

Baker County Overview

Location

Baker County is one of Florida's First Coast counties located in Northeast Florida, only a short distance from the Jacksonville beaches on the Atlantic Ocean. The county borders the state of Georgia, is 140 miles from the Florida Capital in Tallahassee, and 45 miles from the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Area Profile

There are 585 square miles in Baker County. The projected population is over 25,000 within five years. MacClenny, the county seat with a population of 5,000, is expected to keep up with the county projection.

Baker County is growing rapidly due to its prime location and the availability of five interchanges on Interstate 10, which crosses the county from east to west.

The climate in Northeast Florida is mild with plenty of sunshine. Baker County has a mean temperature of 69 degrees F. and a distinctive change in seasons.

Transportation

Interstate 10 and U.S. 90 run east and west through the county. Several state roads run north, providing access to the state of Georgia, and south to Gainesville, Orlando, and Tampa.

CSX Transportation offers rail service on a main tract route east and west through Macclenny.

Jacksonville International Airport is 40 minutes from Baker County, Lake City Municipal Airport is 30 minutes away, and two other airfields, Craig and Herlong, are located in Jacksonville. Baker County also has two private airfields.

History

In 1861 by an act of the legislature, Baker County became the 39th county in Florida. The county was named for Honorable James McNait Baker, former Judge of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Florida.

The first county seat was located in Sanderson until February 1, 1886 when it was moved to Macclenny. Macclenny was named after C.B. Macclenny, a big timber salesman. The town was incorporated April 11, 1887, and a revised map was recorded on March 4, 1889.

Olustee Battlefield, a state historic site located in Baker County, is a memorial to the major engagement of the Civil War in Florida. The battlefield, on U.S. 90 two miles east of Olustee, covers 270 acres.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the main businesses were: cattle raising, turpentine, lumbering, and farming. Osceola National Forest has played an important roll in the economy of the county.

Quality of Life

One of Baker County's more unique advantages is small town atmosphere with big city convenience. All of the cultural, educational, recreational, and professional opportunities of a large metropolitan area are only twenty minutes away in Jacksonville.

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Baker County today is a thriving progressive county with an excellent school system, updated medical services, an abundance of recreational facilities, a variety of churches representing almost all denominations, and a knowledgeable business community.

Recreation

There are boundless opportunities for the outdoor sportsman in Baker County. A large part of the Osceola National Forest lies within its boundaries, providing some of Florida's best hunting. The mild climate and the availability of lakes in the county and nearby provide a vast opportunity for the fisherman. Swimming and water skiing are also enjoyed, especially on the 800-acre Ocean Pond, located in the national forest.

Other recreational facilities, including ball fields and tennis courts, are publicly maintained. The YMCA, school system, and local churches offer a variety of sports and culture programs in the community.

Labor

The labor force in Baker County is very dependable and productive. A large percent of the labor force travels outside the county to work. The diversified labor force available in the county has a variety of skill levels.

Florida's "right to work" law reduces labor pressures and helps to create a harmonious working environment. The availability of nearby vocational training programs enhances the value of the ready labor supply in Baker County.

Industry

Baker County has two main industrial parks, Enterprise East on US 90 east of Macclenny and Enterprise West in Sanderson. Enterprise East offers water and water treatment facilities from the City of Macclenny and Enterprise West offers rail from CSX Transportation.

Wal-Mart's Food Distribution Center, employing approximately 600 employees, is located in Enterprise East. Wiremil, Inc., a manufacturer of pre-stressed steel cable for road and bridge construction, and Sanderson Pipe Corporation, a PVC pipe manufacturer, are located in Enterprise West.

Partnership

The Baker County Chamber of Commerce and the Baker County Development Commission have formed a "Partnership" to promote local business expansion and encourage new industrial growth. The Development Commission has land available in the county's two industrial parks, Enterprise East and Enterprise West.

The Commission also can issue Industrial Revenue Bonds for new and expanding manufacturing firms. The Partnership works closely with the Baker County Board of Commissioners and the City of Macclenny in providing opportunities for industrial prospects.

Agriculture

Agriculture has always played a predominant role in the history of Baker County. Forestry is the backbone of the agricultural community, followed closely by the ornamental horticulture industry. The county has some of Florida's oldest and largest wholesale nurseries, especially in woody ornamentals. Nursery stock grown in Baker County is shipped nationwide.

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Government

There are two incorporated municipalities in the county. They are the county seat of Macclenny (5000 pop.) and Glen St. Mary (500 pop.) Both have a mayor-council form of government. A five-member Board of County Commissioners governs the unincorporated areas.

Education

The Baker County school system includes a Pre/K-Kindergarten Center (Pre-K), two elementary schools (1-3), a center for fourth and fifth grades, a sixth grade center, a middle school (7-8), a high school (9-12), and an alternative school. Thirty-five percent of the counties in Florida are fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Baker County has achieved this accreditation.

The high school and middle school have full-time band teachers. All of the schools have full time physical education teachers, media specialists and guidance counselors. Community and adult educational programs are also offered by the school district.

A branch of Lake City Community College is located in Macclenny. Florida Community College and Lake City Community College are only 35 minutes away. Higher education opportunities lie nearby at Jacksonville's University of North Florida, Jacksonville University, and Edward Waters College. The University of Florida is located in Gainesville only 45 minutes away.

Medical Services

Very capable medical doctors and dentists serve Baker County. The county maintains a 25-bed hospital and medical center with access to numerous specialized physicians from the Jacksonville area. Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital, a state-of-the-art facility, is located in Macclenny. The Baker County Health Department and a community mental health clinic are also available.

The Frank Wells Nursing Home, maintained by the county, and Macclenny Nursing and Rehab Center, privately owned, provide care for over 180 patients.

South of Macclenny is the Northeast Florida State Hospital where over 500 beds are available for patients from the north Florida region.

Taxes

The county does not have state or local personal income taxes, state ad valorem taxes, or state tangible property taxes. Food and drugs are exempt the 7 percent sales tax. Ad valorem taxes are assessed countywide and inside the City of Macclenny.

Utilities

Northeast Florida Telephone Company, Inc. and Setel provide telephone services. Public water and water treatment facilities are available from the City of Macclenny. The remainder of the county is serviced by private wells and septic tanks.

Electricity is furnished by Florida Power and Light, the state's largest utility, for most areas. Okefenoke Rural Electric and Clay Electric Cooperative service other areas.