



City of Niles

Guide to Development

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Contact Information

City of Niles General Contact Information

- **City Administration**
Address: 333 N 2nd St., Ste 301 Niles, MI 49120
Phone: 1-269-683-4700 Ext. 3011
Email: AdminEA@nilesmi.org
- **City Clerk's Office**
Phone: 1-269-683-4700 Ext. 3030
Email: CityClerk@nilesmi.org

Development-related Contact Information

- **Zoning Administrator:** communitydevelopment@nilesmi.org
- **Department of Public Works:** DPWdirector@nilesmi.org
- **Fire Department:** FireChief@nilesmi.org
- **Police Department:** PoliceExecAssistant@nilesmi.org
- **Utilities Department:** UtilitiesEA@nilesmi.org
- **Building Safety Division:** buildingsafety@nilesmi.org
- **Assessing Division:** assessor@nilesmi.org

For more contact information, visit [this webpage](#)

Boards and Commissions

Approval Authorities

Throughout the development project, different boards and commissions play a part in the review and approval process. Before starting a development project, it is important that the developer, residents, and business owners understand which boards and commissions hold approval authority over different stages of the project. The table below visualizes who makes recommendations [O] and who provides final approval [X].

	Zoning Administrator	Planning Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals	City Council
Site Plan Review	O	X		
Special Land Use	O	X		
Variance	O		X	
Appeal	O		X	
Rezoning	O	O		X

Boards & Commissions Meeting Schedules

- **Planning Commission:** Every 4th Wednesday, 5:30 PM in Niles City Hall, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI.
- **Downtown Development Authority:** Every 3rd Monday, 4:30 PM in Niles City Hall, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI.
- **City Council:** Every 2nd and 4th Monday, 6:00 PM in Niles Council Chambers, 1345 E. Main St. Niles, MI.
For more information on attending a City Council meeting, click [here](#).
- **Brownfield Redevelopment Authority:** Every 3rd Tuesday, 4:00 PM in Niles City Hall, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI.
- **Historic District Commission:** Every 2nd Tuesday, 5:30 PM in Niles City Hall, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI.

Special Meetings

ZBA will hold a meeting upon request. In order to request a meeting with any of these boards, please contact the zoning administrator to schedule a meeting at communitydevelopment@nilesmi.org

- **Zoning Board of Appeal:** Upon request at Niles City Hall, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI.

Paths to Development

Conceptual Review Meeting

The City of Niles staff is more than happy to sit down and discuss the proposed development with potential applicants. Prior to beginning this process, please view the list below to ensure a smooth approval process. This list will facilitate a comprehensive meeting.

Please ensure that the following items are known or available for the meeting:

- Location
- Existing Use
- Intended Development (Residential, Retail, Commercial, etc.)
- Preliminary sketches
- Surrounding land uses

Each of these items will help City of Niles staff provide initial feedback to the applicant, cover any potential issues or incentives, and make the review process simpler for all parties involved.

Site Plan Review Checklist

Once Conceptual Review Meeting has taken place, please [download](#) and fill out the **Site Plan Review Checklist** outlines what will be required when you submit your formal drawings and request for review and zoning approval. Each item on the checklist **MUST** have a response. If you elect to use NA, you must explain why it is NA.

Site Plan Review Application and all items included must be submitted by the end of the **1st week of any given month by 11 AM. Two (2) full-size color site plans and a pdf version** must be submitted with a check for **\$1,000.00** to: City of Niles, MI Attn: Community Development Dept. City of Niles, 333 N 2nd St. Niles, MI 49120



Site Plan Submission Meeting

In order to better help you understand our process and to work out most locally approved issues, the City of Niles requires a Site Plan Submission Meeting **within 1 business week of Site Plan submission** with our staff who will review the preliminary plan and provide input on requirements. After this meeting, staff will provide your team with necessary and recommended updates. Your architect/engineer will then need to update the plans and/or Site Plan Review Checklist and resubmit it by the **3rd Monday of the month**.

