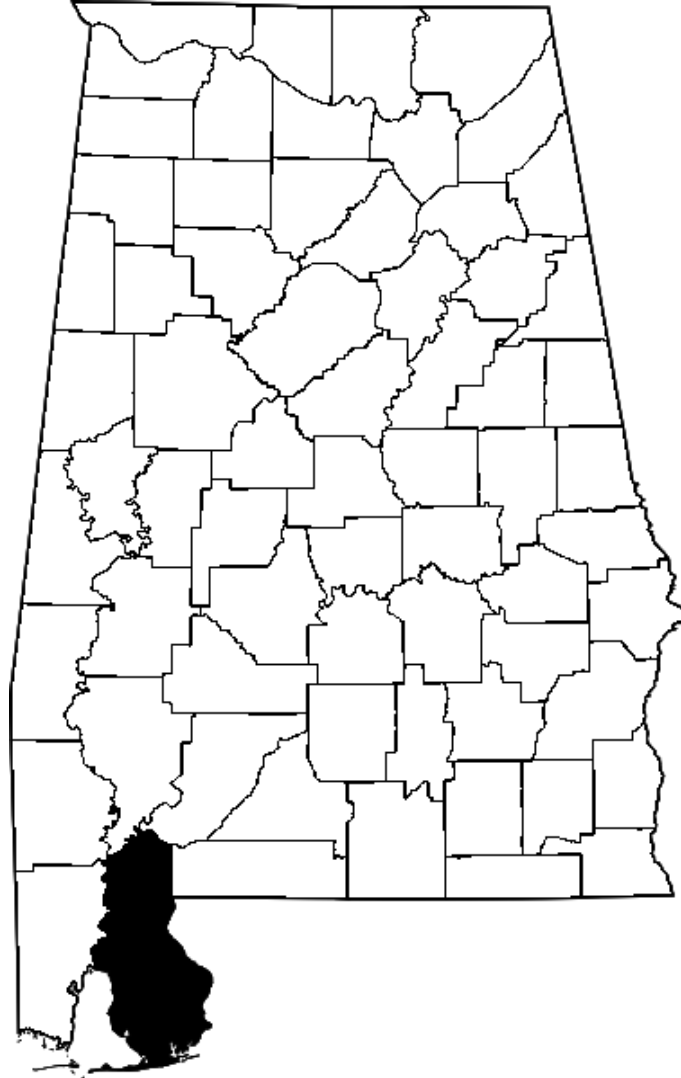


Baldwin County, Alabama: The Present and Future of Poverty in a Southern County



Source: Google Maps

Table of Contents

Background - 3

Government - 5

Notable Cities within Baldwin County - 7

Social Activities - 10

Religion - 10

Housing - 11

Medical Services - 11

Poverty - 12

Racial Tensions - 13

Population Growth & Immigration - 16

Education - 18

Economy - 19

Crime - 24

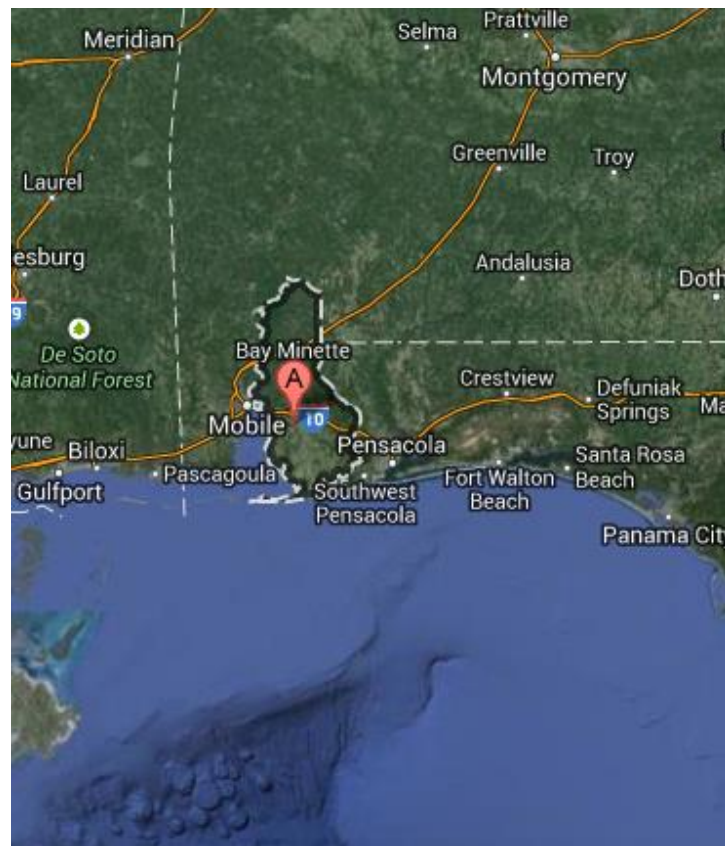
Environmental Issues - 25

Future Implications - 26

Conclusion - 27

Background

Baldwin County is a rural county located in the southernmost part of the state of Alabama and lies within the Coast Plain physiographic section. The county covers approximately 1,596 square miles. The Gulf of Mexico acts as the southern border of the county, with the Tensaw River and Mobile Bay acting as the western border, and the state of Florida as the eastern border. The county lies within the Mobile Statistical Area (Morton).



Source: Google Maps

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Baldwin County was 182,265 residents. However, recently released population estimates state that as of July 2012, the population had grown to 190,790 residents. Although the county has fourteen incorporated municipalities, the majority of Baldwin County's population resides in the unincorporated, rural areas.

Population Estimates in Baldwin County, AL as of July 1 – US Census Bureau FactFinder

2010	2011	2012
183,275	186,830	190,790

Baldwin County is a popular destination for tourists. The region includes nationally renowned golf courses, beaches, recreational opportunities, and a growing economy. The white sand beaches of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach are made up “almost entirely of quartz grains washed down from the Appalachian Mountains thousands of years ago,” making these shores “some of the finest in the world” (“Alabama Gulf Coast Vacations”). Baldwin County's mild climate is also attractive to locals and tourists, with an average temperature of almost 67 degrees Fahrenheit (“Baldwin County Weather”). These various aspects have attracted many people to Baldwin County and have even led to a population growth over the past few years. Today, Baldwin County remains one of the top three fastest growing counties in Alabama. However, as discussed throughout this paper, exponential growth may not be the best way to combat poverty in rural counties. Theoretically, this growth may actually be worsening the economic situations of many residences within the region, as funds per student are decreasing and many of the new jobs that have been created in the area are not necessarily good jobs.

