

Open Records Act

This link was created to provide a faster, more efficient avenue to accessing the city's public records. Anyone interested in exercising his or her rights under the Georgia Open Records Act (ORA), to view records may do so.

- What is an open records request?
- What is the procedure for inspecting public records?
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- What material is exempt from public inspection?
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What is an open records request?

An open record is defined in the ORA as:

"...all books, papers, maps, photographs, cards, tapes, discs, diskettes, recordings or other documentary materials regardless of physical form or characteristics, which are prepared, owned, used, in the possession of or retained by a public agency."

For any reason, someone may request an inspection of an agency's records. Unless the material is exempt from disclosure under the ORA, the agency must respond to a request within three working days of the request. Please note that according to the Office of the Attorney General, the purpose of the ORA is not to provide information but to provide access to public records.

What is the procedure for inspecting public records?

To make an open records request, you must submit a request; requests should be directed to the city clerk. A request can be a completed open records request form or a letter stating specifically which records are desired for review. This request may be faxed, mailed or e-mailed to stthomas@riverdalega.gov. Specifying the records or information desired affords the city with direct knowledge of which files to provide, and establishes the scope of the required response.

How long will it take to get a response?

The agency has a reasonable amount of time to determine whether or not the record(s) requested are subject to access under the ORA and to permit inspection and copying. The reasonable time shall not exceed three business days. Weekends and holidays do not count as part of the three business days. For example, if a custodian receives a request on Monday, June 23, she must respond to the requester by Thursday, June 26, provided that the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th are not holidays.

What material is exempt from public inspection?

The requested records are reviewed by the agency before access is granted to the public in order to determine what, if any, exempted material may be contained in the files.

The ORA lists several types of exempted documents. For a complete list, see the ORA. The following is a list of some of the categories of exempted documents most likely to involve City of Riverdale ORA requests:

- (1) Documents specifically required by the federal government to be kept confidential;
- (2) Medical or veterinary records and similar files, the disclosure of which would be an invasion of personal privacy;

- (3) Except as otherwise provided by law, records compiled for law enforcement or prosecution purposes to the extent that production of such records would disclose the identity of a confidential source, disclose confidential investigative or prosecution material which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or persons, or disclose the existence of a confidential surveillance or investigation;
- (4) Records of law enforcement, prosecution, or regulatory agencies in any pending investigation or prosecution of criminal or unlawful activity, other than initial police arrest reports, and initial incident reports; provided, however, that an investigation or prosecution shall no longer be deemed to be pending when all direct litigation involving said investigation and prosecution has become final or otherwise terminated;
- (5) Individual Georgia Uniform Motor Vehicle Accident Reports, except upon the submission of a written statement of need by the requesting party, such statement to be provided to the custodian of records and to set forth the need for the report pursuant to this Code section; provided, however, that any person or entity whose name or identifying information is contained in a Georgia Uniform Motor Vehicle Accident report shall be entitled, either personally or through a lawyer or other representative, to receive a copy of such report; and provided further that Georgia Uniform Motor Vehicle Accident reports shall not be available in bulk for inspection or copying by any person absent a written statement showing the need for each such report pursuant to the requirements of this Code section. For the purposes of this subsection, the term 'need' means that the natural person or legal entity who is representing in person or by representative to inspect or copy the Georgia Uniform Motor Vehicle Accident Report:
 - (A) Has a personnel, professional, or business connection with a party to the accident;
 - (B) Owns or leases an interest in property allegedly or actually damaged in the accident;
 - (C) Was allegedly or actually injured by the accident;
 - (D) Was a witness to the accident;
 - (E) Is the actual or alleged insurer of a party to the accident or of property actually or allegedly damaged by the accident;
 - (F) Is a prosecutor or publicly employed law enforcement officer;
 - (G) Is alleged to be liable to another party as a result of the accident;
 - (H) Is an attorney stating that he or she needs the requested reports as part of a criminal case, or an investigation of a potential claim involving contentions that a roadway, railroad crossing, or intersection is unsafe;
 - (I) Is gathering information as a representative of a news media organization; or
 - (J) Is conducting research in the public interest for such purposes as accident prevention, prevention of injuries or damages in accidents, determination of fault in an accident or accidents, or other similar purposes; provided, however, this subparagraph will apply only to accident reports on accidents that occurred more than 30 days prior to

the request and which shall have the name, street address, telephone number and driver's license number redacted.

