

City of Niles

History

Four different flags have flown over Niles since the first explorers entered the area. In 1684, French Jesuit missionaries came to work among the Miami and Potawatomi Indians. Seven years later in 1691, Fort St. Joseph was built on the banks of the St. Joseph River. In 1761, the French surrendered this fort, the future site of the City of Niles, to the British. In 1762, however, France ceded Spain all its rights along the Mississippi River as far north as St. Louis. This prompted 65 members of the Spanish militia and 60 Indians to fight the British still established in the area. After capturing Fort St. Joseph in 1781, the Spanish flag was raised. Not long after this capture, however, the militia decided to return to St. Louis and the Spanish flag was lowered. The fourth and final flag began to fly over the area in 1783 when the Americans took over the fort and raised the Stars and Stripes.

It was not until the early 1820's that the first settlers came to the Niles area. On August 1, 1829, the Village of Niles was platted and was incorporated as a city in 1835.

The Four Flags Area gave birth to some prime figures in American history, including Aaron Montgomery Ward, founder of the famous mail order business; Dr. Fred Bonine, a well known eye specialist with a worldwide practice; and John and Horace Dodge, makers of the first Dodge automobile. Through the years, Niles has changed from a rural village to an industrial center with several of the City's early industries still present.

Fort St. Joseph was a vibrant center of social, political, economic, and religious activity during the colonial period in southwest Michigan.

Nestled along the St. Joseph River in what is now the city of Niles, the fort was founded by the French in 1691 and served as a mission, garrison, and trading post for nearly a century. By the 1730's, Fort St. Joseph had become one of the most important colonial outposts in the western Great Lakes, frequently visited by local Potawatomi and Miami Indian trading partners who lived nearby. It was a vital link in the communications network of New France and played a major commercial role, accounting for a significant volume of furs acquired from Native Americans in exchange for European commodities like glass beads, textiles, iron knives, and brass kettles.

Despite the significance of the fort in the history of early European settlement in the region, Fort St. Joseph remains understudied by professionals and is relatively unknown to the public. For example, there are no detailed maps or drawings that show the size and configuration of the palisade, nor is it known how many structures were built at the site, how they were distributed, or what they looked like. Even the exact location of the fort had eluded archaeologists until recently.

In 2002, excavations by Western Michigan University archaeologists, in partnership with Support the Fort and the City of Niles, identified intact evidence of the Fort St. Joseph community. The evidence consists of structural remains (e.g., a fireplace and a hearth) and other landscape features including a pit filled with carbonized corncobs and a gunsmith's repair kit. These activity areas are associated with 18th century artifacts, animal bones from colonial meals, and architectural remains such as hand wrought nails that were recovered from throughout the excavations.

The archaeology will continue well into the future as there is much to learn from the material remains of Fort St. Joseph.

Observations

The City of Niles, which covers about 5.8 square miles, is ideally located halfway between Detroit and Chicago, on two major U.S. highways. It has good access to large markets in South Bend, Kalamazoo, Michigan City, Indianapolis and Chicago. Consequently, the City is an industrial center with major cooperative efforts flourishing to encourage further development in the City and surrounding municipalities. The downtown center exudes the friendly atmosphere of a typical small American town. The community enjoys good educational opportunities with a solid public school system and some of the nation's foremost private universities nearby.

Community Vision

- Attract high-tech industry to the incubator zone.
- Improve transportation access for future development.
- Enhance and improve water and sewer services to accommodate the larger industries.

All Demographic Information is based upon the 2009 Census Estimate

Population

1980 Census	13,115	
1990 Census	12,458	5.02 % decrease
2000 Census	12,204	0.97 % decrease
2009 Census Estimate	11,272	7.64 % decrease

Personal Income

Median Family	\$38,324.00
Average per Capita	\$17,203.00
Median Household	\$31,829.00

Labor Force

Total Work Force	5,417
Unemployment Rate	11.8 %

Principal Economic Base Employers

Lakeland Hospital	490 Employees
Michiana Box & Crate	100 Employees
Modineer.....	434 Employees
National Standard	150 Employees
Niles Community Schools	250 Employees
Tem-Pace	120 Employees