Government

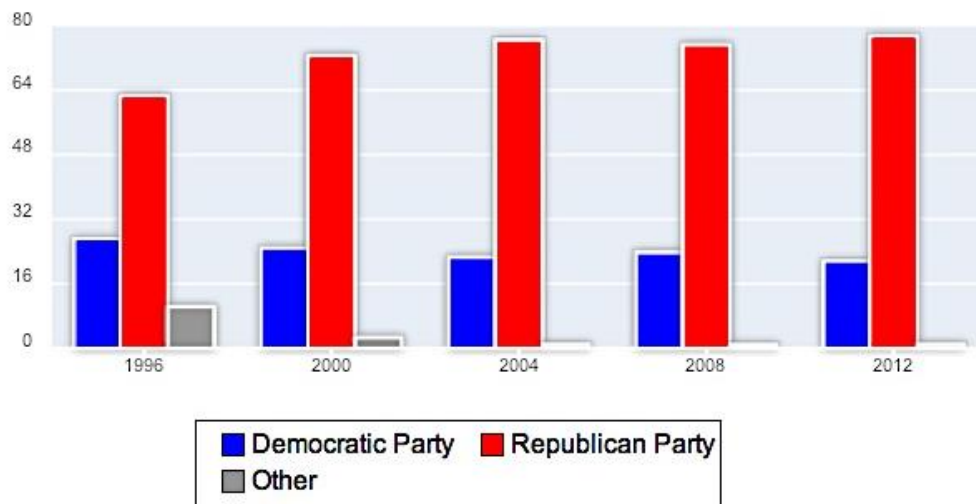
The county government is headquartered in the town of Bay Minette. The fourteen municipalities within Baldwin County are mayor/council governments and include elected council members (“About Baldwin”). The four county commissioners who currently hold office are all white, male Republicans. Other commonalities among the commissioners include their activism in their churches and their common interests in local economic growth due to personal financial interests. The southern region of the United States is often known as the Bible Belt, as there are strong connections between religious beliefs and political parties. However, they did not all grow up in the region, adding some diversity and difference in opinions regarding programs and policies.

Commissioner Frank Burt, Jr. has served six consecutive terms since 1989. He grew up in Baldwin County, attended Auburn University in northern Alabama, and returned to Bay Minette, the county seat, after graduating to work as a pharmacist. He also served in the US Navy. Commissioner Burt has been an active member of the First Baptist Church of Bay Minette since 1955 and has acted as a Sunday school teacher, Director, and Chairman of the Board of Deacons. Commissioner Robert James actually grew up in New Jersey and moved to Alabama after completing community college in New Jersey. He is a licensed underground utilities contractor and operates a company, with his brother, in Baldwin County that constructs roads and utilities. Commissioner James has lived in Baldwin County for 32 years and is an active member of the Christ Presbyterian Church in Daphne, serving as a Sunday school teacher and former Elder. Commissioner Tucker Dorsey grew up in Georgia and moved to Baldwin County in 1994 to continue building homes. Since then, he has managed the largest residential development project in Southwest Alabama. Commissioner Dorsey is a member of and a greeter

at the Church on the Eastern Shore and is active in local organizations. He is serving his first term as a commissioner. Commissioner Charles Gruber is a third generation member of Baldwin County and has served in local government since 1979, starting as a member of the Town Council of Elberta. He is currently serving his second term as commissioner. He served in the US Army Reserve for 25 years. Commissioner Gruber worked as an employee of the Baldwin County Commission for 30 years and remains active in project oversight. Commissioner Gruber is a member and usher at St. Bartholomew Catholic Church in Elberta.

Baldwin County has consecutively voted Republican in the last five presidential elections as well, with 77% of the population voting for Mitt Romney in the 2012 Presidential Election (City Data). The Congressional Representative, Bradley Byrne, is also a Republican. Representative Byrne is an avid supporter of veterans, the pro-life movement, and employees' rights ("Sponsored Legislation"). The strong Republican presence within the county connects with the laidback, Southern lifestyle in which residences do not want the government to interfere with daily life and activities.

Presidential Election Voting Results – Baldwin County, AL



Source: http://www.city-data.com/county/Baldwin_County-AL.html

Notable Cities within Baldwin County

The cities described below provide additional insight into the small town lives of the citizens of Baldwin County. However, many of these towns have seen expansive growth over the past few years. The population increases are leading to struggles within the communities, as life-long citizens yearn for the relaxed lifestyle that the towns of Baldwin County have hosted for so many years. While the economic growth and expansion within the towns may be providing financial benefits and creating jobs, these benefits may not be going to the people who need assistance.

- **Bay Minette** - Bay Minette is located within the pine forests of Baldwin County. Although the town refers to itself as a “small southern community,” Bay Minette has a thriving timber industry and attracts many outdoorsmen for fishing, hunting, and camping. Over the years, Bay Minette has had steady growth due the county government’s headquarters being located within the town. The government has offered many employment opportunities to the citizens. Many other citizens work in manufacturing (“Bay Minette”).
- **Daphne** - The town of Daphne has been ranked at by CNN/Money as one of the “Top 100 Best Places to Live.” Over the past few years, the town’s population has grown by 30%, but Daphne has managed to keep the small town feel. The town is well known for a seafood occurrence known as Jubilee. The phenomenon causes blue crabs, shrimp, and fish to move to shallow waters, making them easy for bystanders to catch. The special event has great meaning to the people of Daphne and the Eastern Shore and gives them a great reason to celebrate (“All About Daphne”).
- **Elberta** - Elberta, Alabama is home to the Baldwin County Heritage Museum (“Elberta, Alabama”). This town is known for the German Sausage Festival, which also includes arts

and crafts and entertainment for the entire family. The festival was started in 1978 by the Volunteer Fire Department as a fundraiser to benefit the town, fire department, and local nonprofits (“Festival”).

- **Fairhope** - Fairhope is small town located along the Eastern Shore that is pedestrian friendly and offers an active arts community. However, it is the largest town within Baldwin County. It is also known as a great location for weekend getaways. Fairhope has been recognized both nationally and internationally for its natural beauty and relaxed quality of life. “In 2010, *Family Circle Magazine* named Fairhope as one of the 10 best places to raise a family. Most recently, it was voted as the most business friendly city in Alabama by the Alabama Policy Institute” (“About Fairhope”).
- **Gulf Shores & Orange Beach** - Gulf Shores is one of the nation's top beach communities. The coastal city is family friendly and has a constantly changing population due to tourism influxes. Mild winter months attract snowbirds from the northern states, while warmer summer months attract hundreds of thousands of tourists to the beaches. Until the 1970s, the majority of the Gulf Shores population worked in shrimping, oystering, and fishing. However, government legislation greatly impacted and limited this lifestyle. Since then, tourism and real estate businesses have replaced those industries (“A Brief History of Gulf Shores”). Orange Beach is another popular location for family vacations, offering beach access, golf courses, and wonderful activities for tourists (“Orange Beach, Alabama”). Nevertheless, the community of Orange Beach, as well as Gulf Shores and the surrounding coastal communities, has dealt with its fair share of disasters, both natural and industrial. During the summer of 2010, Orange Beach, Gulf Shores, and many other communities along the Gulf Coast, faced a massive decrease in tourism and resulting devastating economic loss

as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oilrig explosion and resulting oil spill. The disaster polluted countless natural habitats and tourist attractions along the coast. Today, the beaches and tourism industry have mostly recovered, but the fishing industry still suffers and is expected to see repercussions of the accident for years to come (Kaetz).

