

# Municipality Domain Name Fact Sheet<sup>1</sup>

Many Massachusetts cities and towns have contacted the Information Technology Division (ITD) for guidance on registering domain names for use as the municipality's website address and/or for email addresses. As you are likely aware the purpose of a domain name is to provide an easily remembered word address instead of a numerical address for an Internet resource, such as a website or email account. We hope the information on this page will help municipalities make sound decisions about acquiring and using domain names.

## ***Use a .GOV domain name***

In 2002, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) announced that local governments would be able to use the .GOV domain. This was particularly good news at the time because also around that time period, registration of a .US domain name was opened up to non-governmental entities. Given that a .GOV domain name can only be used by United States government entities, using a .GOV domain name increases your users' trust in the authenticity of your website.

## ***GSA suggested naming conventions***

The GSA issued suggested naming conventions for local governmental units, which include the city or town name as well as the state postal abbreviation, e.g., [www.auburn-ma.gov](http://www.auburn-ma.gov) for the website and [@auburn-ma.gov](mailto:@auburn-ma.gov) or [@auburnma.gov](mailto:@auburnma.gov) for the email address. They also accept addresses without the hyphen:, e.g., [www.auburnma.gov](http://www.auburnma.gov). Using the “-ma” or “ma” format will distinguish the Auburn, Massachusetts site and email addresses from those of Auburn, Maine, Alabama, Washington or California.. We strongly recommend that municipalities adopt this naming convention as it will enhance the likelihood of approval by the GSA, formalize your preferred “brand”, make it easier for your citizens and other users to remember and benefit from your website, as well as provide assurance to your citizens your website is an official government website and that associated email addresses for your city or town resolve to municipal employees.

For consistency, we are suggesting an additional guideline. Official city or town names should be used rather than informal or popular abbreviations, for instance, [marlborough-ma.gov](http://marlborough-ma.gov), rather than [marlboro-ma.gov](http://marlboro-ma.gov).

Even if your municipality is already using another domain name or you have no website planned, we strongly urge that you reserve the domain name convention appropriate to your city or town for future use. You should also consider reserving any variations as well, for example:

[northhattleborough-ma.gov](http://northhattleborough-ma.gov)

[northhattleboroughma.gov](http://northhattleboroughma.gov)

[northhattleboro-ma.gov](http://northhattleboro-ma.gov)

[northhattleboroma.gov](http://northhattleboroma.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> This Fact Sheet was last updated on February 5, 2009

nattleborough-ma.gov  
nattleboroughma.govnattleboro-ma.gov  
nattleboroma.gov

### ***Getting and using a .GOV domain***

To obtain a .GOV domain, go to the GSA's <http://www.dotgov.gov/> website and follow their registration instructions. You may need to ask your Internet Service Provider (ISP) for some of the required technical information to complete the registration process for the .GOV domain.

GSA bills renewal fees based upon the initial date of registration. If you are planning to register more than one domain name, you can minimize renewal activity if you register them at the same time. After the GSA has granted you the domain, your technical staff and/or your ISP will need to add this domain to your Domain Name Service (DNS). They will then need to update your host machines, such as your web and mail servers, to use this domain name.

If you are using another party for your email service, you may need to coordinate between your ISP and your email provider as well. If your current email provider does not allow you to use your own domain name, you could consider switching to a provider that does.

### ***The .US domain***

Given that a .US domain name may be registered, not only by governmental units, but also by any U.S. resident, public service organization or business with a bona fide location in the United States, we strongly encourage you to also reserve any .US domain names that might be relevant to your community. Registering .US domain names may allow you to prevent instances in which unauthorized sites falsely represent themselves as official websites of your city or town. You can find information and register .US domains at <http://www.neustar.us>.

### ***Additional Information***

If you have any questions about domain names and your website presence, please contact Kerry Conard, Mass.Gov Project Manager, by phone at (617) 626-4452 or by e-mail at [Kerry.Conard@state.ma.us](mailto:Kerry.Conard@state.ma.us).

For any questions related to the above guideline, you may also contact Stephanie Zierten, Deputy General Counsel by phone at (617) 626-4698 or by e-mail at [Stephanie.Zierten@state.ma.us](mailto:Stephanie.Zierten@state.ma.us), or Linda Hamel, General Counsel by phone at (617) 626-4404 or by e-mail at [Linda.Hamel@state.ma.us](mailto:Linda.Hamel@state.ma.us).