

Privacy Policy

Welcome to the website and portals of the Taunton Housing Authority, more commonly referred to as THA. Your privacy is one of our top priorities. The following policy applies only to the use of the THA website, portals and SMS messaging. As you navigate the website or portals, you will see links that, when clicked, will take you to other websites operated by other organizations, entities or agencies. These websites have individual privacy policies tailored to the interactions available through each site. Please note that although some of the social media pages used by the THA might appear to be part of this website or a webpage under THA control, these sites are hosted by a third-party provider. Thus, when visiting these third-party social media sites, you are subject to different privacy policies and terms of service. We strongly suggest that you read the privacy policies for each website that you visit, and any external site that you visit through a link appearing at their site.

A Privacy Partnership. Your privacy with respect to the use of the THA website and related portals results from a partnership between the Taunton Housing Authority and you, the user. At this website and related portals, we attempt to protect your privacy to the maximum extent possible. However, because some of the information that we receive through this website is subject to **the Massachusetts Public Records Law (G.L. c. 4, §7(26), G.L. c. 66, §10-10B)**, we cannot ensure absolute privacy. Information that you provide to us through this site may be made available to members of the public under the Public Records Law. This policy informs you of the information that we collect from you at this site, what we do with it, to whom it may be disseminated, and how you can access it. Based on this information, you can make an informed decision about your use of our site. You can maximize the benefits of your privacy partnership with THA by making informed decisions about whether to share personally identifiable information with us through this site.

Personally Identifiable Information. We use the term "personally identifiable information" to mean any information that could reasonably be used to identify you, including your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, Social Security number, date of birth, bank account information, credit card information, or any combination of information that could be used to identify you.

SMS Terms of Service. SMS, or Short Message Service, refers to the technology that allows sending short text messages, typically up to 160 characters, between mobile phones or from a computer to a phone. By opting into SMS ("short message service") from a web form or other medium, you agree to receive SMS messages from the Taunton Housing Authority. This includes SMS messages for appointment scheduling and appointment reminders, phone calls and paperwork requests, etc. Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply. See privacy policy at [Privacy Policy URL]. Message HELP for help. Reply STOP to any message to opt out. SMS consent is not shared with third parties or affiliates for marketing purposes.

Information Voluntarily Provided by You. This site collects voluntary information from you through surveys, e-mails, and any comments posted on social media pages hosted by this website (such as mini-blogs or social media pages). All such information, including comments and e-mails sent by you to this site will contain personally identifiable information.

Information Automatically Collected and Stored by this Site. This website and related portals do not use permanent “cookies”. They do, however, use temporary “sessions cookies” to allow visitors to interact with the site. “Session cookies” do not allow us to personally identify a visitor. These cookies are stored only in memory and are released when the user’s browser is shut down.

This site does collect and store your "Internet Protocol ("IP") address," (which does not identify you as an individual) indefinitely, as well as information about the date and time of your visit, whether a file you have requested exists, and how many "bytes" of information were transmitted to you over the Web from this site. We use your IP address to assess the frequency of visits to this site and the popularity of its various pages and functions. We will not attempt to match any personally identifiable information that you provide to us with your IP address, unless there are reasonable grounds to believe that doing so would provide information that is relevant and material to a criminal investigation.

Usage Data. In addition, the THA may use a tool called Google Analytics™ or other social media analytics to collect information about use of this site. Google Analytics or other tools collect information such as how often users visit this site, what pages they visit when they do so, and what other sites they used prior to coming to this site. We use the information we get from Google Analytics or other tools only to improve this site. Google Analytics and similar tools collect only the IP address assigned to you on the date you visit this site, rather than your name or other identifying information. We do not combine the information collected using these tools with personally identifiable information. Although Google Analytics plants a persistent cookie on your web browser to identify you as a unique user the next time you visit this site, the cookie cannot be used by anyone but Google. Google’s ability to use and share information collected by Google Analytics about your visits to this site is restricted by the Google Analytics Terms of Use and the Google Privacy Policy. Google Analytics Terms of Use are available online [here](#). Google Privacy Policy is available online [here](#). You can prevent Google Analytics from recognizing you on return visits to this site by disabling cookies on your browser.