- **Magnolia Springs** - The town of Magnolia Springs lies along the Magnolia River. The town is full of natural beauty, including magnolia trees and giant oak trees, along with camellias, azalea, wisteria, and dogwood. The community revolves around the river, as “the Magnolia River remains the only river route mail delivery in the continental United States” (“Welcome to the Town of Magnolia Springs, Alabama”). Although the community is tightknit, metropolitan areas, including Mobile, are only minutes away. The town sees itself as “a successful mix of Southern and Northern, of native-born and transplant, epitomizes the ‘New South’ yet, at the same time, glories in the true application of the phrase ‘Southern hospitality’” (“Welcome to the Town of Magnolia Springs, Alabama”). Other features of Magnolia Springs include beautiful homes, shaded roads, exquisite gardens, and a relaxed lifestyle.
- **Spanish Fort** - The town of Spanish Fort is located on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. Spanish Fort offers many outdoor activities, fresh seafood, and beautiful scenery for visitors and citizens to enjoy. The town is currently focused on growth and has set high expectations for schools, community development, and economic growth within Spanish Fort. Projects include the construction of a new community center, featuring a seniors’ center, a library, and offices for city administrators. Spanish Fort hopes to keep the small town feeling while also focusing on citizens and their wellbeing, and the town’s growth and development (“City of Spanish Fort - Get to Know Us”).

Social Activities

Mardi Gras is widely celebrated on the Alabama Gulf Coast, particularly within Baldwin County, as parades and festivities are organized every day within the area for the entire Mardi Gras season. Many of the other towns throughout Baldwin County also host various festivities throughout the year, including art and food festivals.

The 27th Annual Baldwin County Strawberry Festival recently took place in a popular community park, attracting vendors and visitors from across the Gulf Coast. This year's festival attracted 170 vendors, which included 20 food vendors. Local business owners appreciate the opportunity for additional marketing and sales, while visitors and locals alike enjoy the goods and treats available for purchase (Scheurich).

Religion

According to the Association of Religion Data Archives and the County Membership Report for Baldwin County in 2010, the religious traditions for Baldwin County can be broken into six categories. Evangelical Protestants account for 57,986 people, Black Protestants account for 3,130 people, Mainline Protestants account for 20,075 people, Catholics account for 14,009 people, and 1,528 people identified with other religions. There were 85,347 people who did not claim a religious tradition ("Baldwin County, Alabama County Membership Report").

It is important to draw attention to the large amount of Evangelical Protestants in Baldwin County. This religious group is stereotypically known as an unwelcoming group of people who typically point fingers at people who are suffering, rather than lending a hand to those in need. As Tony Campolo, an evangelical pastor, speaker, author, and professor, stated during an interview, "Evangelicalism is in a precarious position. On the one hand, it is doctrinally strong... On the other hand, over the last couple of decades, evangelicalism has been

seduced into the politics of the Religious Right. It's anti-gay, anti-poor, and anti-environment" (Struckmeyer). Having such a high population of Evangelicals in the area may cause tensions within communities, as opinions will greatly differ regarding poverty policy and programming. These religious beliefs may also lead to unwelcoming attitudes and a weak support system for minority immigrants. However, it is important to remember that this stereotype of Evangelicalism does not apply to all of those who belong to the faith.

Housing

In regards to housing structures in Baldwin County, in 2010 there were 105,267 housing units in the region. Of those units, 62,838 were one-unit, detached structures. There were 11,742 mobile homes and 220 boats, RV, vans, or other vehicles recognized as living structures. Of these housing units, there were 77,978 that were occupied. In regards to living conditions, 449 lacked complete plumbing facilities and 905 lacked complete kitchen facilities. There were 2,302 households without telephone service available ("Selected Housing Characteristics 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates").

Medical Services

Baldwin County offers many medical facilities including hospitals and infirmaries. Thomas Hospital, which serves the Eastern Shore and surrounding communities within Baldwin County, has been named one of the Nation's 100 Top Hospitals ("Thomas Hospital"). However, Baldwin County has been noted as a health professional shortage area in regards to primary medical care, dental care, and mental health care. The county specifically needs eight additional primary medical care providers for low income South Baldwin, 36 dental care providers for the low-income population, and one full time provider of mental health care for the low-income population. Baldwin County also has a lack of suicide prevention programs. Other issues for

citizens include employment dangers, as those working in the agriculture and fishing industries are often exposed to hazardous materials (*Rapid Community Health Needs Assessment Report Gulf Region Health Outreach Program: Primary Care Capacity Project - Alabama: Baldwin and Mobile County*).

Poverty

There are various aspects throughout Baldwin County that can lead to poverty and deepen it as well. Poverty also disproportionately affects minorities in Baldwin County, which may be an implication of the racial tensions that still exist in the southern region.

Poverty Status for Past 12 Months 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	Baldwin County, Alabama					
	Total		Below poverty level		Percent below poverty level	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population for whom poverty status is determined	180,970	+/-435	24,002	+/-2,188	13.3%	+/-1.2
One race	178,093	+/-657	22,954	+/-2,139	12.9%	+/-1.2
White	156,783	+/-808	15,427	+/-1,932	9.8%	+/-1.2
Black or African American	16,305	+/-491	5,907	+/-1,083	36.2%	+/-6.4
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,022	+/-257	336	+/-199	32.9%	+/-19.1
Asian	1,334	+/-174	377	+/-139	28.3%	+/-11.1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	+/-8	0	+/-28	0.0%	+/-100.0
Some other race	2,645	+/-805	907	+/-533	34.3%	+/-18.0
Two or more races	2,877	+/-517	1,048	+/-449	36.4%	+/-11.7
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	7,878	+/-33	2,322	+/-613	29.5%	+/-7.8
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	151,729	+/-299	14,047	+/-1,851	9.3%	+/-1.2

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates data, 13.3% of the population in Baldwin County, Alabama lives in poverty. Within the county, 9.8% of whites are in poverty, 36.2% of blacks are in poverty, and 29.5% of Hispanics are in poverty. As

shown through this data, poverty in Baldwin County disproportionately affects minority groups. Although there are more white people in poverty, there is a higher percentage of the black population and a higher percentage of the Hispanic population in poverty. It is also necessary to note the high levels of poverty for the American Indian/Alaska Native population and the Asian population in Baldwin County, in comparison to the level of poverty for the white population in the county. These high levels of poverty may have a connection to racial tensions that are still prominent in the area. Regardless of the time that has passed, racial tensions are ingrained in the southern culture, leading to an unwelcoming environment for minorities.