To schedule a site plan submission meeting, please contact the zoning administrator at communitydevelopment@nilesmi.org or 1-269-683-4700 Ext. 3020 within 1 week of the submission of the site plan.

Included in the Site plan submission meeting are

- **Zoning Administrator:** Ryan Millin: communitydevelopment@nilesmi.org
- **Building Official:** buildingofficial@nilesmi.org
- **Public Safety Chief:** Jim Millin: NilesPSD@nilesmi.org
- **Fire Marshal:** Rory Iwaniuk: firemarshal@nilesmi.org
- **Utilities Manager:** Jeff Dunlap: utilitiesmanager@nilesmi.org
- **Assistant Utilities Manager** (Electric/Water/Wastewater): AsstUtilMgr@nilesmi.org
- **Public Works Director:** Joe Ray: DPWdirector@nilesmi.org
- **City Administrator:** Ric Huff: cityadministrator@nilesmi.org

The following individuals must attend:

- **The property owner;** if different from the applicant, may send a certified statement of agreement to the project
- **The applicant** if different from the owner
- **The architect or engineer** of record for the project

Special Land Use

Some development projects with certain operational characteristics may not be compatible with all locations within the zoning district. These uses of land require additional review from the planning commission based on the zoning ordinance.

To start this process, please fill out [Special Land Use Application](#) and submit it to the zoning administrator.

Once the application is submitted and the fee is paid (see [Fee Schedule](#)), the zoning administrator will forward the application to the planning commission along with a report within 30 days of submission. The zoning administrator will also place the review workshop in the planning commission's meeting agenda. This meeting is an opportunity for the planning commission to review the application and question the applicant about the special land use.

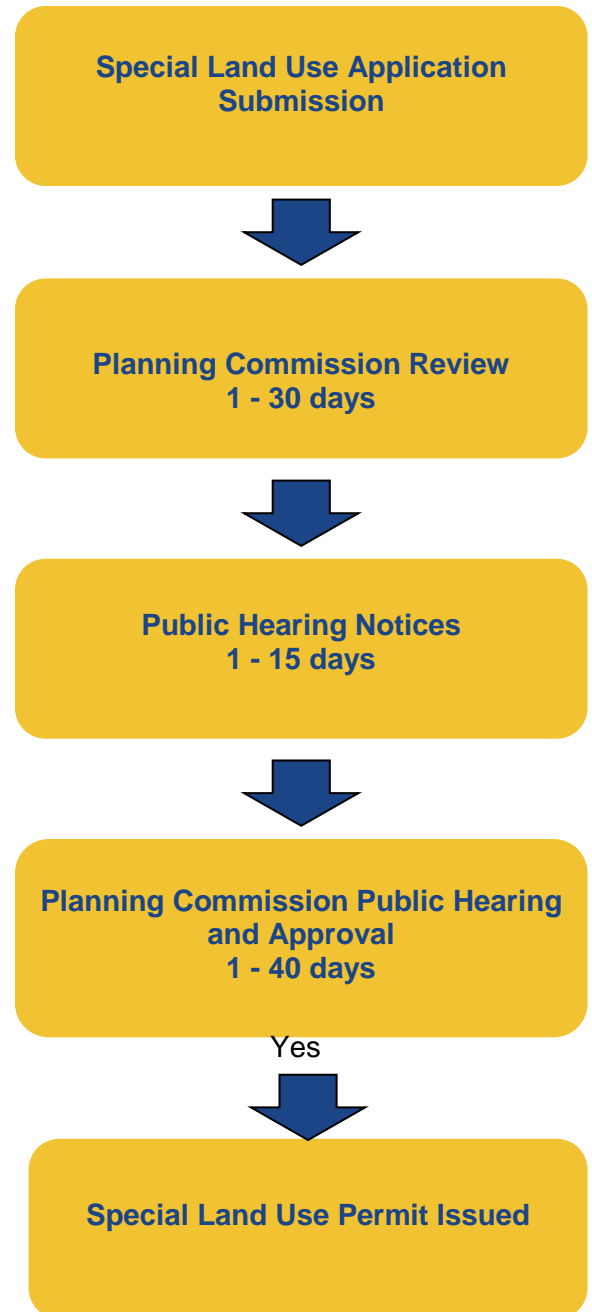
Once the planning commission concurs that the application is complete, a public hearing will be scheduled. For a detailed public hearing procedure, go to page 9. After the public hearing, the planning commission reviews the application and reaches a decision within 40 days of the public hearing.

