

A CALL TO ACTION

Doing your part for the records that are Closest to Home and Closest to You



What are local government archives?

They are important records created or collected by counties, cities, towns, villages, school districts, and other units of government. They contain information for and about individuals, families, properties, businesses, and organizations in the community. They must be retained permanently because they have long-term or archival significance.

Local government archives matter because...

They prove our identity, document many of our fundamental rights, ensure government is efficient and accountable to its citizens, and tell the story of our heritage and our communities.

Local government archives are vulnerable...

To disaster, neglect, and the impact of changing technologies.

As a citizen who cares about your records...

You have an important role to play in protecting and preserving these essential, yet vulnerable local government records. Ask your local officials and members of your state legislature to make records a priority:

- Increase resources for state and local governments to manage records
- Improve access to information needed by residents and governments alike
- Protect records of continuing value through proper storage facilities
- Include the protection and recovery of records in emergency preparedness plans

Find out what challenges your local government officials face in managing and making public records available.



How do they identify and protect records of continuing value? Are their storage facilities adequate? What resources do they need to protect their records and provide access?

Seek like-minded citizens—educators, local historians, genealogists, journalists, and preservationists working to restore historic homes and neighborhoods.



Ask about their experiences in gaining access to public records or interactions with state and local associations. Do they understand the challenges faced by local officials and the need for additional resources?

Support efforts to increase resources for state and local governments to manage records, improve access, and protect records of continuing value.



Use this brochure to make the case in your community to direct resources to the care of local government archives and records management. Download from www.statearchivists.org/lga.

As a local government official charged with care of records...

Make support for records management and the long-term care of records of continuing value a priority.



Identify the records of long-term or permanent value maintained by your office. Check your records retention schedule and make sure it is up-to-date. If you do not have a records retention schedule, contact the records manager for your jurisdiction or your state archives and records management program to learn how to create one.

Make certain that those who handle the records are familiar with best practices and legal requirements. Provide training if necessary.



Most states have specific laws and regulations about which records must be retained and for how long. Many also set standards for paper, microfilm, and other media used for long-term retention and offer training programs to local governments.

Develop an emergency preparedness plan for records needed in an emergency.



Get started by creating a Pocket Response Plan www.statearchivists.org/prepare

Contact your state archivist for information about records of long-term value.



Find contact information for all state archivists at www.statearchivists.org/statearchivists.htm

If local government agencies in your area need help with any of these, contact your state archives. Most state archives offer support that can include storage of records, expertise and services in microfilming and in digital guidance, as well as basic education in records management and archival administration. If they can't help with the problem you're experiencing, they will know where to find the resources to do so.

More information

Council of State Archivists www.statearchivists.org/lga/

For additional information about the **Closest to Home Project** and more information on archival programs for local governments and how you can help promote the preservation of local government records, visit the Council of State Archivists web site at <http://www.statearchivists.org/lga/>

Additional copies of this brochure are available for download at www.statearchivists.org/lga/ or by writing to the Council of State Archivists, 308 East Burlington Street #189, Iowa City IA 52240. Email: lga@statearchivists.org. Telephone: 319-338-0248.



The **Council of State Archivists** (CoSA) established the **Task Force on Local Government Records** in December 2005. CoSA charged the Task Force with leading its **Closest to Home Project** to analyze current conditions and determine what services, standards, and funding strategies would work best to ensure the long-term preservation of and access to local government records. This brochure is one result of their work. The project and publication of this brochure were supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).