(6) Records that consist of confidential evaluations submitted to, or examinations prepared by, a governmental agency and prepared in connection with the appointment or hiring of a public officer or employee; and records consisting of material obtained in investigations related to the suspension, firing, or investigation of complaints against public officers or employees until ten days after the same has been presented to the agency or an officer for action or the investigation is otherwise concluded or terminated, provided that this paragraph shall not be interpreted to make such investigatory records privileged.

(7) Real estate appraisals, engineering or feasibility estimates, or other records made for or by the state or a local agency relative to the acquisition of real property until such time as the property has been acquired or the proposed transaction has been terminated or abandoned;

(8) Engineers cost estimates and rejected or deferred bid proposals until such time as the final award is made, either received or prepared by the Department of Transportation pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 2 of Title 32, by a county pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 4 of Title 32, or by a municipality pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 4 of Title 32:

(9) An individual's social security number and insurance or medical information in personnel records, which may be redacted from such records;

(10) Records that would reveal the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, security codes, or any other data or information developed, collected, or received by counties or municipalities in connection with the installation, servicing, maintaining, operating, selling, or leasing of burglar alarm systems, fire alarm systems, or other electronic security systems; provided, however, that initial police reports and initial incident reports shall remain subject to disclosure pursuant to paragraph (4) of this subsection;

(11)

A. An individual's social security number, mother's birth name, credit card information, debit card information, bank account information, financial data or information, and insurance or medical information in all records, and if technically feasible at reasonable cost, day and month of birth, which shall be redacted prior to disclosure of any record requested pursuant to this article; provided, however, that such information shall not be redacted from such records if the person or entity requesting such records requests such information in a writing signed under oath by such person or a person legally authorized to represent such entity which states that such person or entity is gathering information as a representative of a news media organization for use in connection with news gathering and reporting; and provided, further, that such access shall be limited to social security numbers and day and month of birth; and provided, further, that this news media organization exception for access to social security numbers and day and month of birth and the other protected information set forth in this subparagraph shall not apply to teachers and employees of a public school.

B. This paragraph shall have no application to:

The disclosure of information contained in the records or papers of any court or derived therefrom including without limitation records maintained pursuant to Article 9 of Title 11;

The disclosure of information to a court, prosecutor, or publicly employed law enforcement officer, or authorized agent thereof, seeking records in an official capacity;

The disclosure of information to a public employee of this state, its political subdivisions, or the United States who is obtaining such information for administrative purposes, in which case, subject to applicable laws of the United States, further access to such information shall continue to be subject to the provisions of this paragraph;

The disclosure of information as authorized by the order of a court of competent jurisdiction upon good cause shown to have access to any or all of such information upon such conditions as may be set forth in such order;

The disclosure of information to the individual in respect of whom such information is maintained, with the authorization thereof, or to an authorized agent thereof; provided, however, that the agency maintaining such information shall require proper identification of such individual or such individual's agent, or proof of authorization, as determined by such agency;

The disclosure of the day and month of birth and mother's birth name of a deceased individual;

The disclosure by an agency of credit or payment information in connection with a request by a consumer reporting agency as that term is defined under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. Section 1681, et seq.);

The disclosure by an agency of information in its records in connection with the agency's discharging or fulfilling of its duties and responsibilities, including, but not limited to, the collection of debts owed to the agency or individuals or entities whom the agency assists in the collection of debts owed to the individual or entity; or

The disclosure of information necessary to comply with legal or regulatory requirements or for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Records and information disseminated pursuant to this paragraph may be used only by the authorized recipient and only for the authorized purpose. Any person who obtains records or information pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph and knowingly and willfully discloses, distributes, or sells such records or information to an unauthorized recipient or for an unauthorized purpose shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature and upon conviction thereof shall be punished as provided in Code Section 17-10-4. Any person injured thereby shall have a cause of action for invasion of privacy. Any prosecution pursuant to this paragraph shall be in accordance with the procedure in subsection (b) of Code Section 50-18-74.

C. In the event that the custodian of public records protected by this paragraph has good faith reason to believe that a pending request for such records has been made fraudulently, under false pretenses, or by means of false swearing, such custodian shall apply to the superior court of the county in which such records are maintained for a protective order limiting or prohibiting access to such records.

