

# City of Benton Harbor

## History

The history of Benton Harbor began with the purchase of 160 acres of land by Eleazar Morton in a portion of Benton Township. In 1836, he moved his family into a log cabin on high ground west of Ox Creek. Morton and his son, Henry, planted orchards and prospered from the sale of fruit. In 1849, the Morton family moved into a new home that still stands at 501 Territorial Street as a proud reminder of the City's founder.

To establish a market for the convenience of farmers on the East side of the St. Joseph River, Sterne Brunson, along with Charles Hull and Henry Morton, undertook the building of a mile-long canal through the wetland between the River and the future city of Benton Harbor. Because of this well-known resident's venture, the town was founded as Brunson Harbor in 1860.

Brunson Harbor became Benton Harbor in 1865. The new settlement grew rapidly and was incorporated as a village in 1866. The canal had made Benton Harbor a lake port and by the 1870's, ships were loading more than 300,000 packages of fruit per year. Sawmills and basket factories lined the canal. The establishment of a High School, college, street railway, opera house and a national bank all between the years of 1872 to 1888 indicated evidence of rapid growth. By 1891, the time had come for incorporation as a city and a charter was granted by the state legislature.

In the 1890's, huge numbers of tourists deluged the area seeking relaxation and amusement. Numerous hotels offered mineral baths as they were believed to have health benefits. In 1903, Benjamin and Mary Purnell founded the Israelite House of David, a communal society. Located on a large tract of land east of the city, their amusement park and baseball team became famous nationwide and attracted thousands of visitors.

In 1905, the Benton Harbor Development Company was organized to attract industries to the City. Land grants and financial aid induced numerous industries to locate in the city. The Roaring Twenties were boom years and inspired the building of new hotels, office buildings, schools and churches.

Beginning in the 1960's, Benton Harbor began to decline. Industries and residents moved out of the City due to problems that were being experienced nationwide in inner-city environments. The deterioration continued to escalate until the late 1980's. In 1986, Benton Harbor became the focus of state government attention and was designated as an Enterprise Zone. This program provided substantial incentives for business location and was the basis for the renewal of Benton Harbor. The City of Benton Harbor also received one of four Renaissance Zone designations in 1997 in the State of Michigan. The City has beautifully developed its St. Joseph River waterfront. Many other developments, including the newly designated Arts District and Harbor Shores, are encouraging the rebirth of this once vital city.

## Observations

Benton Harbor is a true center for intermodal transportation. Industries have easy shipping access to Lake Michigan and beyond the City's commercial port. The Southwestern Michigan Regional Airport is an excellent facility available to personal and corporate aircraft. Benton Harbor is halfway between Detroit and Chicago, with Interstates 94 and 196 providing convenient access to more than 50% of the nation's major markets. CSX Rail Line and Amtrak run through the City.

For commercial and industrial entrepreneurs, Benton Harbor is a choice location because it has been designated as an Enterprise Zone. The Renaissance Zone has encouraged an increase in business activity. It provides tax abatements on real and personal property taxes.

The City of Benton Harbor's aggressive approach to training its workforce has created a new outlook for its future. The City is working with business organizations, local schools and State government to form a Workforce Development Consortium enabling economic development. This consortium will serve the needs of the City's unemployed and underemployed population.

Under the leadership of progressive local elected officials, and efforts of independent organizations, Benton Harbor is once again on its way to becoming the true "Port of Opportunities" of Southwest Michigan.

## Community Vision

- Attract industrial and commercial entrepreneurs to the City's Enterprise and Renaissance Zones.
- Provide a safe and wholesome environment for families.
- Create an environment to foster community and economic development.

