

HandMade in America
SMALL TOWN
REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

NORTH CAROLINA
Established
1870

BAKERSVILLE

AN ARTISTS' SANCTUARY OF MAJESTIC
Natural Beauty

BAKERSVILLE at a Glance

Population (July, 2009):
343
(- 3.9% since 2000)

Median Age:
46.4 years

Median Household
Income (2008):
\$24,066

Median House/Condo
Value (2008):
\$129,209

Cost of Living Index (Dec. 2009):
86.9
(U.S. average is 100)

Zip Code: 28705



“In 1996 a small group of interested citizens saw the need to re-invent our town” explains Sue Ledford of the Bakersville Town Board. “ After several meetings over a period of many months, we realized what an undertaking this project was going to be.

Our Economic Development Commission director became aware of a new organization wanting to help small towns regain their economic, social, political, and heritage places. We jumped at the opportunity to join HandMade in America’s Small Towns program, becoming one of the four charter members.”

Civic leader Bob Hensley advises, “by nurturing and growing the leadership capabilities of the group and by bringing the several small towns together at a common table, HandMade created a network that in many senses



Bob Hensley stands outside of the newly renovated Mitchell County Courthouse. Hensley played a key role in the restoration project.

became greater than the sum of its parts.” Sue continues, “Through the program, Bakersville began plans for landscaping and the Bakersville Creekwalk.” Becoming a reality in 2000, the Creekwalk now has handicapped accessible fishing piers, a childrens’ ceramic tile wall, lighting and a metal bridge connecting the Creekwalk to a gazebo and pavilion. According to Sue, “HandMade



Inside the Crimson Laurel Art Gallery, visitors can find amazing local ceramics and glass that can't be found anywhere else.

helped Bakersville secure monies for these improvements, which have led to Bakersville becoming the home of the Bakersville Creekwalk Arts Festival, the Troutacular Festival, a Christmas Parade, Easter egg and scavenger hunt, among others. Because of HandMade and our local citizens’ belief in Bakersville, our downtown has been reborn with new and expanded businesses making us an art center.”

Support for artists

When asked why so many artists have made Bakersville their home, David Trophia, co-owner of the Crimson Laurel Gallery, explains, “it’s a perfect combination of geography, affordability and community: the beauty of the area in which we live, inexpensive land with low taxes and one of the largest concentrations of artists per capita in the United States.” This world-class gallery specializes in ceramics, featuring the products of over 175 local, regional and nationally recognized artists. Adds John



The Penland school has been instrumental in fostering the arts in Bakersville.

Lara, the gallery’s other owner, “Bakersville is a charming location with a welcoming lifestyle. Penland has no doubt been instrumental in attracting artists to the area who then chose to stay.” Just a few miles to the south, Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education that was founded in 1929. Each year, approximately 1,200 people come to Penland for instruction in textiles, clay, books and paper, drawing and painting, glass, iron, metals, photography, printmaking, and wood, while another 14,000 pass through as visitors. The Toe River Arts Council (TRAC), a non-profit organization founded in 1976 to promote the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, also provides community education, support, grants and stipends to area artists and organizes a twice-yearly studio tour featuring 70-80 studios and galleries.



Accomplishments: Bakersville renewal since 1999

- Creation of the Bakersville Creek Walk, now a first-class community recreational amenity with paved paths, lighting, pavilion, ceramic walls, handicapped accessible fishing piers and a walking bridge, hosting dozens of events each year.
- Installation of welcome signs, banners, street lighting, trees and landscaping.
- Renovation of the Historic Mitchell County Courthouse as a venue for education, small business support, historical preservation, and arts and cultural events for the entire community.

New Businesses and Jobs created:

13 new businesses came into town. 11 existing businesses saw an expansion. A total of 44 new jobs gained.

Market Analysis:

A Market Analysis conducted in 2010 identified business opportunities in retail, restaurants, entertainment and lodging. For a complete report, go to <http://handmadeinamerica.org/economic-development/small-town-revitalization>

Investments:

\$4,752,273 in public investments, and \$2,548,345 in private investments

Building Renovation:

43 Buildings Renovated and 30 facades redone.



Mitchell County Historic Courthouse Foundation Board of Directors Kick off Public Capital Campaign.