Racial Tensions

Race differences have played, and continue to play, a significant role in southern states' culture and social hierarchy. As noted in "Race and Ethnicity in Rural America," "African Americans were concentrated in rural parts of the country, as they worked as slaves on plantations" in southern states ("Race and Ethnicity in Rural America"). Even today, rural African Americans who live "in small towns in the south [. . .] face long-standing traditions of racial discrimination and economic oppression" (Lichter). Although the practices of slavery and segregation may have been legally eliminated, the social structures of discrimination are still real in small, rural Southern towns. Rural blacks are still heavily segregate throughout the United States, as "half of rural Blacks live in just [four] states—Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Adding Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas brings the total to 75%" (Probst). Regions with a high concentration of Blacks "have greater occupational and wage disparities between Blacks and Whites. Disadvantage is both a collective and a contextual effect: geographic units surrounded by other units with high Black concentrations tend to be in the South, a less supportive institutional environment. Institutional effects, measured at the state

level, also affect occupation and wage outcomes” (Probst). Therefore, not only do Southern Rural Blacks face discrimination and a lack of economic opportunities, but they also do not have any forms of support through government programs or institutions. They have no voice in their communities, especially in areas where race still plays a role in local government and economic hierarchy. As previously noted, all four county commissioners are white. The Congressional Representative is also white. The lack of assistance and acceptance, both socially and economically, and the inability to voice their concerns leads to additional struggles for rural, southern blacks.

In “Person and Place: The Compounding Effects of Race/Ethnicity and Rurality on Health,” it is discussed that “[r]esearch on the Black population has found that geographic concentration has deleterious effects on health and mortality; such effects may also be present among other racial/ethnic minority groups and in rural as well as urban locales” (Probst). Not only does geographic location and discrimination affect economic opportunities, it also affects mental and physical health.

As previously stated, according to the Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Demographic Profile Data, Baldwin County had a population of 182,265 people. The 2010 population is broken down to include 85.6% white, 9.4% black, and 4.4% Hispanic. As noted by the Carsey Institute, there has been an increase in the Hispanic population, as “Hispanics have dispersed from gateway cities into new rural destinations in the Midwest and South, often to work for low wages in meatpacking plants, agriculture, or construction” (Lichter). In Baldwin County, there are still agricultural jobs that exist and an active and growing construction industry as the population continues to increase.

Profile of General Population & Housing Characteristics: 2010 Demographic Profile Data

Baldwin County, Alabama – 2010 Census Data		
Race/Origin	Number	Percent
Total population	182,265	100.0
One Race	179,542	98.5
White	156,153	85.7
Black or African American	17,105	9.4
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,216	0.7
Asian	1,348	0.7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	89	0.0
Some Other Race	3,631	2.0
Two or More Races	2,723	1.5
White; American Indian and Alaska Native	1,035	0.6
White; Asian	336	0.2
White; Black or African American	658	0.4
White; Some Other Race	311	0.2
Race alone or in combination with one or more other races:		
White	158,661	87.0
Black or African American	17,996	9.9
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,436	1.3
Asian	1,818	1.0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	179	0.1
Some Other Race	4,051	2.2
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	7,992	4.4
Not Hispanic or Latino	174,273	95.6

Employment Status - 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	Baldwin County, Alabama							
	Total		In labor force		Employed		Unemployment rate	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population, 16 years and over	146,042	+/-289	60.9%	+/-0.8	55.5%	+/-0.8	8.5%	+/-0.9
One race	144,378	+/-351	60.8%	+/-0.8	55.6%	+/-0.8	8.3%	+/-0.9
White	127,643	+/-612	60.7%	+/-0.9	55.8%	+/-1.0	7.7%	+/-0.8
Black or African American	12,944	+/-183	56.3%	+/-3.1	49.4%	+/-3.3	12.0%	+/-3.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	842	+/-218	62.6%	+/-11.4	43.7%	+/-11.7	30.2%	+/-20.1
Asian	1,038	+/-126	77.7%	+/-10.0	74.5%	+/-11.7	4.1%	+/-4.8
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	+/-8	100.0%	+/-100.0	100.0%	+/-100.0	0.0%	+/-100.0
Some other race	1,907	+/-579	87.4%	+/-9.2	74.2%	+/-11.6	15.1%	+/-13.6
Two or more races	1,664	+/-259	65.7%	+/-7.9	50.2%	+/-9.7	23.6%	+/-12.5
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	5,166	+/-60	78.0%	+/-4.6	67.5%	+/-6.7	13.3%	+/-8.2
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	124,414	+/-272	60.4%	+/-0.9	55.6%	+/-0.9	7.6%	+/-0.8

Employment status looks at the overall employment and unemployment rates. However, it also breaks down these levels by race, allowing for comparison across the entire population of Baldwin County. The 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates data states that 55.5% of the eligible population in Baldwin County is employed. The unemployment rate shows differences across races, as the overall unemployment rate is 8.5 percent, but when unemployment is broken down by race, it is 7.7 percent of the white population, 12.0 percent of the black population, and 13.3 percent of the Hispanic population. Therefore, unemployment disproportionately affects minorities in Baldwin County. This may be due to education levels, language barriers, or skill levels. However, there could also be underlying discrimination that is preventing these people from being hired.

Population Growth & Immigration

As the data shows on the following page, there has not been an increase in the number of children in the area. However, this data is contradictory to the information released regarding the limited amount of funds Baldwin County schools receive per student, due to the increase in students. This discrepancy may be due to a lack of recent data, as the report regarding a lack of funds was released within the past month. The number of young adults has slightly decreased, and the retirement age population has slightly increased. The retirement age population increase may be due to the aging baby boomers in the county. It is also important to notice the overall growth of the population, as the county has grown by over 60,000 people, as of 2012, since the Decennial Census took place.