## All Demographic Information is based upon the 2009 Census Estimate

### Population

1980 Census	14,707	
1990 Census	12,818	12.84 % decline
2000 Census	11,182	12.76 % decline
2009 Census Estimate	10,826	3.18 % decline

### Personal Income

Median Family	\$23,579.00
Average per Capita	\$10,235.00
Median Household	\$17,491.00

### Labor Force

Total Work Force	4,334
Unemployment Rate	31.3 %

### Principal Economic Base Employers

Benton Harbor Area Schools	490 employees
Michigan Dept of Human Svcs	151 employees

### Housing

Number of Dwellings	5,013
Owner Occupied	1,646
Renter Occupied	2,325
Median Rent	\$471
Median Home Value	\$57,200

### Building Permits – 2010

	Number Issued	Dollar Amount
Residential	40	\$4,607,368.00
Commercial	17	\$19,502,427.00
Industrial	5	\$733,800.00
Other	16	\$189,440.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>\$25,033,035.00</b>



# Government

## Municipal Hall

Benton Harbor City Hall  
200 Wall Street  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
Phone: (269) 927-8400  
Fax: (269) 927-8479

## Council Meetings

First and Third Monday of each Month  
Start: 7:00 p.m.



## County Commissioners

Mamie Yarbrough, District 4  
1086 Monroe Street  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
Phone: (269) 925-2669  
mymymy59@sbcglobal.net

## State Governor

Rick Snyder (R)  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: (517) 373-3400  
Faz: (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



Eleazer Morton

## State Representative

Al Pscholka (R), District 79  
Michigan House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514  
Phone: (517) 373-1403  
Fax: (517) 373-3652  
ALPscholka@house.mi.gov

## U.S. Representative

Fred Upton, 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Benton Harbor is served by the following school district:

Benton Harbor Area Schools  
Dr. Leonard Seawood, Superintendent  
823 Riverview Dr.  
P.O. Box 1107  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
Phone: (269) 927-0600  
Student membership: 3,688



# Public Services

## Public Safety - Police Division

Chief of Police: Roger Lange  
Phone: (269) 927-8436  
Sworn Officers: 18  
Number of Cars: 13

## Public Safety - Fire Division

Deputy Director Eugene Seats  
Phone: (269) 926-2231  
Number of Stations: 1  
Full-Time Paid: 6  
Insurance Rate Class: 5

## Trash Collection

Contact: Reliable Disposal  
Phone: (800) 677-1083  
Type: Independent

## Recycling

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

## Water

Plant: Benton Harbor Water Dept, Gloria Henry  
Phone: (269) 927-8471  
Source: Lake Michigan  
Capacity: 12,000,000 GPD  
Customer Service: Sylvia Robinson  
Address: 175 Territorial; Benton Harbor  
Phone: (269) 934-7638  
Fax: (269) 934-7660

## Sewer

Benton Harbor / St. Joseph Waste Water Plant  
Phone: (269) 983-7719  
System Type: Activated Sludge  
Capacity: 18,000,000 GPD

## Telephone

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

## Gas

Michigan Gas Utilities  
1-800-778-3802

## Electric

American Electric Power Company  
(800) 311-6424



Jean Klock Park

# 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 Enforcement/ Public Safety	0.3500
Special Voted 911	0.2500
Senior Citizens	0.3000
LMC College	1.7854
City	11.1287
Special Voted	12.9621
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>31.5485</b>

## School Taxes (Berrien RESA)

State Education Tax	6.0000
Non-Homestead (Business)	17.8308
Extra Voted Building & Site	2.0000
Debt Retirement	0.0000
Berrien RESA	0.1745
Special Education	2.1954

## Subtotals

<b>Homestead</b>	<b>10.3699</b>
<b>Non-Homestead (Business)</b>	<b>28.2007</b>

## Benton Harbor



Harbor Shores Golf Club

# Economic Development

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



Cornerstone Alliance  
 38 West Wall Street, P.O. Box 428  
 Benton Harbor, MI 49023  
 Contact: Wendy Dant-Chesser, Executive VP  
 Phone: (269) 925-6100