Renovated Mitchell County Historic Courthouse Energizes the Town

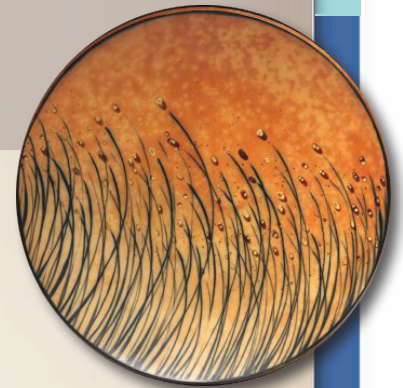
The beautiful Italianate-style stone Mitchell County Courthouse, built in 1907, was unoccupied and in disrepair after the opening of a new courthouse in 1993. The Bakersville Improvement Group (BIG), composed of business owners, artists and civic leaders, conceived a project to restore it and set up a foundation to handle renovation details and funding. In May of 2010, thanks to many years of hard work and generous funding from several North Carolina foundations and the people of Mitchell County, the Historic Courthouse

celebrated its Grand Opening as a multi use public building with state of the art teleconference, presentation and broadband technology applications. As Dr. Dan Barron, the Board Chair states, "We will make this a center for entrepreneurs that includes artists and crafts

people, agriculture workers, and knowledge-based career minded individuals and companies."

The marvelous mountain

A dozen miles to the north of Bakersville rises majestic Roan Mountain which, at 6,285 feet, is one of the highest peaks in the Appalachian range, and to many its most beautiful. Abounding in rare varieties of plants, such as Gray's Lily, discovered on its summit by Asa Gray in 1841, it is most widely known as the site of



In June, Roan Mountain puts on a spectacular display of Rhododendron in full bloom.

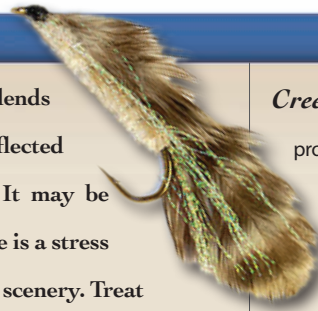
the world's largest natural Catawba Rhododendron gardens. Over 600 acres of rhododendron thickets

burst into such profuse full bloom in mid to late June of each year that the mountain sometimes appears pink or lavender when viewed from Bakersville. This spectacular display has been celebrated since 1947 with the town's annual Rhododendron Festival. The Roan's ecosystem, dominant in majestic spruce and fir trees, is of the type mostly found in Canada, with, unlike most of North Carolina, no snakes and thorn-less blackberry bushes. A fortunate few visitors are treated to the mountain's mysterious phenomena, a circular rainbow and the unearthly "mountain music," which on occasion hums its way across the balds.

"It's a perfect combination of geography, affordability, and community... one of the highest concentrations of artists... in the US"

- David Trophias, Co-Owner of Crimson Laurel Gallery, Bakersville.

Bakersville's high country landscape lends it a kind of dreamy feel, which is reflected in the art produced by area artists. It may be small, but it's not remote. Driving there is a stress reliever through spectacular mountain scenery. Treat yourself to a visit, and be sure you don't miss:



Galleries and Studios : Downtown Bakersville offers an eclectic group of galleries. The Bakersville Emporium and Anita's Atelier anchor the corner. Next door, Dot's Coffee Shop doubles as an art gallery. Crimson Laurel Gallery, recently nominated for a Niche award, specializes in high quality studio ceramics. Be sure and ask owners John and David about their renovation of



The Crimson Laurel Gallery plays host to a vast array of local art works from paintings & photographs, to ceramics & furniture.

this century old building that has housed a silent movie theater, a bowling alley and a general store and where some of the original record-keeping for the general store can still be found etched into the walls ascending the stairs. Lane markers, bowling scores, and IOU's are also visible. The gallery's entrance features framed pages from a tailor's catalog used to insulate the building and a framed playbill from an old movie. (crimsonlaurelgallery.com)



The artists of Bakersville are known around the nation for their inspiring work. Richard Ritter owner of Ritter Glass specializes in making highly detailed glassworks.

Creek Walk: Cane Creek runs through the middle of town and provides the accompaniment to a well used paved walk for walkers or recreational bikers. Every September it is transformed into a venue for the juried Creek Walk Arts Festival. (bakersvillefestival.com)



Ravenswood Pottery - Mike Labr & Dollie Letourneau. Just a sampling of the work that can be seen at Creek Walk Arts Fest.

Fishing: Bakersville offers many options for fishermen, young or old. Cane Creek is one of North Carolina's Mountain Heritage Trout Waters. (Ncwildlife.org).



The Troutacular Festival held in Bakersville is made specifically for kids to enjoy the thrill of Trout fishing.

Festivals, such as the Troutacular for kids aged 0-16 in June, and the BAIT (Bakersville Adventures In Trout Fishing) in October provide venues for arts, crafts, outdoor education, music, games and food. Don't know how



North Carolina Rhododendron Festival: two day festival featuring 10K run, street dance, crowning of the Rhododendron Queen, Creek Walk Arts Festival, car show, ducky derby and other creekside and downtown events. (bakersville.com/rhod-events)

to fish? Lessons are available.



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in AMERICA

