

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY
FOR
BLOUNT COUNTY PROPERTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g), the following Public Records Policy for Blount County Property Assessor's Office is hereby adopted by Blount County Board of Commissioners to provide economical and efficient access to public records as provided under the Tennessee Public Records Act ("TPRA") in Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-501, et seq.

The TPRA provides that all state, county and municipal records shall, at all times during business hours, which for public hospitals shall be during the business hours of their administrative offices, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of this state, and those in charge of the records shall not refuse such right of inspection to any citizen, unless otherwise provided by state law. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(2)(A). Accordingly, the public records of Blount County Property Assessor's Office are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.

Personnel of Blount County Property Assessor's Office shall timely and efficiently provide access and assistance to persons requesting to view or receive copies of public records. No provisions of this Policy shall be used to hinder access to open public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records, as well as the efficient and safe operation of Blount County Property Assessor's Office, shall be protected as provided by current law. Concerns about this Policy should be addressed to the Public Records Request Coordinator for Blount County Property Assessor's Office or to the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel ("OORC").

This Policy is available for inspection and duplication in the office of Blount County Property Assessor. This Policy is posted online at <http://www.blounttn.org>. This Policy shall be reviewed annually.

This Policy shall be applied consistently throughout the Blount County Property Assessor's Office.

I. Definitions:

- A. Records Custodian: The office, official or employee lawfully responsible for the direct custody and care of a public record. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(C). The records custodian is not necessarily the original preparer or receiver of the record.
- B. Public Records: All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(A).
- C. Public Records Request Coordinator: The individual, or individuals, designated in Section III, A.3 of this Policy who has, or have, the responsibility to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and are fulfilled in accordance with the TPRA. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(B). The Public Records Request Coordinator may also be a records custodian.
- D. Requestor: A person seeking access to a public record, whether it is for inspection or duplication.

II. Requesting Access to Public Records

- A. Public record requests shall be made to the Public Records Request Coordinator ("PRRC") or his/her designee in order to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and fulfilled in a timely manner.
- B. Requests for inspection only cannot be required to be made in writing. The PRRC should request a mailing or email address from the requestor for providing any written communication required under the TPRA.
- C. Requests for inspection **only** may be made orally or in writing using the Public Records Request Form available in our office located at 351 Court Street, Maryville, Tennessee or the request can be made by phone at (865)273-5850.
- D. Requests for copies, or requests for inspection and copies, shall be made in writing using the attached Public Records Request Form.
- E. Proof of Tennessee citizenship by presentation of a valid Tennessee driver's license (or alternative acceptable form of ID) is required as a condition to inspect or receive copies of public records.

III. Responding to Public Records Requests

A. Public Record Request Coordinator

- 1. The PRRC shall review public record requests and make an initial determination of the following:
 - a. If the requestor provided evidence of Tennessee citizenship (*if required*);
 - b. If the records requested are described with sufficient specificity to identify them; and
 - c. If the Blount County Property Assessor's Office is the custodian of the records.
- 2. The PRRC shall acknowledge receipt of the request and take any of the following appropriate action(s):
 - a. Advise the requestor of this Policy and the elections made regarding:
 - i. Proof of Tennessee citizenship;
 - ii. Form(s) required for copies;
 - iii. Fees (and labor threshold and waivers, if applicable); and
 - iv. Aggregation of multiple or frequent requests.
 - b. If appropriate, deny the request in writing, providing the appropriate ground such as one of the following:
 - i. The requestor is not, or has not presented evidence of being, a Tennessee citizen (*if proof of citizenship is required*).
 - ii. The request lacks specificity. (Offer to assist in clarification)