Historic Benton Harbor State Bank

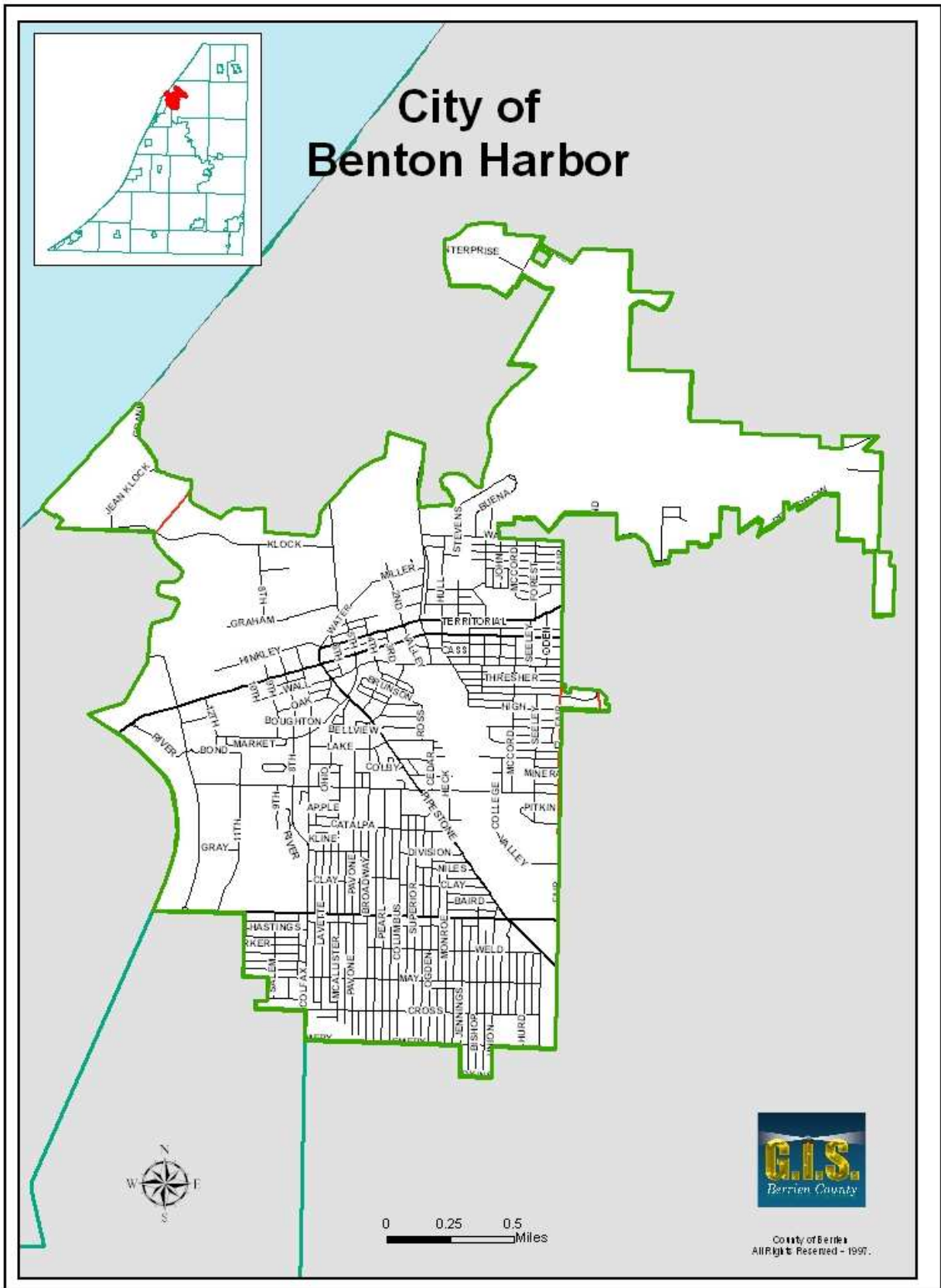


Benton Harbor Farmers Market  
 Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park

# Climate

	January	July
Average Maximum Temperature	32F / 0C	82F / 28C
Average Minimum Temperature	18F / -8C	61F / 16C
Days over 90F or 32C	11	
Days below 0F or 18C	4	
Days of Growing Season	162	
Average Annual Rainfall	37" / 94cm	
Average Annual Snowfall	70" / 178cm	





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](http://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.