Housing

Number of Dwellings	5,148
Owner Occupied	2,661
Renter Occupied	1,840
Median Rent	\$533
Median Home Value	\$88,900

Building Permits – 2010

	Number Issued	Dollar Amount
Commercial	21	\$1,200,405.00
Industrial	1	\$36,000.00
Other	225	\$1,248,801.00
Total	247	\$2,485,206.00

Government

Municipal Hall

Niles City Hall
508 East Main Street
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 683-4700
Fax: (269) 684-3930
Website: www.ci.niles.mi.us

Council Meetings

Second and Fourth Monday of each month
Start: 6:00 p.m.

County Commissioner

Zach Perkins
(District 13)
546 Grant Street
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 357-9266
z@nilescommish.com

State Governor

Rick Snyder (R)
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: (517) 373-3400
Fax: (517) 335-6863
Rick.Snyder@michigan.gov

State Senator

John Proos (R), District 21
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Phone: (517) 373-6960
Fax: (517) 373-0897
SenJProos@senate.michigan.gov

State Representative

Sharon Tyler (R), District 78
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
Phone: (517) 373-1796
Fax: (517) 373-5918
sharontyler@house.mi.gov

U.S. Representative

Fred Upton, 6th Congressional District
2183 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3761
Fax: (202) 225-4986
tellupton@mail.house.gov

U.S. Senators

Debbie Stabenow (D)
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4822
stabenow.senate.gov/email.htm

Carl Levin (D)
269 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6221
levin.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm
Access via website Contact Center

Education

The City of Niles is served by the following school district:

Niles Community Schools
111 Spruce Street
Niles MI 49120
Phone: (269) 683-0732
Enrollment: 3,835



Taxes

In March 1994, Michigan voters approved a new tax structure (Proposal A). The following table provides a simplistic look at the taxes currently levied within this community. Property tax is based now upon taxable value, not state equalized value.

General Taxes

General County	4.7723
Law Enf/ Public Safety	0.3500
Special Voted 911	0.2500
Senior Citizens	0.3000
LMC College	1.7854
City	14.1334
Special Voted	0.5000
Subtotal	22.0911

School Taxes

	Niles
State Education Tax	6.0000
Non-Homestead (Business)	18.0000
Extra Voted Building & Site	1.0000
Debt Retirement	0.0000
Berrien RESA	0.1745
Special Education	2.1954

Subtotals

Homestead	9.3699
Non-Homestead (Business)	27.3699

Chamber of Commerce

Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 10
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 683-3721



Public Services

Police

Chief of Police: Richard Huff
Phone: (269) 683-1313
Sworn Officers: 22
Civilian Employees: 12
Number of Cars: 15

Fire

Fire Chief: Larry Lamb
Phone: (269) 683-0160
Number of Stations: 1
Professional Firemen: 14
Part-Time Paid: 19
Volunteers: 0
Insurance Rate Class: 5

Trash Collection

Contact City Hall for referrals
Phone: (269) 683-4700
Type: Independent Contracts

Recycling

Berrien County Community Development
Jill Adams, Environmental Specialist
(269) 983-7111 Ext. 8234
Program information available online at
www.berriencounty.org/recycle.

Water

City Utilities Department
Phone: (269) 683-4700
Source: Municipal Wells
Capacity: 6,000,000 GPD