If approved, the zoning administrator will issue the special use permit, along with any conditions of approval deemed necessary.

Upon approval of special land use, the developer can apply for a building permit.

To determine whether a Special Land Use application is required for your project, see Table 4-2 in **Article Four of the [Zoning Ordinance](#)**.

For more detailed steps of the Special Land Use process, see: [Check List # 5: For Processing Zoning Special Use Permit in Michigan](#) Article 8 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#)



Variance

Variances are permissions or approvals of specific features and measurements on a property that are not aligned with the standards set in the zoning ordinance. Variances permit minor changes to dimensional regulations.

To start this process, please fill out [Variance Application](#) and submit it to the zoning administrator, who will forward it to the Zoning Board of Appeal. Once the application is submitted and the fee is paid (see [Fee Schedule](#)), the zoning administrator will schedule a public hearing. For a detailed public hearing procedure, go to page 9.

After the public hearing, the ZBA will reach a decision during a ZBA workshop, with any condition necessary. The applicant will be notified of the decision within 40 days of the public hearing.

The variance is effective for 12 months upon approval unless otherwise specified in section 1201 of the zoning ordinance.



To see a detailed application process for variances, see Article 12 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#).

For more detailed steps of the variance process, see:
[Check List # 6: For Processing a Zoning Appeal and Variance in Michigan](#)

Public Hearings and Notices

Special Land Use

Once the planning commission concurs that the application is complete, a public hearing will be scheduled on planning commission's agenda.

Notice of hearing delivered and published no less than 15 days before the hearing:

- On the newspaper of general circulation in the city of Niles
- The property owner
- All persons to whom real property is assessed within 300 ft of the boundary of the property in question
- all occupants of each dwelling unit owned or leased by different persons within 300 ft of the boundary of the property
- Utilities companies that serve in the project area (electric, gas, water, railways, etc.)

Notice includes:

- Description of the Special Use request
- General description of the property
- Date, time and location of the public hearing
- The time and location for written comments to be received concerning the special use application

Variance

Upon receipt of a complete application, the ZBA will fix a reasonable time of the hearing of an appeal or a request for a variance.

Notice of hearing delivered and published no less than 15 days before the hearing:

- On the newspaper of general circulation in the city of Niles
- The property owner
- All persons to whom real property is assessed within 300 ft of the boundary of the property in question
- all occupants of each dwelling unit owned or leased by different persons within 300 ft of the boundary of the property
- Utilities companies that serve the project area (electric, gas, water, railways, etc.)

Notice includes:

- Written notice stating the nature of the interpretation request
- General description of the property
- Date, time, and location of the public hearing

Rezoning

Once the rezoning petition has been submitted to the zoning administrator, the petition will be placed on the Planning Commission's agenda for review during a regular meeting. During their initial review of the request, the Planning Commission will schedule a public hearing for input on the proposed changes to the zoning ordinance.

Following the Planning Commission's public hearing, the board will make a formal recommendation to the City Council to adopt or reject the proposed zoning amendment.

Unless the City Council decides to consult a professional opinion on the proposed change, the zoning petition is generally reviewed during the next regular meeting. Following the first reading, the Council may schedule and hold a public hearing, and then vote on the proposed changes after the public hearing and second reading. The council may:

1. Approve the amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. The notice must be published in a paper within 15 days of adoption before the change goes into effect
2. Deny the request; decisions may not be appealed to the ZBA.