2000 Decennial Census, Breakdown by Age – Overall Population: 140,415**Children:**

Under 5 years: 8,621; 6.1%
 5 to 9 years: 9,486; 6.8%
 10 to 14 years: 10,144; 7.2%

Young Adults:

15 to 19 years: 9,463; 6.7%
 20 to 24 years: 7,092; 5.1%
 25 to 34 years: 17,020; 12.1%

Retirement Age:

65 years and over: 21,703; 15.5%

2008-2012 ACS, Breakdown by Age – Overall Population: 182,265**Children:**

Under 5 years: 11,158; 6.1%
 5 to 9 years: 11,599; 6.4%
 10 to 14 years: 11,926; 6.5%

Young Adults:

15 to 19 years: 11,600; 6.4%
 20 to 24 years: 9,449; 5.2%
 25 to 34 years: 20,956; 11.5%

Retirement Age:

65 years and over: 30,568; 16.8%

In 2000, the population of Baldwin County was 140,415. The individual poverty rate was 10.1%, and the family poverty rate was 7.6%. By 2010, the population of Baldwin County had risen to 182,265. The individual poverty rate was 13.1%, and the family poverty rate was 9.5%. In 2000, 1.8% of the population, or 2,466 people, was Hispanic. In 2010, 4.4% of the population, or 7,992 people, was Hispanic. Through the analysis of this data, it can be interpreted that there is a positive correlation between population increases and poverty rate increases, which may also be related to an increase in the minority population.

However, there is also evidence of out migration, particularly for young adults. There is evidence of people leaving for college, as the population for 15 to 19 year olds in 6.4% of the population, and 20 to 24 year olds in 5.2% of the population. However, the population jumps back up for 25 to 34 year olds, to 11.5% of the population. The decrease in the population

after high school and the increase in population after higher education are shown in these statistics. The area of Baldwin County does not have any major universities, forcing kids to leave the area for higher education opportunities at four-year institutions. However, these kids appear to be returning to the area after graduation, or there are other people attracted to the area after they have graduated. Therefore, the issue of brain drain is not a clear problem for the region.

Education

Baldwin County schools are currently struggling to meet students' educational needs due to the limited amount of funding that the county receives per student. The county ranks 99th per student in spending allocated per student, which is second to last in the entire state. The decrease in spending is due to the exponential growth in the region, leading to a funding crisis for the district. The county is currently in desperate need of multiple new school buildings and additions to accommodate the in-migration of families with children. If this increase in growth and decrease in spending per child continues, parents and administration worry that it could impact the quality of education received in the classroom ("School Future Struggle in Baldwin County").

According to the 2011-2012 Alabama Education Report Card, five Baldwin County schools did not meet their goals for Adequate Yearly Progress, meaning they must stay at their current status and work towards meeting those same components next year. The schools are Bay Minette Intermediate School, Bay Minette Middle School, Foley Middle School, Foley Intermediate School, and Robertsdale Elementary School. The reason these schools did not make adequate yearly progress was due to a lack of progress within special education programs. The report also included that 41.5% of the students within Baldwin County Public Schools are

eligible for free or reduced meals. More than 98% of Baldwin County Public Schools' faculty members meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Guidelines.

However, in June 2013, Alabama received permission to depart from No Child Left Behind. The State of Alabama has now introduced a program called PLAN 2020, which seeks a 90% graduation rate and to better prepare students for future employment, not just the testing required for NCLB.

Economy

The closest major city to Baldwin County is Mobile. Mobile offers a rich history, a growing economy thanks to business and community partnerships, multiple convention centers, and a strong tourism industry ("The City of Mobile"). Many people commute from towns within Baldwin County to Mobile in Mobile County daily for work, due to the lack of well-paying jobs within Baldwin County. Between 2008 and 2012, Baldwin County citizens spent an average of 25.7 minutes commuting to work, just slightly over the state of Alabama average of 24.1 minutes ("Baldwin County QuickFacts").

Because of the natural beauty of the region and the large amount of tourists who visit year-round, the level of employment in the rental and leasing industry is more than twice the level of the national average. The largest employer in the county is the Baldwin County Board of Education, with 4,000 employees serving 26,900 students in 47 schools (Morton).

The Baldwin County economy, however, has taken some hits over the past few years. As presented in the Census Bureau ACS data, the County Business Patterns show the impact of economic events and other events that impacted the county's workforce. It is particularly important to note the impact of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010 on the Baldwin County economy, which led to a decrease in both work opportunities and business

establishments, as the tourism industry was virtually eliminated.

Baldwin County Economy & Establishments – Census Bureau ACS

2011 – 4,624 establishments; 51,386 employees

2010 – 4,665 establishments; 51,171 employees (BP Oil Spill was in April 2010; was not capped until July 2010)

- Industry breakdown for 2010 for areas directly related to tourism:
 - Retail trade: 946 establishments
 - Real estate and rental and leasing: 287 establishments
 - Arts, entertainment, and recreation: 65 establishments
 - Accommodation and food services: 425 establishments

2009 – 4,812 establishments; 52,233 employees (Recession)

2008 – 5,006 establishments; 56,124 employees (Recession)

