



## CITY OF ATLANTA RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

### 1. GENERAL

The records of the City of Atlanta are essential to ensuring the efficient and informed operation of all City of Atlanta departments, bureaus, offices and agencies that provide daily services and programs. These records serve an invaluable role in the efficient operation of municipal government by preserving accurate documentation of the organization, functions, policies, procedures, decisions and essential transactions of the City of Atlanta. These records also provide the vital information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the City of Atlanta government and its citizens. The preservation and availability of these records is an important element in fostering government accountability.

This *Records Management Policy* sets forth the overall rules and procedures for creation, maintenance and destruction of records within all City of Atlanta departments, bureaus, offices and agencies and prescribes the duties, functions, and accountability of all City of Atlanta employees and their responsibility for records in their care, control, or custody.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

*Records* are all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, microfilm, magnetic tape or other material regardless of physical form or characteristics made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in performance of functions by any department, bureau, office or agency.

*Record Series* are documents or records having similar physical characteristics or relating to a similar function or activity that are filed in a unified arrangement.

*Records Management* is the application of management techniques to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of records undertaken to reduce costs and improve efficiency of record keeping. Records Management includes management of filing and microfilming equipment and supplies; filing and information retrieval systems; files, correspondence, reports, and forms management; historical documentation; micrographics; retention programming; and vital records protection.

*Retention schedule* is a set of disposition instructions prescribing how long, where, and in what form a record series shall be kept.

*Third Party Vendor* is the Records Storage Company the City establishes a contractual agreement to provide primarily for the storage, processing, servicing, and securing the City inactive records that must be retained for varying periods of time but need not be retained in an agency's office equipment or office space.

*Vital records* are any records vital to the resumption and continuation of operations, or both; to the recreation of the legal and financial status of government; or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to citizens.



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### **3. RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Mayor, City Attorney, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, and Municipal Clerk shall serve on or designate a member of their staff to serve on an administrative committee to be identified as the Records Management Administrative Committee. The Records Management Administrative Committee shall be responsible for developing and issuing rules and regulations for the establishment and maintenance of economical and efficient management of the City of Atlanta's overall records management program as it relates to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposition of records, filing and copying equipment, supplies, microfilming of records and vital records program. In performing these duties, the Records Management Administrative Committee shall solicit and review comments from department heads concerning any proposed changes in the established rules and regulations of the records management program. The Records Management Administrative Committee shall also be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the activities of the Records Management Officer.

The Records Management Administrative Committee shall be chaired by the Chief Financial Officer or his/her designee and meet at the call of the Committee Chair at least once during each quarter of the calendar year. The Records Management Administrative Committee shall be authorized to identify and appoint additional non voting members to the Records Management Administrative Committee to assist with the fulfillment of the committee's duties.

In the event a member designated to serve on the Records Management Administrative Committee is unable to fulfill their duties for any reason, the designating authority shall appoint a new designee within thirty (30) days of the position vacancy.

### **4. RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICER**

The Records Management Officer shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining an active and continuing program for the economical and effective management of records, including but not limited to a digital and retrieval system, as well as implementing any rules and regulations issued by the Records Management Administrative Committee. In the performance of these duties, the Records Management Officer shall assist each department in the implementation and maintenance of a program for records management, including working with all department heads to ensure that retention schedules are established for all City of Atlanta records; conducting training in records management to designees of the departments; maintaining an official file of approved retention schedules; maintaining an official file of records transfer and receipt forms; maintaining an official file of certificates of records destruction; preserving records of continuing value; coordinating and arranging for removal of records not in common and current use from departmental office space to other suitable city facilities; removing other records upon the expiration of their day to day utility



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in the office in accordance with approved disposition standards; eliminating systematically all other records in accordance with approved disposition standards; and recommending the appointment of subordinate officers to the Records Management Administrative Committee. The Records Management Officer shall also report annually on the progress and savings from the Records Management Officer's efforts.

### **5. DEPARTMENT HEADS**

All Department Heads shall cause to be created and preserved, records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures and essential transactions of their respective departments. Furthermore, all Department Heads shall cooperate fully with the Records Management Officer in implementing and maintaining records management procedures and regulations, including the requirement that they submit a recommended disposition standard for each record series in the Department Head's care, custody, or control. All Department Heads shall also establish necessary safeguards against removal or loss of records and such further safeguards as may be required by regulation of the Records Management Administrative Committee. Such safeguards shall include notification to all officials and personnel that City records are public property and as such shall constitute a record of public acts; such records shall not be placed in the custody of private or semipublic institutions unless authorized by the Atlanta City Council; and no records in the custody of a city officer are to be destroyed or otherwise alienated except as provided by law.