- iii. An exemption makes the record not subject to disclosure under the TPRA. (Provide the exemption in written denial)
 - iv. The Blount County Property Assessor's Office is not the custodian of the requested records.
 - v. The records do not exist.
- c. If appropriate, contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.
 - d. Forward the records request to the appropriate records custodian in the Blount County Property Assessor's Office.
 - e. If requested records are in the custody of a different governmental entity, and the PRRC knows the correct governmental entity, advise the requestor of the correct governmental entity and PRRC for that entity if known.
3. The designated PRRC is:
- a. Name or title: Amy Slaughter
 - b. Contact information: **Office Phone:** (865)273-5850 **Office Fax:** (865)273-5866 **Office Address:** 351 Court Street, Maryville, Tennessee 37804
Email: aslaughter@blounttn.org.
4. The PRRC(s) shall report to the governing authority on an annual basis about the Blount County Property Assessor's Office's compliance with the TPRA pursuant to this Policy and shall make recommendations, if any, for improvement or changes to this Policy.

B. Records Custodian

- 1. Upon receiving a public records request, a records custodian shall promptly make requested public records available in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503. If the records custodian is uncertain that an applicable exemption applies, the custodian may consult with the PRRC, counsel, or the OORC.
- 2. If not practicable to promptly provide requested records because additional time is necessary to determine whether the requested records exist; to search for, retrieve, or otherwise gain access to records; to determine whether the records are open; to redact records; or for other similar reasons, then a records custodian shall, within seven (7) business days from the records custodian's receipt of the request, send the requestor a completed Public Records Request Response Form which is attached.
- 3. If a records custodian denies a public record request, he or she shall deny the request in writing as provided in Section III.A.2.b using the Public Records Request Response Form.
- 4. If a records custodian reasonably determines production of records should be segmented because the records request is for a large volume of records, or additional time is necessary to prepare the records for access, the records custodian shall use the Public Records Request Response Form to notify the requestor that production of the records will be in segments and that a records production schedule

will be provided as expeditiously as practicable. If appropriate, the records custodian should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.

5. If a records custodian discovers records responsive to a records request were omitted, the records custodian should contact the requestor concerning the omission and produce the records as quickly as practicable.

C. Redaction

1. If a record contains confidential information or information that is not open for public inspection, the records custodian shall prepare a redacted copy prior to providing access. If questions arise concerning redaction, the records custodian should coordinate with counsel or other appropriate parties regarding review and redaction of records. The records custodian and the PRRC may also consult with the OORC or with the Office of Attorney General and Reporter.
2. Whenever a redacted record is provided, a records custodian should provide the requestor with the basis for redaction. The basis given for redaction shall be general in nature and not disclose confidential information.

IV. Inspection of Records

- A. There shall be no charge for inspection of open public records
 - B. The location for inspection of records within the offices of Blount County Property Assessor's Office should be determined by either the PRRC or the records custodian.
- V. Under reasonable circumstances, the PRRC or a records custodian may require an appointment for inspection or may require inspection of records at an alternate location.

VI. Copies of Records

- A. A records custodian shall promptly respond to a public record request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.
- B. Copies will be available for pickup at a location specified by the records custodian.
- C. Upon payment for postage, copies will be delivered to the requestor's home address by the United States Postal Service.
- D. A requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment.

VII. Fees and Charges and Procedures for Billing and Payment

- A. Fees and charges for copies of public records should not be used to hinder access to public records. No charges will be assessed for copies and duplicates unless request exceeds one hour of labor.
- B. Records custodians shall provide requestors with an itemized estimate of the charges using the Public Records Request Form prior to producing copies of records and may require pre-payment of such charges before producing requested records.
- C. When fees for copies and labor do not exceed one hour of labor, the fees may be waived. Requests for waivers for fees above the one hour labor cost must be presented to Tim

Helton, who is authorized to determine if such waiver is in the best interest of Blount County Property Assessor's Office and for the public good.

D. Fees and charges for copies are as follows (*if higher than the amounts authorized by the OORC Schedule of Reasonable Charges, documentation should be attached*):

1. \$0.15 per page for letter- and legal-size black and white copies.
2. \$0.50 per page for letter- and legal-size color copies.
3. \$2.00 for each large tax map printed- color or black and white.
4. Labor when time exceeds 1 hour.
5. If an outside vendor is used, the actual costs assessed by the vendor.