Dissemination of Your Personally Identifiable Information. We do not sell any personally identifiable information collected through this website or related portals. However, once you voluntarily submit personally identifiable information to us related to your use of this website or related portals, its dissemination is governed by the Public Records Law (referenced above), the "Fair Information Practices Act”, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66A, and other applicable laws and regulations. The Records Retention Law requires THA to preserve records created or received by a housing authority employee. Pursuant to this retention requirement, emails or messages sent to a THA email account and information submitted via the THA website or related portals and comments posted or messages received via an official Taunton Housing Authority page on a third-party website (such as an official THA profile on a social network) could be treated as public records and may be permanently archived. Information that you submit voluntarily through third party social media sites where such sites are associated with the THA and when such information is publicly available, including your name, city or town, and the substance of anything that you post may be disseminated further by being posted online at this website or associated portals or be publicly discussed by an employee or official of the housing authority. In addition to social media postings, any emails, or other communications you send us

may be provided to a member of the public in response to a public records request. The information you voluntarily submit through emails will be disclosed only to THA employees or officials with a “need to know” for purposes of fulfilling their job responsibilities. They will only use information to answer your questions, respond to any requests for assistance, and fulfill any legal obligation. Where appropriate, we may provide the information submitted by you via social media sites or email to the person or company that is the subject of the inquiry, or to a government agency responsible for the matters presented in your communication.

For this reason, part or all the information you send us may be provided to a member of the public in response to a public records request. There are pieces of information, such as credit card numbers, social security numbers, drivers’ license numbers, PIN (personal identifier number), usernames, or passwords that generally are not considered public for the purposes of a public records request.

In addition, where required by law, sensitive personal information that you voluntarily submit will be disclosed only to THA employees or officials, or those under contract with the THA, with a "need to know" for purposes of fulfilling their job responsibilities. The information will be used for such purposes as; answering your questions, responding to any requests for assistance, generating summary statistics about usage, auditing applications and detecting fraud, aiding in the planning, design and development of the THA website or portals, and fulfilling THA’s legal obligations.

Your Access and Opportunity to Correct. The "Public Records Law" and the "Fair Information Practices Act" provide you with certain rights to get information about you that is in our records.

Security. Because this website or portals do not encrypt incoming e-mail or comments, you should not send messages containing information that you consider highly sensitive to this website or related portals. We use standard security measures to ensure that information provided by you, or sent via the social media pages or email, including your personally identifiable information, is not lost, misused, altered, or unintentionally destroyed. We also use software to monitor network traffic to identify unauthorized attempts to upload or change information, or otherwise cause damage. Except for authorized law enforcement investigations, no attempts are made to identify individual users of the THA website or portals, email submission features or the THA’s social media pages, such as Flickr™, YouTube™, Facebook™ or Twitter™ or their usage habits.

Policy changes. We will post substantive changes to this policy at least 30 days before they take effect. Any information we collect under the current privacy policy will remain subject to the terms of this policy. After any changes take effect, all new information we collect, if any, will be subject to the new policy.

Definitions

“Cookies” are files that a website can place on your computer. A cookie file contains unique information that a website can use to track such things as your password, lists of Web pages you

have visited, and the date when you last looked at a specific web page, or to identify your session at a particular website. A cookie file allows the website to recognize you as you click through pages on the website and when you later revisit the site. A website can use cookies to “remember” your preferences, and to record your browsing behavior on the Web. Although you can prevent websites from placing cookies on your computer by using your browser’s preference menu, disabling cookies may affect your ability to view or interact with some websites.

An “Internet Protocol Address” or “IP Address” is a series of numbers that identifies each computer and machine connected to the Internet. An IP address enables a server on a computer network to send you the file that you have requested on the Internet. The IP address disclosed to us may identify with the computer on which you are accessing the Internet, or a server owned by your Internet Service Provider. Because it is machine-specific, rather than person-specific, an IP address is not, in and of itself, personally identifiable information.

“Social Media”. A social media website is a website on a social media application that is usually maintained by an individual and has regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. A social media identify is a specific user identify that has been registered on a third-party social media site and is associated with the Agency. Government social media sites or identities typically provide forums for commentary or news on topics related to the government agency that hosts the social media site or has secured the social media identify. A typical social media site (whether hosted by the Agency or a third party) combines text, images, and links to other websites including blogs, wikis, and other media related to the topic and enables readers to leave comments in an interactive format.

“Weblog” or “Blog”. A weblog or blog is a Web site, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Government blogs typically provide commentary and news on topics related to the government agency hosting the blog. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to the topic, and enables readers to leave comments in an interactive format.