D. This paragraph shall supplement and shall not supplant, overrule, replace, or otherwise modify or supersede any provision of statute, regulation, or law of the federal government or of this state as now or hereafter amended or enacted requiring, restricting, or prohibiting access to the information identified in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph and shall constitute only a regulation of the methods of such access where not otherwise provided for, restricted, or prohibited;

(12) Public records containing information that would disclose or might lead to the disclosure of any component in the process used to execute or adopt an electronic signature, if such disclosure would or might cause the electronic signature to cease being under the sole control of the person using it. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "electronic signature" has the same meaning as that term is defined in Code Section 10-123; or

(13) Records that would reveal the home address or telephone number, social security number, or insurance or medical information of law enforcement officers, judges, scientists employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, correctional employees, and prosecutors or identification of immediate family members or dependents thereof.

(14)

A. Records, the disclosure of which would compromise security against sabotage or criminal or terrorist acts and the nondisclosure of which is necessary for the protection of life, safety, or public property, which shall be limited to the following:

Security plans and vulnerability assessments for any public utility, technology infrastructure, building, facility, function, or activity in effect at the time of the request for disclosure or pertaining to a plan or assessment in effect at such time;

Any plan for protection against terrorist or other attacks, which plan depends for its effectiveness in whole or in part upon a lack of general public knowledge of its details;

Any document relating to the existence, nature, location, or function of security devices designed to protect against terrorist or other attacks, which devices depend for their effectiveness in whole or in part upon a lack of general public knowledge; and

Any plan, blueprint, or other material which if made public could compromise security against sabotage, criminal, or terroristic acts.

B. In the event of litigation challenging nondisclosure pursuant to this paragraph by an agency of a document covered by this paragraph, the court may review the documents in question in camera and may condition, in writing, any disclosure upon such measures as the court may find to be necessary to protect against endangerment of life, safety, or public property.

C. As used in divisions (i) and (iv) of subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the term "activity" means deployment or surveillance strategies, actions mandated by changes in the federal threat level, motorcades, contingency plans, proposed or alternative motorcade routes, executive and dignitary protection, planned responses to criminal or terrorist actions, after-action reports still in use, proposed or actual plans and responses to bioterrorism, and proposed or actual plans and responses to requesting and receiving the National Pharmacy Stockpile; or

(15) Unless the request is made by the accused in a criminal case or by his or her attorney, public records of an emergency "911" system, as defined in paragraph (3) of Code Section 46-5-122, containing information which would reveal the name, address, or telephone number of a person placing a call to a public safety answering point, which information may be redacted from such records if necessary to prevent the disclosure of the identity of a confidential source, to prevent disclosure of material which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or persons, or to prevent the disclosure of the existence of a

confidential surveillance or investigation.

(16) The ORA shall not be applicable to:

(1) Any trade secrets obtained from a person or business entity which are of a privileged or confidential nature and required by law to be submitted to a government agency or to data, records, or information of a proprietary nature, produced or collected by or for faculty or staff of state institutions of higher learning, or other governmental agencies, in the conduct of or as a result of, study or research on commercial, scientific, technical, or scholarly issues, whether sponsored by the institution alone or in conjunction with a governmental body or private concern, where such data, records, or information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented; or

(17) The ORA shall not be construed to repeal:

(1) The attorney-client privilege recognized by state law to the extent that a record pertains to the requesting or giving of legal advice or the disclosure of facts concerning or pertaining to pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions brought or to be brought by or against the agency or any officer or employee; provided, however, attorney-client information may be obtained in a proceeding under Code Section 50-18-73 to prove justification or lack thereof in refusing disclosure of documents under this Code section provided the judge of the court in which said proceeding is pending shall first determine by an in camera examination that such disclosure would be relevant on that issue;

(2) The confidentiality of attorney work product; or

(3) State laws making certain tax matters confidential.

How much does it cost to obtain public records?

Review of specific records can be done without charge unless the nature or volume of the material requested requires assistance. If assistance is necessary, there will be a service charge. Inspection of records can be requested by making an appointment with the City Clerk.

Pursuant to the ORA, copies of records shall be furnished upon payment of .25 per page. In addition, a reasonable charge may be collected for search, retrieval, and other direct administrative costs for complying with a request. The hourly charge shall not exceed the salary of the lowest paid full-time employee who, in the discretion of the custodian of the records, has the necessary skill and training to perform the request; provided, however, that no charge shall be made for the first fifteen minutes. A deposit may be required depending on the volume of the materials requested,

Certification of documents shall be charged at \$1.00 per document.

[Click here to view the City's Open Records Act Policy.](#)

[Click here to download a Request for Public Records Form.](#)

If you have any comments, suggestions or questions pertaining to the City of Riverdale's Open Records process, contact:

Office of the City Clerk
6690 Church Street
Riverdale, Georgia 30274

770-909-5386
lbarthell@riverdalega.gov