E. **No duplication costs will be charged for the following requests:**

- * less than one hour of labor,
- * properties that are currently under appeal,
- * property record cards requested in person at the front office window(unless 1 hour labor is exceeded).

F. Payment is to be made by cash or personal check made payable to **Blount County Trustee** and presented to Blount County Property Assessor's Office.

G. Payment in advance will be required when costs are estimated to exceed one hour of labor.

H. **Exemptions from the Public Records policy are as follows:**

* Property Record Cards requested in person at the office's front window. These will be fulfilled immediately and with no charge (unless 1 hour labor is exceeded) and with no reporting necessary.

* Data requested using the attached Blount County Assessor of Property Data Request Form and/or the Blount County Assessor of Property GIS Map Product Order Form, which are already in place in the Blount County Property Assessor's Office. These forms will continue to be used for specialty maps, reports, etc and the appropriate fees will be charged as spelled out on the forms.

PUBLIC RECORD REQUEST RESPONSE
FORM Blount County Property Assessor's Office
351 Court Street
Maryville, TN 37804

Date:

Requesting Person's Name and Contact Information:

In response to your records request received on _____, our office is taking the action(s)¹ indicated below:

- ☐ The public record(s) responsive to your request will be made available for inspection: Location:
Date & Time:
- ☐ Copies of public record(s) responsive to your request are:
☐ Attached;
☐ Available for pickup at the following location:
☐ Being delivered via: ☐ USPS First-Class Mail ☐ Electronically ☐ Other: _____.
- ☐ Your request is denied on the following grounds:
☐ Your request was not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the specific requested record(s).
You need to provide additional information to identify the requested record(s).
☐ No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain record(s) responsive to your request.
☐ No proof of Tennessee citizenship was presented with your request. Your request will be reconsidered upon _____ presentation of an adequate form of identification.
☐ You are not a Tennessee citizen.
☐ You have not paid the estimated copying/production fees.
☐ The following state, federal, or other applicable law prohibits disclosure of the requested records:
- ☐ It is not practicable for the records you requested to be made promptly available for inspection and/or copying because:
☐ It has not yet been determined that records responsive to your request exist; or
☐ The office is still in the process of retrieving, reviewing, and/or redacting the requested records.

The time reasonably necessary to produce the record(s) or information and/or to make a determination of a proper response to your request is:

If you have any additional questions regarding your record request, please contact Amy Slaughter.

Sincerely,

Amy L. Slaughter
Office Administrator
(865)273-5850
aslaughter@blounttn.org

¹ If all requested records do not have the same response, so indicate.

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST FORM

The Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) grants Tennessee citizens the right to access open public records that exist at the time of the request. The TPRA does not require records custodians to compile information or create or recreate records that do not exist.

To: Blount County Property Assessor's Office, Amy Slaughter
Phone: (865)273-5850 Fax: (865)273-5866
Email: aslaughter@blounttn.org

From: _____

Is the requestor a Tennessee citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Request: ☐ Inspection (The TPRA does not permit fees or require a written request for inspection onlyⁱ.)

☐ Copy/Duplicate

If costs for copies are assessed, the requestor has a right to receive an estimate. Do you wish to waive your right to an estimate and agree to pay copying and duplication costs in an amount not to exceed \$_____? If so, initial here: _____.

Delivery preference: ☐ On-Site Pick-Up ☐ USPS First-Class Mail
☐ Electronic ☐ Other:

Records Requested:

Provide a detailed description of the record(s) requested, including: (1) type of record; (2) timeframe or dates for the records sought; and (3) subject matter or key words related to the records. Under the TPRA, record requests must be sufficiently detailed to enable a governmental entity to identify the specific records sought. As such, your record request must provide enough detail to enable the records custodian responding to the request to identify the specific records you are seeking.

[illegible]

Signature of Requestor and Date Submitted

Signature of Public Records Request Coordinator and Date Received

ⁱ Note, Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-504(a)(20)(C) permits charging for redaction of private records of a utility.



