

KALAMAZOO COUNTY CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS

ANNUAL REPORT

MEREDITH PLACE - CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS



2021

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To the Board of County Commissioners and Residents of Kalamazoo County

It's an honor for me to present the 2021 Annual Report for the Office of County Clerk and Register of Deeds. Last year was a significant one for our office as we moved forward on a number of new initiatives, while maintaining service in the areas of Vital Records, Register of Deeds, Elections, and County ID.

The Kalamazoo County Clerk is an elected position mandated by Article VII, Section 4 of the State Constitution. The Clerk derives its authority from the Michigan Constitution and statutory law.

This position has a diverse range of duties, including but not limited to:

- Clerk of the Board of Commissioners
- Registrar of Vital Records
- Clerk of the Circuit Court
- Chief Election Officer for the County

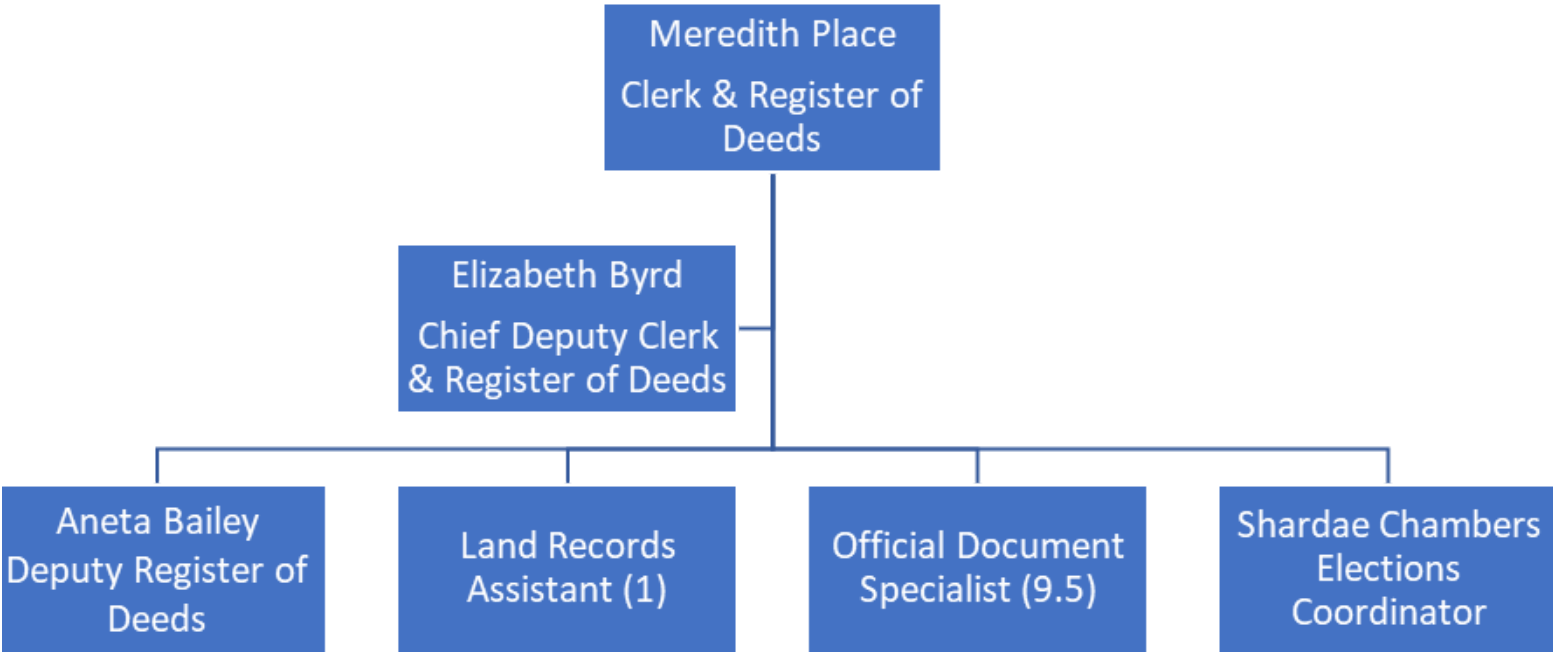


We would not be able to accomplish what we do without the tremendous support of the many departments within Kalamazoo County and Board of Commissioners. The collaborative partnerships we enjoy here allow us to think outside of the box on a daily basis to solve problems for our residents.

Thank you for your support! I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Clerk and Register of Deeds!

