

**ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
GENERAL INFORMATION**

**LOCATION**

*St. Lucie County is located in the heart of the Treasure Coast about two-thirds of the way down the Atlantic Coast of Florida and encompasses an area of approximately 581 square miles. It is bordered on the North by Indian River County, on the West by Okeechobee County and on the South by Martin County. St. Lucie's 615.5 square miles contain three municipalities as well as acres of unincorporated territory containing subdivisions, light industry and agribusiness. St. Lucie's major cities, Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie, are located in an area that is recognized as the center of a transportation network ideally situated for distribution purposes. The county is positioned at a point where Interstate 95, Florida's Turnpike, U.S. Highway 1, the Port of Fort Pierce, St. Lucie International Airport, and Florida East Coast Railway are within ten miles of each other. The 1990 United States Census population of the county was 150,171 and the 1995 population estimate by the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research is 171,160. The principal industries of the county include tourism, agriculture, services, and light manufacturing.*

*Below is a table which shows the relative number of square miles of each incorporated municipality within the County and of the unincorporated areas of the County:*

<u>Land Area</u>	<u>Square Miles</u>
City of Port St. Lucie	80.0
City of Ft. Pierce	21.0
St. Lucie Village	1.5
Unincorporated Area	<u>513.0</u>
St. Lucie County Total	615.5

Source: Community Development Department, St. Lucie County.

## **GOVERNMENT**

*St. Lucie County, the 26th largest county (approximately 615.5 square miles) in the State. Incorporated areas within the county include the City of Fort Pierce, the City of Port St. Lucie and the Town of St. Lucie Village.*

### **St. Lucie County**

*St. Lucie County, which is managed by a professional administrator, is governed by a five-member board of commissioners. Besides serving as the County Commission, the five-member board also sits as the local "Port and Airport Authority," the "Beach Erosion District," and the "Mosquito Control District."*

*While each commissioner represents a specific district, elections are on a county-wide basis. Each commissioner serves a four-year term, and the elections are partisan in nature. Their terms are staggered.*

### **City of Fort Pierce**

*Fort Pierce serves as the county seat of St. Lucie County. It is run by a five-member city commission which employs a professional city manager. A mayor-commissioner is the presiding elected official.*

*Although it was incorporated in 1901, Fort Pierce's history begins in 1837 during the Seminole Indian War. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Benjamin Kendrick Pierce established the original fort which was used as the army's headquarters in the war. After seven years of fighting, the Seminoles took refuge in the Everglades in 1842. This event left Fort Pierce free to develop as a permanent settlement.*

*Water transportation, fishing and canning of fish were key to the area's early economy. Pineapple was once the major crop, but was replaced by citrus. As the City matured and with the advent of the railroad, Fort Pierce developed into the economic and commercial hub of the Treasure Coast.*

*Today, Fort Pierce continues as the area's commercial center. In 1985, the immediate Fort Pierce area claimed 45% of the Treasure Coast's retail sales. Its transportation network has grown to include Interstate 95, the Florida Turnpike, Highway 70 and the St. Lucie County International Airport.*

*Two commissioners represent the City's northside and two the southside. However, each commission race, as well as that for mayor-commissioner, is decided by a city-wide vote.*

### **City of Port St. Lucie**

*The City of Port St. Lucie (the "City") is a residential community in the southern part of St. Lucie County, Florida, and was incorporated in 1961. The City encompasses approximately 80 square miles of the 615.5 square miles of St. Lucie County and is located on the southeastern coastline of the State of Florida. The City is located one hundred miles north of Miami, 50 miles north of West Palm Beach and about 65 miles south of Melbourne. The City is served by three major north-south Florida highways: Interstate 95, the Florida Turnpike, and U.S. Highway 1.*

*Currently more than one-third of St. Lucie County's population is within the City, less than one-third is in the City of Ft. Pierce, and the balance of the County's population resides in the unincorporated area of the County. In 1970, the City boasted only 330 residents. By 1980 the population increased to 15,000 and by 1990 more than 53,144.*

*The City is governed by a five-member city council presided over by a mayor-commissioner. There is also a city manager who acts as the chief administrative officer and is responsible to the council.*

### **Fort Pierce Utilities Authority**

*This totally independent body is responsible for administering the City's electric, water, gas and sewage services. Its five-member policy board consists of four city commission appointees and the mayor. Each appointee serves a four-year term. Chief administrator for the Authority is a professional Utilities Director.*

### **St. Lucie Village**

*This community stretching along the Indian River is located just north of Fort Pierce off Old Dixie Highway. A five-member board of aldermen and a major are responsible for governing the small residential community.*

## **EDUCATION**

### **Public Schools**

*The public school system is county-wide with 18 elementary schools (grades K-5), four middle schools (grades 6-8), and four high schools. St. Lucie County also has one exceptional student education center and two alternative schools. It employs approximately 1,500 classroom teachers and 1,100 non-teachers and has a five-member board who serve four-year terms and are elected to office. The superintendent is appointed by the school board. All St. Lucie County schools were accredited in 1983 by the Southern Association of Secondary Schools.*