To start a rezoning petition process, please contact zoning administrator at communitydevelopment@nilesmi.org



For more detailed steps of the rezoning process, see [Check List # 4: For Adoption of a Zoning Ordinance Amendment in Michigan](#)

Development Resources

Zoning Ordinance and Map

Please carefully review the following [Zoning Ordinance](#) articles/sections:

- Article 3-11: Lighting
- Article 3-16: Landscaping & Buffering
- Article 5: Zoning Districts
- Article 6: Parking
- Article 10: Site Plan Review

The zoning ordinance was developed to establish zoning districts and regulations in accordance with the provisions of Act 207 of the Public Acts of 1921, as amended; to define certain terms used herein; to provide for regulations governing nonconforming uses and structures; to establish a Zoning Board of Appeals and define its duties and powers; to provide for the administration and enforcement of this Ordinance and to provide penalties for the violation of this Ordinance.

The fundamental purpose of this Ordinance is to promote public health, safety, morals, and general welfare; to encourage the use of lands and natural resources in accordance with their character and adaptability; to limit the improper use of land; to provide for the orderly development of the City; to reduce the hazard to life and property; to establish the location and size of, and the specific uses for which structures may hereafter be erected or altered, and the minimum open spaces, sanitary, safety and protective measures that shall be required for such structures; to lessen congestion on the public roads and streets; to provide safety in traffic and vehicular parking; to facilitate the development of an adequate water supply and other public requirements; to conserve life, property and natural resources, and the expenditure of funds for public improvements and services; to conform with the most advantageous uses of land, resources, and properties.

To view designated zoning districts within the city of Niles, see [Niles Zoning Map](#).

Master Plan

[Master Plan](#) summarizes Niles' future plans for development and redevelopment. It serves as the official policy statement for land use, transportation, infrastructure, and other city services. Additionally, the Master Plan connects Niles' plans to the plans of other communities in the Southwest Michigan region.

Fee Schedule

[Fee Schedule](#) provides any development-related fees. This fee schedule is updated every year by the city council.

Building permit

Following approval of a site plan, the applicant shall be eligible to apply for all appropriate building permits through the building safety division. Please fill out the [Building Permit Application](#) and submit it to the building safety division.

For questions regarding the building permit, please call 269-683-2374 ext. 5050 or e-mail buildingsafety@nilesmi.org

[Building permit fees](#) list any fees associated with filing a building permit.

Development Incentives Tools

A wide range of development incentive tools may be available to a project at federal, state, and local levels. To be eligible, projects must be in compliance with the zoning ordinance in a harmonious manner with the Master Plan. Some development Incentive Tools are listed below. For detailed information, see [City of Niles Development Incentive Tools Page](#)

Brownfield

- Land Disposition Policy
- State and City Brownfield TIF

Industry/Commercial

- Industry Property Tax Abatement
- Revolving Loan Fund (Gap Financing)
- OPRA
- Commercial Rehabilitation Act
- Commercial Redevelopment Act

Housing

- Attainable Housing Facilities Act
- Neighborhood Enterprise Zone

Design Guidelines

- Residential Facilities Exemption Act
- PILOTs

Downtown

- Facade Improvement Program

Historic Preservation

- Federal Tax Credit
- Michigan Historic Preservation Tax Credit

Non-Financials

- Off-Street Parking Reductions
- Reduced Setbacks
- Resources Connections

[Design Guidelines](#) offers some basic, straightforward advice to merchants, property owners, and others involved in improving the downtown. It contains a brief discussion of the importance of the design elements being examined. Those wishing to take advantage of special financial incentives, such as the Downtown Development Authority's Revolving Loan Fund Program, must comply with the City of Niles Downtown Design Guidelines.

Other Forms and Applications

- [Niles Zoning Map](#)
- [11th Street Overlay & Map](#)
- [Land Division Application Processing & Routing Sheet](#)
- [Sign Permit Application](#)
- [Site Plan Review Checklist](#)
- [Special Land Use Application](#)
- [Variance Application](#)
- [Zoning Compliance Application](#)
- [Niles Zoning Ordinance](#)
- [Application: Chickens, Horses, Goats](#)