Blount County Property Assessor

Tim Helton

351 Court St
Maryville, TN 37804
PH: (865) 273-5850
FAX: (865) 273-5866

Blount County Assessor of Property Data Request Order Form

DATE OF REQUEST: _____

NAME: _____

AFFILIATION / ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

INTENDED USE OF DATA: _____

FORMAT OF DATA (digital file or paper copies): _____

DATA REQUEST: _____

Data Request:

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<u>Records</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Digital File or Paper Copies		_____	_____
		_____	_____
		_____	_____
		_____	_____

DMF \$ 40.00 x _____ Hrs = ____

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE

WE WILL CONTACT YOU WHEN YOUR ORDER IS READY.

Every effort will be made to fill your request in a timely and efficient manner. Project complexity, volume of requests, and normal workload will determine completion time.

Signature: _____

Disclaimer:

The information contained within Blount County Property Assessor's Office is not to be construed or used as a legally binding document. Information is constructed from property information recorded in the office of Register of Deeds, and while information is believed to be accurate, information will be considered non-conclusive as to location or ownership and accuracy is not guaranteed. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the Property Assessor's Office. In no event will Blount County Government be liable for any damages, including loss of data, lost profits, business interruption, and loss of business information or other pecuniary loss that may arise from the use of the information. Property Assessment data has been produced for property assessment purposes only.



Blount County Property Assessor

Tim Helton

351 Court Street
Maryville, TN 37804
PH: (865) 273-5850
FAX: (865) 273-5866

Blount County Assessor of Property GIS Map Product Order Form

DATE OF REQUEST: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

AFFILIATION / ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS / PARCEL NO. / LOCATION: _____

ADDITIONAL AREA TO BE INCLUDED: _____

MAP SCALE NEEDED (IF KNOWN; MAY DETERMINE SIZE OF MAP): _____

Paper Map Request:

Black and white plain paper copies of pre-printed interoffice use maps, assessment records, etc:

<u>Size (in.)</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
8.5x11, 8.5x14, or 11x17	copy or fax	\$.50	_____	_____
24x36	copy	\$ 2.00	_____	_____

Plotted Map Request:

Color inkjet plotted maps (generated by preprogrammed AML):

<u>Size (in.)</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
11x17	lines/text only	\$ 3.00	_____	_____
11x17	photo only	\$12.00	_____	_____
11x17	lines/text/photo	\$15.00	_____	_____
24x36	lines/text only	\$ 5.00	_____	_____
24x36	photo only	\$20.00	_____	_____
24x36	lines/text/photo	\$25.00	_____	_____

Custom Plotted Map Request:

A Data Manipulation Fee (DMF) of **\$ 40.00** will be charged per hour of work, one-hour minimum and per hour thereafter. This is a one-time fee per order, regardless of product quantity ordered.

<u>Size (in.)</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
8.5x11 or 8.5x14	lines + text only	\$ 1.50	_____	_____
	lines + text + photos	\$ 3.00	_____	_____
11x17	lines + text only	\$ 3.00	_____	_____
	lines + text + photos	\$ 6.00	_____	_____
18x24	lines + text only	\$ 5.00	_____	_____
	lines + text + photos	\$11.00	_____	_____
24x36	lines + text only	\$ 9.00	_____	_____
	lines + text + photos	\$21.00	_____	_____

DMF \$ 40.00 x _____ Hrs = _____

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE

WE WILL CONTACT YOU WHEN YOUR ORDER IS READY.

Every effort will be made to fill your request in a timely and efficient manner. Project complexity, volume of requests, and normal workload will determine completion time.

Disclaimer:

Signature: _____

The information contained within Blount County Property Map products is not to be construed or used as a "legal description" or "survey". Maps are constructed from property information recorded in the office of Register of Deeds, and while map information is believed to be accurate, maps will be considered non-conclusive as to location or ownership and accuracy is not guaranteed. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the Property Assessor's Mapping Department. In no event will Blount County Government be liable for any damages, including loss of data, lost profits, business interruption, loss of business information or other pecuniary loss that may arise from the use of maps or the information they contain. Mapping data has been produced for property assessment purposes only.