*Kindergarten is mandatory for five-year olds. Items needed to enroll are acceptable evidence of birth, doctor's physical statement, proof of immunization for four polio, one measles, mumps, rubella shot and four diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus shots. Exceptions are religious conflicts.*

*The total enrollment for the 1994-95 school year is as follows: total elementary 13,250; total middle 5,271; total high school 6,090; total of exceptional students 1,485; giving a grand total of 26,096 students.*

### **Higher Education - Indian River Community College**

*Indian River Community College ("IRCC") is a public two-year college located on the Treasure Coast serving St. Lucie, Martin, Indian River, and Okeechobee Counties.*

*During the 1994-95 school year, more than 45,000 students of all ages and interests attended classes at IRCC. The "open-door-admissions policy" in effect at IRCC guarantees admission to anyone with a high school diploma.*

*The IRCC main campus is located on Virginia Avenue in Fort Pierce. Special points of interest on the IRCC main campus include the McAlpin Fine Arts Center, which houses a professional-quality theater and FM radio station WQCS, a world-class aquatics complex, and the most complete and up-to-date computer education facility in the area. In the Fall of 1995, a joint library between IRCC, Florida Atlantic University ("FAU") and St. Lucie County.*

*IRCC students have scored at the top of the State on the College Level Academic Skills Test ("CLAST"). IRCC*

*also has the highest rates in the State in the placement of vocational certificate programs, several short-term training programs, and more than a thousand different courses each semester. The Quad County Tech Prep program implemented by IRCC and the counties of St. Lucie, Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee was rated as the number one program of its kind by the U.S. Department of Education.*

*IRCC opened the IRCC St. Lucie West Center in St. Lucie West on 40 acres adjacent to the branch campus of FAU. Under state law, IRCC students receiving their associate degree from IRCC are guaranteed placement in a 4-year State university. However, IRCC also has a similar agreement with Barry University, which represents the first joint effort of this type by a public community college and private university in the State, and provides area residents with broad access to a variety of four-year degree programs.*

### **Florida Atlantic University**

*FAU has operated a branch campus in St. Lucie County for more than twenty years. In December, 1994, FAU moved its branch campus from the IRCC main campus in Ft. Pierce to its new location on fifty acres in St. Lucie West. The branch campus currently serves about 400 students, while the entire university serves 2,400 students.*

### **Barry University**

*On January 6, 1992, Barry University opened a branch campus in the western part of the County.*

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

### **St. Lucie County**

*As of July 1, 1995, the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department consisted of 485 full-time personnel, of which 200 are officers and road patrolmen. The department also has a detective bureau. It has the most up-to-date and best equipment available, an excellent identification bureau, and a crime lab. The sheriff is an elected official, who serves a four-year term.*

### **Fort Pierce**

*The City's police force has a full-time professional chief and 140 personnel with an allotment of 108 commissioned officers. The City also has an auxiliary police force consisting of 16 active local citizens (the police force is allotted 25 auxiliary positions) who donate their time to the betterment of law enforcement in the community. There is a seven-member S.W.A.T. Team. The police personnel are kept alert to modern methods by in-service training and courses at Indian River community College.*

### **Port St. Lucie**

*Port St. Lucie's police force is composed of approximately 175 personnel of which 100 are commissioned officers. The City also has a four-office investigative division and an auxiliary or reserve force of three. The police personnel are also kept alert to modern methods through training at Indian River Community College and external seminars.*

*The police department was accredited by the CALEA on November 16, 1991. The police department was the 193rd agency in the nation to become accredited and the first in St. Lucie County.*

*There are a number of programs offered to residents by the police department: a close patrol plan of homes belonging to seasonal residents, an infant car seat loan program, and an active neighborhood crime watch program.*

### **FIRE PROTECTION**

*The St. Lucie County-Fort Pierce Fire District provides fire protection for all of St. Lucie County. The fire department is manned by 250 full-time personnel. There are 12 stations spread throughout the County. Currently, there are also 12 full-time workers in the fire prevention bureau and training division with authorization to expand to 15 by the end of 1995.*

## **AIRPORT TRAFFIC**

*The St. Lucie County International Airport is located nearby Fort Pierce and presently has four runways. The airport has two 200 foot wide runways and connecting taxiways which are all in good condition; one 5,000 feet and one 6,500 feet. The east-west runway is lighted for night operations. There is a rotating beacon and a non-directional radio homer beacon. The FAA has constructed a control tower at the airport which began operation in November 1987. There is a direct telephone line to the flight service station. Gas and oil are available as well as major and minor repairs, hangar facilities and tiedowns. U.S. Customs, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Services are based at the airport to accommodate international traffic. The airport is shown on all aeronautical charts and airport information manuals. All roads leading to the airport are paved.*