2007 – 5,124 establishments; 56,273 employees

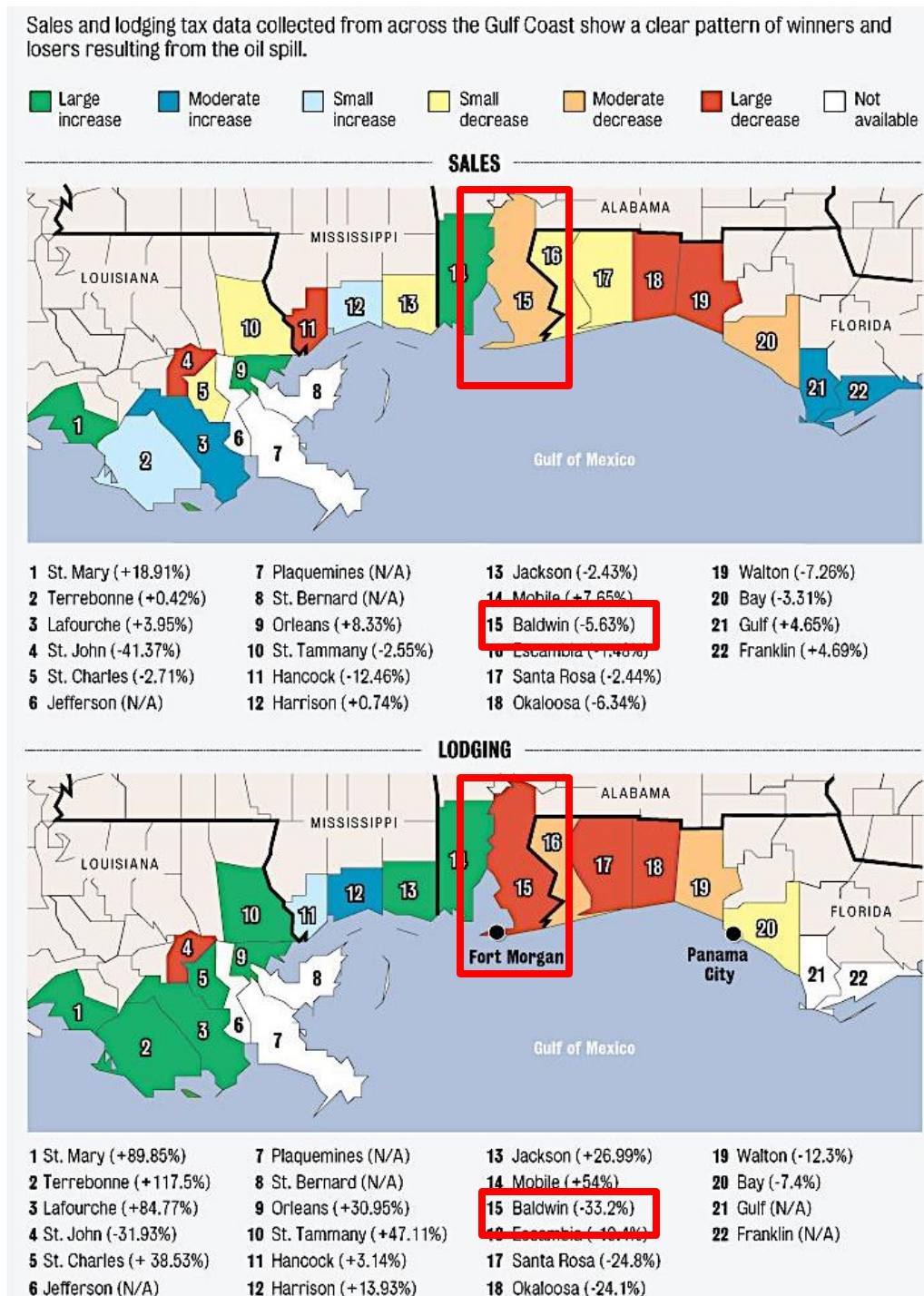
2006 – 4,816 establishments; 54,793 employees

2005 – 4,629 establishments; 51,909 employees

2004 – 4,370 establishments; 49,300 employees

Between 2004 and 2007, Baldwin County had economic growth as the number of establishments and jobs in the county increased. However, Baldwin County was impacted by the recession, leading to a decrease in both establishments and jobs. As previously noted and shown in the data, the establishments and number of employees both continued to decrease as a result of the BP oil spill and its effects on the tourism industry. Also, many of the jobs within the tourism industry are low paying and offer little opportunity for growth. The jobs that were lost impacted those who were already struggling economically. As noted in “BP Oil spill's biggest impact was on Baldwin County economy, not environment,” the tourism industry took a huge hit as a result of the spill. Although the Alabama coast had little environmental damage from the spill, the fears about the spill damaged the Gulf economy, as tourists stayed away and consumers avoided local seafood (Busby). Another article, “Alabama, Florida economies seem to have been hit hardest by oil spill, survey shows,” looked at the economic effects. After the BP oil spill, Baldwin County saw a sales tax decline of 5.63 percent and lodging taxes fell by 33 percent, which was the worst of any county surveyed. (The survey results from The Mobile Press-

Register for other Gulf Coast counties' economies are shown on the next page.) Orange Beach, a town within Baldwin County along the Gulf Coast, had its mayor, Tony Kennon, speak out about the economic destruction resulting from the spill. "We're the epicenter of financial loss along the Gulf Coast," he said. "That wasn't a hyperbole. That was the truth" (The Mobile Press-Register).



Since the oil spill and economic recession, Baldwin County has begun to recover as outside businesses are looking to join the Baldwin County economy. According to “5 economic trends expected to reshape Mobile in 2013,” there are quite a few developments in Baldwin County and the surrounding areas’ future. This includes Airbus selecting Mobile, which is technically in Mobile County, for a \$600 million assembly plant. This plant will provide employment opportunities for 1,000 people. However, these employment options may not necessarily provide positions that offer benefits or the possibility for promotions. As of February 2014, there were still discussions occurring about the top aerospace union organizing the plant (Reed).

There are also rumors regarding the possible development of a cruise ship terminal, which will lead to an increase in leisure activity and tourism in the area. Local economic development officials are also working to redefine workforce development, adding improved communication, technical skills training, and increased cooperation throughout the region. These steps are greatly needed to prepare the region for the Airbus assembly plant and other economic opportunities. There may also be an increase in traffic for the Port of Mobile, pending the Panama Canal expansion. The Port was also a deciding factor in bringing the Airbus factory to Mobile. With additional traffic and larger ships coming into the Gulf of Mexico, the Port of Mobile will have the ability to expand its container sector and greatly benefit from the improvements. Another economic factor for the area is an increase in aerospace activity as Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana unite to form the Aerospace Alliance. The increased efforts and interests across the region will lead to an increase in investments in the aircraft industry and the corridor’s economy (Dugan).

A unique feature of Baldwin County and its effort to grow and improve the region’s

economy is the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance. The Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, also known as BCDEA, is a partnership of local professionals, community leaders, and officials who are:

Dedicated to providing opportunities for businesses in Baldwin County, growing and improving the county's economy, and ensuring exceptional quality of life for everyone who lives and works here. [BCEDA] strive[s] to not only to increase the quality of life in [the] county, but to also diversify the economy in terms of industry in the area. [The] organization focuses [BCEDA's] efforts on business development endeavors that will ultimately create jobs, generate capital investment, and increase the quality of life in our area. [BCEDA partners] focus on, but are not limited to: marketing, business recruitment, workforce development, existing industry support, support and growth of community infrastructure, and entrepreneurial assistance. ("About Us - About BCEDA")

The BCEDA believes in investing in the major industries in the county, including advanced manufacturing, aerospace, distribution and logistics, and innovative industries. The organization also emphasizes the location of Baldwin County, as the region has access to major highways, airports, railways, and Mobile Bay. Another source of economic encouragement highlighted by BCEDA includes the Alabama Capital Tax Credit, which allows certain companies, including agricultural and food product processors, to claim credit against Alabama income tax. BCEDA also provides information regarding loans and bonds that small business owners, certain industries, and startup companies can utilize for financing.

Although economic opportunities are beginning to appear throughout the county, many of these jobs do not pay well and do not offer benefits to support families. Many of the employment opportunities that do currently exist revolve around the tourism industry. These jobs include staff for hotels, restaurants, and other tourist accommodation sites and attractions. Although these jobs are plentiful during tourism seasons, they do not pay well and offer little to no benefits for employees who spend hours on their feet. These jobs also have timelines, as the positions vanish as soon as the tourists disappear. Employment opportunities have also been

created in the construction industry, as a growing population increases demand for housing options. However, construction sites require hard physical labor and typically offer low wages and no benefits. Therefore, the current influx in jobs due to increasing tourism and a growth in population may not be the best solution for poverty in Baldwin County.