Sewer

Niles WWTP
Phone: (269) 683-4700
System Type: Secondary
Capacity: 5,800,000 GPD

Telephone

A T & T
Residential Customers (800) 244-4444
Business Customers (800) 660-3000

Gas

Semco Energy Company
Phone: (800) 624-2019

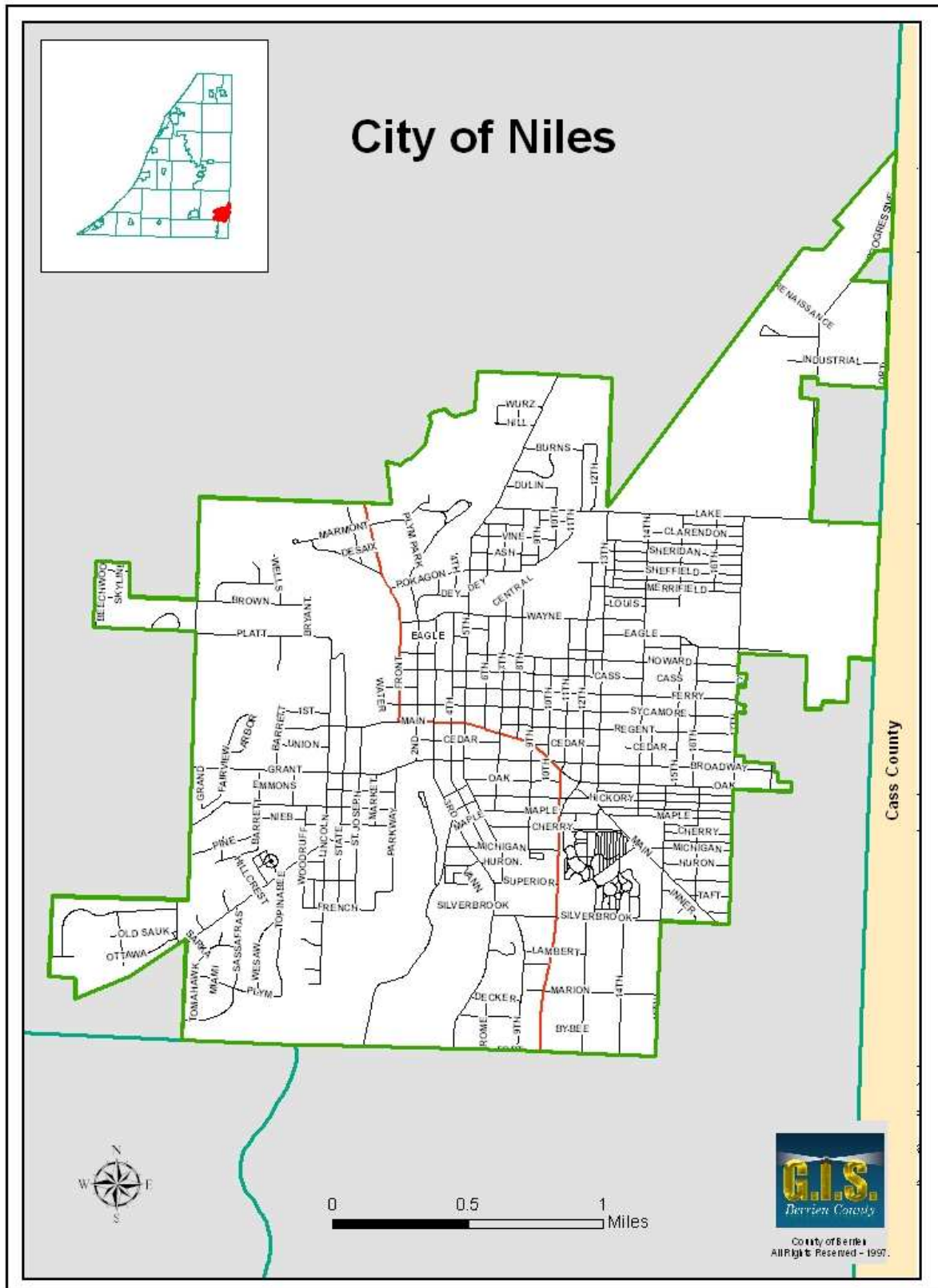
Electric

American Electric Power Company
Phone: (800) 311-6424

Economic Development

Berrien County Community Development Department
701 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085
Contact: Daniel Fette, Director
Phone: (269) 983-7111, Ext. 8617

Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance
Shelley Klug, Executive Director
1950 Industrial Drive
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 683-1833



This Community Snapshot has been prepared by the Berrien County Community Development Department. For more detailed information on services available in Berrien County, please visit our website at www.berriencounty.org/CommunityDevelopment.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information. However, as data is constantly changing, Berrien County will be held harmless for any omissions or errors contained herein.