GREATER BATON ROUGE ZOO LOCATED TO THE NORTH IN BAKER

By JAMES MINTON
Baker-Zachary bureau

BAKER — East Baton Rouge Parish’s second largest municipality offers its residents urban conveniences in proximity to suburban neighborhoods.

Deriving its name from Baker Plantation, the community became a railroad stop in the 1880s and got its first post office in 1888.

Incorporated in 1945, the city now operates under a home rule charter with a mayor, five City Council members elected from single-member districts and an elected police chief.

Baker also has a municipal court with an elected judge.

In 1995, voters approved a state constitutional amendment allowing Baker to create a city school system separate from the parish system.

City voters elected a five-member School Board in 1998, and the board is now awaiting a federal court decision on its bid to withdraw the city’s membership from the parish school system.

Baker’s population topped 13,000 in the 1990 census. The current population is estimated at 13,315, according to the Chamber of Commerce.

The city limits extend from the industrial area north of Interstate 110 to the southern edge of Zachary’s corporate limits.

The Baker City Hall and Municipal Auditorium are located at 3325 Groom Road, across from Baker High School. The Baker Police Department and City Court are located in the same building, along with a BREC recreation center, Council on Aging Senior Center, a municipal park and Chamber of Commerce office.

The Chamber of Commerce (775-3547) offers a Web site with information on Baker (www.bakerchamber.org).

The main routes to Baton Rouge are Plank Road and La. 19, both of which provide interstate highway access. Shopping centers and other business areas line both routes.

Police protection is provided by a 30-member department supported by a 25-member reserve force, eight Explorer Scout law enforcement cadets and four school crossing guards. The department also staffs an answering point for the parish’s 911 emergency communications network.

The fire department, with 15 full-time firefighters and a large volunteer force, is well-equipped for responding to fires and medical emergencies. The city has an enviable Class 3 fire insurance rating.

The city provides water, natural gas, sewerage, garbage collection and recycling services. To inquire about service, call 775-9952.

Electricity is supplied by Dixie Electric Membership Corp. (654-9355) and Entergy Corp. To request Entergy service, call 1-800-368-3749 (1-800-Entergy).

Power outages on Entergy’s system may be reported by calling 1-800-968-8243.

Baker’s attractions include the Heritgage Museum on Main Street, a general history museum that includes a small village depicting small-town life at the turn of the century.

The Greater Baton Rouge Zoo is a major Baker attraction.

The city maintains a fishing pond off Groom Road west of La. 19, the Charles Heine Memorial Park along La. 19, BREC parks are located throughout the city.

Nearby are Greenwood Park, the W.W. Dumas Memorial Golf Course, the Greater Baton Rouge Zoo and Cohn Arboretum.

The East Baton Rouge Parish Library’s Baker branch is at 4761 Groom Road.

The Baker Little Theater, 3121 Van Buren Drive, is well known in the area for its series of productions each year.

The Advocate has a news bureau at 3262 Baker Blvd. serving Baker, Zachary and East and West Feliciana parishes.

Schools include Baker High, Baker Middle School, and Bakerfield, Baker Heights, Park Ridge and St. Isidore elementary schools.

Bethany World Prayer Center on Plank Road also operates Bethany Christian School.

The state Office of Motor Vehicles has a branch office at 2250 Main St. (771-6203), where the parish Registrar of Voters also has a branch office.

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