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Group tours and private events can be scheduled by appointment.

How much does it cost to visit?

General admission for tours is:


- Adults: \$10
- Children under 12: Free with an accompanying adult

Admission fees may vary during special events.

Can I rent the Swift-Coles Home for events?

Yes. The home is available for weddings, photography sessions, and private events.

To check availability and rental fees, contact the site coordinator at:

 (251) 949-5550

 swiftcoles@baldwincountyal.gov

What is the history of the Swift-Coles Historic Home?

Originally built in 1882 as a modest four-room structure by Charles Swift, the home expanded over time to become a 16-room Southern mansion. It is noted for its Southern Greek Revival architecture and heart pine wood construction, sourced from Swift's lumber mill.

In 1976, the home was purchased and restored by Nicholas Coles, who added many antique furnishings and opened it to the public.

Today, it is owned by Baldwin County and operated as a historic house museum and special event venue.

Is the home on the historic register?

Yes. The Swift-Coles Historic Home is listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage and is recognized for its architectural and cultural significance to Baldwin County.

What is the difference between the Baldwin County Historic Development Commission and the Architectural Review Board?

Baldwin County Historic Development Commission (BCHDC)

The BCHDC is a volunteer advisory board focused on historic preservation education, promotion, and recognition throughout Baldwin County.

Main Functions:

- Promotes awareness of Baldwin County's historic resources
- Oversees programs like the Banner & Shield Program
- Supports research and preservation initiatives
- Hosts public outreach and historic recognition events

Who Should Contact BCHDC?

- Those interested in historic plaques, banners, or recognition
- Anyone wanting to learn more about local history
- Residents seeking to promote or celebrate a historic property

Baldwin County Architectural Review Board (ARB)

The ARB is a regulatory body responsible for reviewing proposed exterior changes to properties located in historic overlay districts within Baldwin County.

Main Functions:

- Reviews renovation, construction, or demolition plans
- Issues Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) for projects in historic districts
- Ensures changes are consistent with the character and guidelines of the district

Who Should Contact the ARB?

- Property owners in a designated historic district planning renovations, repairs, or new construction
- Those unsure if their property is within a historic overlay district
- Anyone required to submit plans for review before building permits are issued