### **6. RECORDS OFFICERS**

All Department Heads shall appoint a Records Officer for each organizational component of their department where applicable. All appointments shall be submitted to the Records Management Officer in writing along with the name, title, departmental unit, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of the appointee. In the event an appointed Records Officer is unable to fulfill their duties for any reason, the Department Head shall appoint a new Records Officer within thirty (30) days of the position vacancy.

In order to qualify for appointment as a departmental Records Officer, an individual must be a full time employee with the respective department and have an in-depth knowledge of the departmental/unit operations. It is recommended that Department Heads only appoint employees to serve in the position of Records Officer who have worked in the respective department a minimum of one (1) year.

Records Officers shall be responsible for creating and updating an annual inventory of the department/unit's records; developing and maintaining a current retention schedule for the department/unit's records; working with the Records Management Officer to ensure the appropriate and timely transfer of departmental records to the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility; and to work with the Records Management Officer to ensure that departmental



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records are maintained and ultimately destroyed in accordance with the approved departmental retention schedules.

Records officers shall also be responsible for internally advising and assisting departmental/unit personnel with the development of file plans, records shipments, and forms preparation; as well as creating and maintaining departmental/unit reference files for approved retention schedules, records management forms, records transfer and receipt forms, and certificates of records destruction.

### **7. RECORDS CERTIFYING OFFICER**

The Municipal Clerk shall act as the records certifying officer for the City of Atlanta and is charged with the responsibility of certifying records for use by the public and the courts. All fees collected for the certification of records shall be paid into the General Fund through a miscellaneous receipt.

### **8. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

All City of Atlanta employees shall be responsible for ensuring that no records in their care, custody or control are destroyed or disposed of except as authorized by an approved records retention schedule.

All City of Atlanta employees shall be responsible for filing records into official records systems developed by their respective departments.

All City of Atlanta employees shall be responsible for protecting sensitive documents in their care, custody or control from unauthorized access, including ensuring that records storage areas are kept secure from unauthorized persons; passwords to networked resources and data sources are utilized and kept confidential; and sensitive records are never left unattended in a non-secure environment.

### **9. RETENTION SCHEDULES**

All records, regardless of their value, must be retained permanently unless their destruction or some other disposition is authorized by an approved records retention/disposition schedule. No records will be authorized or scheduled for permanent retention in a department environment.

Each City of Atlanta department shall be responsible for submitting an "Application for a Records Retention Schedule" (Form ARM-2) for all records created by or in the custody of the department to the Records Management Officer. One application must be submitted for each record series created or maintained by the department. All Form ARM-2's must be



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approved in writing by the Department Head prior to submittal to the Records Management Officer.

Upon receipt of a Form ARM-2, the Records Management Officer shall review the Form ARM-2 for accuracy and present the application to the Records Management Administrative Committee for approval.

Retention Schedules approved by the Department Head and the Records Management Administrative Committee shall be forwarded to the State of Georgia Records Committee as required by law.

Upon approval of a Records Retention Schedule, departments shall apply the disposition period of the approved schedule to the identified record series in their department on a continuing basis, up and until a new records retention schedule is approved.

Retention schedules shall be amended by the department through the submission of a Form ARM-2 whenever the department determines the need to provide for increased or decreased retention, microfilming, digitizing or some other disposition of a record series as a result of a change in the law or an articulable business need by the department.

Retention schedules shall also be amended by the department through the submission of a Form ARM-2 whenever there is a change in the function of a record series (the reason it is created) or in the file content. Changes in the function of a record series may alter the value of the record, thereby requiring increased or decreased retention.

No records shall be scheduled for retention by a department beyond the applicable retention period provided by law except where an articulable business need by the department is approved by the Records Management Administrative Committee.

### **10. RECORDS TRANSFER**

Each City of Atlanta department shall be responsible for submitting a "Records Transfer and Receipt" (Form ARM-3) to the Records Management Officer to request and schedule the transfer of records to the Records Center maintained by the Records Management Division.

Prior to any transfer of records to the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility, the Records Management Officer shall be responsible for inspecting the records in the requesting department to assure they are properly boxed and prepared for transfer.

Upon approving the transfer of the records, the Records Management Officer shall arrange and notify the departmental/unit Records Officer of the scheduled date and time for the



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movement of the records from the department to the Records Third Party Vendor Storage Facility.