Crime

According to a report released in 2012 by the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center, Baldwin County had 2,903.44 crimes committed per every 100,000 people. There were 8 murders, 30 reported rapes, 76 robberies, 331 assaults, 969 burglaries, 3,838 larcenies, and 191 motor vehicle thefts. In comparison, the poorest county in the state of Alabama, Wilcox County, had a population of 11,528 people in 2012 and had 0 homicides, 0 rapes, 3 robberies, 25 assaults, 24 burglaries, 43 larcenies, and 8 motor vehicle threats. Per 100,000 people, this equates to 893.5 crimes committed (Alabama Statistical Analysis Center).

However, there are discussions regarding an increase in crime rates in Baldwin County following the BP oil spill and its resulting effects on the local economy. According to a study released in June 2012, crime rates increased 18 percent in Baldwin County from 2010 to 2011. Overall, the crime rate in the state of Alabama increased seven percent from 2010 to 2011. However, some experts believe that the crime rate in 2010 was low due to a decrease in tourism. For example, burglaries dropped from 802 in 2009 to 643 in 2010. Then, the number of burglaries increased to 1,102 in 2011, following the return of the tourism industry along the Gulf Coast. The crime rate increases were evident in tourist-dependent areas within Baldwin County, including Orange Beach and Gulf Shores. As Randy Foley, the deputy police chief of Foley said, “The tourism industry was almost nonexistent (in 2010), so you didn’t have tourists,” he said. ‘And the tourists attract the guys that prey on them’” (Kirby).

Although Bishop and others interviewed believe that the BP oil spill did not completely explain the increase in crime throughout Baldwin County, “Bishop, however, did note that the oil spill occurred during a period of sustained economic hardship. ‘You probably have a lot of people committing crimes who ordinarily wouldn’t,’ he said” (Kirby). Orange Beach Assistant Police Chief Greg Duck also added, “‘Just a gut feeling, what we’re seeing is the economy. We’ve got a lot of people out of work’” (Kirby). Therefore, economic desperation may drive people to commit crimes that they would otherwise not commit.

Major Anthony Lowery, a spokesman for the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office, said most crimes that are committed in Baldwin County, perhaps upward of 90 percent, are drug-related in one way or another. He compared the crimes committed in Baldwin County to “a never-ending cycle” (Kirby). Although crime in Mobile and its police jurisdiction declined from 2010 to 2011, crime did increase elsewhere in Baldwin County. Overall, 48 people died in the jurisdiction as a result of homicide, an increase from 33 the year before. Robberies, assaults, burglaries and thefts also increased throughout the county (Kirby).

Environmental Issues

Current environmental issues in Baldwin County draw attention to an apparent drug problem in the area. The Baldwin County Sewage System has seen a recent increase in levels of chemicals that come from the waste of meth production, as every pound of meth results in six to seven pounds of waste. Producers typically dump these chemicals into drains or flush it, sending the chemicals into the sewer system. These chemicals make it difficult to balance the treatment process. This is at least the third time that the plant has had contaminants related to meth waste (Barrentine).

Population growth has also impacted the environment, as the recent population increase

in Baldwin County has stimulated housing development. However, construction is taking place in both commercial and residential areas, leading new residents to purchase homes in rural farming communities. Although local government leaders are encouraging the economic growth, they are not considering the environmental impact of decreasing the amount of land that has been left for agricultural practices. As stated in the study, “High land values create an easy retirement for aging farmers who willingly sell their land to developers” (James 2). As the farmers sell the land to developers, construction firms are quickly converting the open fields into neighborhoods. This overdevelopment is an additional issue concerning the Baldwin County environment. The construction has led to environmental damage, including erosion and sedimentation, as a growth in population requires an increase in housing options for new residents. Development has also affected groundwater in the county, and nitrate levels recently exceeded federally recommended levels at multiple sites throughout Baldwin County (Busby).

Other environmental concerns for Baldwin County include natural disasters and flooding. These events were identified as environmental health priorities for the county in a recent report, *Rapid Community Health Needs Assessment Report Gulf Region Health Outreach Program: Primary Care Capacity Project - Alabama: Baldwin and Mobile County*. However, these issues differ from other environmental issues noted above, as these disasters are not exactly man-made but are still detrimental to the community when they occur.

Future Implications

In regards to possibilities for the future of Baldwin County, there are opportunities for economic development and growth to alleviate poverty in the area. However, as discussed throughout this paper, more economic growth in poorly paying industries and an increase in population may not be the best solution for poverty in Baldwin County. Many of the jobs that

exist within the region are not necessarily good jobs. Alternatively, the county needs more employment positions that offer benefits, living wages, and training. As this discussion has emphasized, economic development is not the same as poverty policy and programming. Baldwin County needs to realize the importance of investing in its citizens, which will hopefully be emphasized through further action and discussion within the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance.

The overall population growth has been detrimental to the towns and communities throughout the counties. Funding for education has been spread thin, as the overall budget provided by the state has not adjusted to the population growth in Baldwin County. The decrease in spending per student has led to a decrease in funding per student in the Baldwin County schools, ranking the school system as the second worst school system in the state in regards to funding per student. If educational quality decreases, children are not going to be prepared for the next grade level, but more importantly, they will not be prepared for the future.

The population growth has also contributed to the exponential increase in construction in the area, causing permanent harm to the environment. Construction firms quickly clear the land, causing erosion and damage to the watershed. These construction jobs are also attracting immigrants, which may be increasing racial tensions within the community.

Conclusion

Baldwin County, Alabama is a county full of southern traditions, religion, and Republican beliefs. The quaint towns and tourists are not the faces of southern poverty; a researcher must take a longer look to find the impoverished residents who live along dirt roads and work absurd hours for minimal pay. It is even more difficult to find the struggling minorities, who essentially become invisible to the outside world.

A strong tourism industry drives the economy, but tourism can also be a fragile industry due to natural disasters and accidents. As the county's economy continues to grow, Baldwin County will attract new residents who are tempted by the job opportunities and beautiful views. However, these jobs are not necessarily good for citizens trying to support a family. In summary, the economic growth may appear to be benefiting the county, but it may be doing more harm than good. Baldwin County needs to invest in its residents for the long run through multiple actions. Investments include finding additional funding for students, restricting housing developments to protect the environment and local residents, and working with the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance to create programs to assist those in poverty.