Records shall only be transferred to the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility for storage in accordance with an approved records retention schedule.

Records shall be processed, maintained or disposed of in accordance with the specific instructions listed in the approved records retention schedule.

Records transferred to the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility shall remain the property of the transferring department and the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility shall require approval from the transferring agency prior to allowing any non departmental unauthorized individual or agency access to the deposited records.

If the functions associated with an existing City of Atlanta department are transferred from that department to another new or existing department, the records documenting that function shall be transferred to the new or existing department. It shall be the responsibility of the receiving department to amend the existing Form ARM-2 for the records received to account for the department's accountability for the records.

If the functions associated with an existing City of Atlanta department are terminated or discontinued, the Department Head shall be responsible for submitting a "Records Transfer and Receipt" (Form ARM-3) to the Records Management Officer to request and schedule the transfer of all the records documenting the discontinued function to the Storage Facility maintained by the Third Party Vendor.

Upon approving the transfer of the records, the Records Management Officer shall arrange and notify the departmental/unit Records Officer of the scheduled date and time for the movement of the records from the department to the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility.

### **11. RECORDS RETRIEVAL**

Records may be retrieved from the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility by the Department Head and/or his/her designee by submitting a "Records Reference Request" (Form ARM-9) to the Records Management Officer. All requests should contain the Transfer Number (TR#), Box Number, and the name of specific record sought for retrieval.

Upon receiving the records from the Third Party Vendor, the Records Management Officer shall notify the requesting department and arrange for the pick up or delivery of the records to the department.

If original records are withdrawn from the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility, they will be sent to the requesting department with a "tracking memorandum" attached. This





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memorandum must accompany the records (s) that are withdrawn when they are returned to the Records Management Division for refileing.

When photocopies are provided by the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility, they will be sent to the requesting department with a “tracking memorandum” attached for the department’s records. Neither the photocopies nor the “tracking memorandum” should be returned to the Records Management Division and/or Third Party Vendor Storage Facility.

Department heads may elect to review records on-site at the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility or authorize access by other parties. Arrangements for on-site visits must be made in advance with the Records Management Officer.

### **12. RECORDS CENTER RECORDS DISPOSAL**

The Records Management Officer shall be responsible for submitting a “Notice of Records Disposal” (Form ARM-10) to all Department Heads when records transferred from their departments are eligible for disposal. The Records Management Officer shall forward the Form ARM-10 to the Department Head at least thirty (30) days prior to any scheduled records disposal date.

The Department Head shall be responsible for reviewing the Form ARM-10 and determining if the records in question should be disposed of as previously approved in the retention schedule due to factors such as pending or active litigation, governmental investigations, or a financial audit.

If the Department Head determines that the records are NOT subject to disposal as previously approved in the retention schedule, the Department Head shall complete Part B of Form ARM-10 and return it to the Records Management Officer to notify him/her to issue a “Hold Notice” on the documents to ensure that no records are inadvertently destroyed until the culmination of the litigation, investigation, or audit.

If the Department Head determines that the records are subject to disposal pursuant to the approved retention schedule, the Department Head shall approve the disposal of the records by completing Part B of Form ARM-10 and returning it to the Records Management Officer. The Records Officer shall be responsible for providing Form ARM-10 to the Records Management Administrative Committee for final approval.

No records shall be disposed of by the Third Party Vendor without the written approval of the respective Department Head and the Records Management Administrative Committee.

Upon implementing an approved records disposition, the “Certificate of Records Disposal” (Part C of Form ARM-10) shall be completed by the Records Management Officer and a



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copy of the certification forwarded to the departmental/unit Records Officer for the department's records.

### **13. DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS DISPOSAL**

All City of Atlanta in-house departmental records disposals shall be approved in advance by the Department Head and recorded by the departmental/unit Records Officer. The departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for documenting the official record series title and retention schedule number as listed on the approved Form ARM-3 maintained by the department.

The Department Head shall be responsible for determining if the records in question should be disposed of as previously approved in the retention schedule due to factors such as pending or active litigation, governmental investigations, or a financial audit.

If the Department Head determines that the records are NOT subject to disposal as previously approved in the retention schedule, the Department Head shall notify the departmental/unit Records Officer to issue a "Hold Notice" on the documents to ensure that no records are inadvertently destroyed until the culmination of the litigation, investigation, or audit.

The departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for submitting a "Report of In-House Destruction" (Form ARM-23) to the Records Management Officer following an approved in-house departmental records disposal.

If the records to be destroyed are confidential or contain sensitive information, the departmental/unit records officer shall ensure that the records are shredded before disposition.

### **14. PREPARATION OF RECORDS FOR STORAGE**

The departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for preparing all records for storage at the Records Center maintained by the Third Party Vendor by placing the records in cardboard storage cartons approved by the Records Management Officer.

Prior to boxing the records for shipment, the departmental/unit Records Officer shall review and inspect the records to assure that exact duplicate copies and other material (such as notes, drafts, etc.) which are not a part of the record series are removed from the file. The departmental/unit Records Officer shall also review and inspect the records to ensure that the records are in proper filing order (numerically, alphabetically, chronologically, etc.).





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Standard records cardboard storage cartons measuring 15”x 12” x 10” shall be used for all letter and legal size files.

Records such as canceled checks and computer tab cards shall be stored in standard tab card boxes measuring 15” x 7 7/8” x 3 5/8”.

If microfilming is authorized, the departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for removing all rubber bands, staples, paper clips, metal fasteners, etc., from the records and mending torn sheets of paper with transparent tape, prior to actual shipment to the Records Center.

Microfilm and microfiche should be stored in standard microfilm storage boxes measuring 15 1/4” x 11 7/8” x 4”.

The flaps on the bottom of the cardboard storage cartons should be folded flat over each other and the bottom of the cardboard storage carton securely taped. The flaps on top of the cardboard storage cartons should not be taped closed. To secure the top of the cardboard storage carton, fold the flaps on top of the cardboard storage carton alternately over and under each other.

The departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for numbering the cardboard storage cartons consecutively with a felt tip marker (or equivalent) starting with the number 1 for the first cardboard storage carton in each shipment. The cardboard storage carton number should be written in the upper right hand corner of the small end of the cardboard storage carton. The contents of the cardboard storage carton should not be written or printed on the outside of the cardboard storage carton. The contents of the cardboard storage carton will be listed on Form ARM-3, “Records Transfer and Receipt”. If you have a box inventory attach it to Form ARM-3.

If the records are to be stored in a departmental holding area, the departmental/unit Records Officer shall record the location of the cardboard storage carton in Box No. 10 on Form ARM-3 and maintain this information for department records. For departmental onsite storage, it is not necessary to send a copy of the completed form to the Records Management Officer.

### **15. RECORDS CENTER STORAGE**

The Third Party Vendor shall assign a specific location number in the Storage Facility to every cardboard storage carton transferred from a City of Atlanta department.

The departmental/unit Records Officer shall be responsible for maintaining a copy of all Form ARM-3’s transmitted to the department by the Records Management Officer. The Form ARM-3 contains all the information necessary to locate the department’s records



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within the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility and is utilized by the department when records are requested for retrieval from the Third Party Vendor Storage Facility.

### **16. ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

All records created, received, maintained, accessed and stored on electronic media pursuant to law or ordinance or in performance of functions by any department, bureau, office or agency must be retained permanently unless their destruction or some other disposition is authorized by an approved records retention/disposition schedule.

Electronic records, including email, should be viewed as an equivalent to paper. The retention of an electronic record is decided by the content of the record and not the format of the record.

Electronic records systems that maintain the official file copy of text documents or data used to generate the official file copy of text documents on electronic media must provide a method for all authorized users of the system to retrieve desired documents, such as indexing or a text search system; provide security to ensure integrity of the documents; and provide for the disposition of the documents. A document created on an electronic records system must be identified sufficiently to enable authorized personnel to retrieve, protect, and carry out the disposition of the documents in the system.

All departments shall ensure, in consultation with the Department of Information Technology, that departmental policies and procedures are established for maintenance and storage of electronic records and any software, hardware, and/or documentation, including maintenance documentation, required to retrieve and read the electronic records. Electronic retention procedures shall include provisions for scheduling the disposition of all electronic records, as well as related access documentation and indexes; and establishing procedures for regular recopying, reformatting and other necessary maintenance to ensure the retention and usability of electronic records throughout their authorized life cycle.

### **17. ANNUAL RECORDS REVIEW**

All Department Heads shall be responsible for implementing an annual records review in their departments. The annual records review shall serve as the time period utilized by each department during which all employees are to review their active records. Based upon this review, employees shall determine in consultation with the departmental/unit Records Officer, whether active records should be maintained or disposed of pursuant to an approved retention schedule.