Bibliography

- "About Baldwin." *Baldwin County Alabama*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <http://www.baldwincountyal.gov/Pageview.asp?edit_id=64>.
- "About Fairhope." *City of Fairhope, AL*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.cofairhope.com/about-us>>.
- "About Us - About BCEDA." *Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance*. N.p., 2014. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.baldwineda.com/about-us/>>.
- "A Brief History of Gulf Shores." *City of Gulf Shores, Alabama*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.gulfshoresal.gov/Index.aspx?NID=412>>.
- "Alabama Gulf Coast Vacations." *Gulf Shores & Orange Beach*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.gulfshores.com/>>.
- Alabama Statistical Analysis Center. *Crime in Alabama 2012*. Rep. Montgomery: Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center, n.d. Print.
- "All About Daphne." *City of Daphne*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.daphneal.com/>>.
- "Baldwin County, Alabama (AL)." *City Data*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2014. <http://www.city-data.com/county/Baldwin_County-AL.html>.
- "Baldwin County, Alabama County Membership Report." *The Association of Religion Data Archives*. N.p., 2010. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/01/rcms2010_01003_county_name_2010.asp>.
- "Baldwin County QuickFacts." *QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau*. US Census Bureau, n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01/01003.html>>.
- "Baldwin County Weather." *Baldwin County, AL Weather*. USA.com, n.d. Web. 24 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.usa.com/baldwin-county-al-weather.htm>>.
- Barrentine, Matt. "Suspected Meth Manufacturing Contaminates Plant." *FOX10 News*. LIN Television Corp, 4 Mar. 2014. Web. 02 Apr. 2014. <<http://fox10tv.com/2014/03/03/suspected-meth-manufacturing-contaminating-plant/>>.
- "Bay Minette." *City of Bay Minette*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.cityofbayminette.org/>>.
- Busby, Guy. "BP Oil Spill's Biggest Impact Was on Baldwin County Economy, Not Environment." *Press-Register*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2011. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <http://blog.al.com/live/2011/03/oil_spills_biggest_impact_was.html>.

Busby, Guy. "More Environmental Problems Expected from Baldwin County Development." *Press-Register*. N.p., 29 Apr. 2009. Web. 02 Apr. 2014.
<http://blog.al.com/live/2009/04/more_environmental_problems_ex.html>.

"City of Spanish Fort - Get to Know Us." *City of Spanish Fort*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014.
<<http://www.cityofspanishfort.com/GettoKnowUs.aspx>>.

Dugan, Kelli. "5 Economic Trends Expected to Reshape Mobile in 2013." *Press-Register*. N.p., 30 Dec. 2012. Web. 21 Apr. 2014.
<http://blog.al.com/live/2012/12/5_economic_trends_expected_to.html>.

"Elberta, Alabama." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 27 Mar. 2014. Web. 27 Mar. 2014.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elberta%2C_Alabama>.

"Festival." *Elberta Fire Department - Elberta, AL*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014.
<<http://www.elbertafire.com/festival/>>.

"Fort Morgan." *Gulf Shores & Orange Beach*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2014.
<<http://www.gulfshores.com/details/fort-morgan/135/default.aspx>>.

James, Kayleigh, and Robert McAlister. *Land-Use Conflicts and Economic Growth in Baldwin County, AL: A Zero-Sum Game?* College of Agriculture - Auburn University. Michelle Worosz, n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2014.
<<http://www.ag.auburn.edu/agec/agrifood/teaching/MobileProject/documents/baldwin.pdf>>.

Kaetz, James P. "Orange Beach." *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. N.p., 29 May 2013. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-3368>>.

Kirby, Brendan. "Baldwin County Crime Spiked in 2011; Was Oil Spill a Factor?" *AL.com*. Alabama Media Group, 30 June 2012. Web. 07 Apr. 2014.
<http://blog.al.com/live/2012/06/baldwin_county_crime_spiked_in.html>.

Lichter, Daniel T., and Domenico Parisi. *Rural Realities*. Issue brief. Durham: Carsey Institute, 2008. Print.

Morton, Patricia H. "Baldwin County" *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. N.p., 26 Mar. 2013. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1303>>.

"Orange Beach, Alabama." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 27 Mar. 2014. Web. 27 Mar. 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Beach%2C_Alabama>.

Probst, Janice C., Charity G. Moore, Sandra H. Glover, and Michael E. Samuels. "Person and Place: The Compounding Effects of Race/Ethnicity and Rurality on Health." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, Oct. 2004. Web. 27 Apr. 2014.
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1448519/>>.

"Race and Ethnicity in Rural America." *Welcome to the Oregon Explorer!* N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Apr. 2014. <<http://oregonexplorer.info/rural/RaceandEthnicityRuralAmerica>>.

Rapid Community Health Needs Assessment Report Gulf Region Health Outreach Program: Primary Care Capacity Project - Alabama: Baldwin and Mobile County. Rep. Louisiana Public Health Institute, n.d. Web. <<http://lphi.org/CMSuploads/Coastal-Alabama-Rapid-Assessment-Report-42366.pdf>>.

Reed, Ted. "Exclusive: Union Says It Will Organize Airbus in Alabama, Try Again at Boeing." *The Street.* N.p., 21 Feb. 2014. Web. 27 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.thestreet.com/story/12426907/1/exclusive-union-says-it-will-organize-airbus-in-alabama-and-win-in-the-south.html>>.

Scheurich, Hal. "Baldwin County Strawberry Festival This Weekend." *Fox 10 TV.* Fox. Mobile, Alabama, 11 Apr. 2014. Television.

"School Future Struggle in Baldwin County." *Local 15.* NBC. Mobile Bay Area, Alabama, 2 Mar. 2014. *YouTube.* Web. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldlrJX10IUI>>.

"Selected Housing Characteristics 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates." *American FactFinder - Results.* N.p., 2012. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_DP04&prodType=table>.

"Sponsored Legislation." *Representative Bradley Byrne.* N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Apr. 2014. <<http://byrne.house.gov/legislation/sponsored-legislation>>.

Struckmeyer, Kurt. "Evangelical Christianity." *Evangelical Christianity.* N.p., 2007. Web. 27 Apr. 2014. <http://followingjesus.org/seekers/evangelical_christianity.htm>.

"The City of Mobile." *Welcome to the City of Mobile, Alabama.* City of Mobile, n.d. Web. 25 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.cityofmobile.org/index.php>>.

The Mobile Press-Register. "Alabama, Florida Economies Seem to Have Been Hit Hardest by Oil Spill, Survey Shows." *NOLA.com.* N.p., 21 Nov. 2010. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2010/11/alabama_florida_economies_seem.html>.

"Thomas Hospital." *Infirmiry Health.* N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.infirmiryhealth.org/hospitals/thomas-hospital>>.

"Welcome to the Town of Magnolia Springs, Alabama." *Town of Magnolia Springs.* N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.townofmagnoliasprings.org/>>.