Meredith Place

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



2021 GOALS ACCOMPLISHED

RE-OPENED COUNTY ID PROGRAM AND LAUNCHED MOBILE UNIT

In April, we announced the immediate availability of the Kalamazoo County Identification Card through online appointments. The Program was closed March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We re-opened the program with expanded hours and in May launched the ID card mobile unit giving the most vulnerable residents access to identification in their community.

ONLINE VITAL RECORDS REQUEST

In September, the Clerk's Office partnered with Fidar Technologies to make requests for certified copies of marriage license, birth and death records easier and more convenient with the use of their Official Records Online (ORO) website. The website is secure and user-friendly and allows services our office provides to be a more accessible to the public.

MODERNIZED ELECTION WEBSITE

Our office unveiled a new website to increase transparency in communicating the results of all elections in Kalamazoo County. For the first time, election results for each contest includes the total number of registered voters, poll book totals, turnout percentage and the number of votes cast by absentee ballot and at the polls on Election Day for each precinct.

FINGERPRINTING AND CONCEALED PISTOL LICENSE

In October, to enhance the CPL application process and turnaround time, we purchased fingerprinting equipment using CPL fund dollars. Staff became certified by attending Michigan State Police training. Revenue generated from the statutory fingerprinting charge will pay for the equipment within one year.

VITAL RECORDS

**Elizabeth Byrd***Chief Deputy Clerk | Register of Deeds*

Overview

By law, the County Clerk serves as the local registrar for the county. The Vital Records division is responsible for the preparation, filing, and preservation of information on the births, deaths, and marriages within Kalamazoo County. The public is provided certified copies of these documents pursuant to legal guidelines.

Certified copies can be obtained by visiting our office located in the County Administration Building, by mail, or by use of our online request system.

Business Registrations

Business registrations filed at the county level are administered and overseen by the Vital Records Division. All businesses that operate in Kalamazoo County are required to register with our office unless they are a corporation, a limited liability company, or limited liability partnership.


Concealed Pistol License (CPL)

The Vital Records Division accepts and processes CPL applications for residents of Kalamazoo County. In Michigan, a resident must obtain a concealed pistol license (CPL), in order to carry a pistol concealed. Individuals applying for a new CPL are required by law to apply at the County Clerk's Office. A CPL may be renewed at the County Clerk's Office, by mail or online with the Michigan State Police.

The County Clerk is responsible for storing and maintaining all records; issuing the license; and issuing statutory disqualifications, notices of suspension, and revocations.

Notary Public

A Notary Public is an officer appointed by the Michigan Secretary of State to attest to the authenticity of a person's signature, to administer oaths, and to witness acknowledgments. Our office processed 494 notary applications during 2021.

A black and white photograph showing a close-up of a person's hand holding a pen and writing on a document. The hand is wearing a white sleeve and a striped cuff. The document has some text and a circular stamp.

*Thank you for your ***very*** prompt and thorough response. It was a pleasure to contact your office and hear back!" - Customer Comment
February 23, 2021*

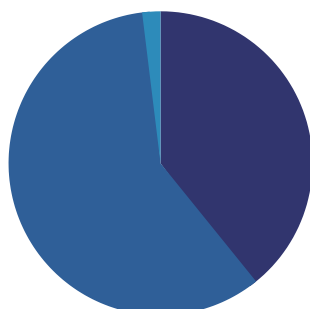
VITAL RECORDS COMPARISON (2018-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Certified Copies (birth, death, marriage)	18002	18825	19313	13972	17984
Deaths Recorded & Filed	2831	2978	2897	3427	3519
Births Recorded & Filed	4657	4914	4770	4525	4539
Marriage Licenses Issued & Filed	1689	1571	1486	1213	1473
Business Registrations Filed	1332	1230	1206	1018	1074
Notary Commissions Issued, Bonds Filed	452	479	488	319	494
Military Discharge Recording	1	8	1	2	1

2021 Kalamazoo County CPL Applications

Total: 4383

Submitted by Mail
1.9%



Submitted In-Person
58.9%

Submitted Online
39.2%

"I received my birth certificate today. Thank you to the Clerk's office team; very helpful and professional!"

*- Customer Comment
June 5, 2021*

REGISTER OF DEEDS

**Elizabeth Byrd***Chief Deputy Clerk | Register of Deeds***Aneta Bailey***Deputy Register of Deeds*

About the Register of Deeds

The Register of Deeds is the official recording office for all land records in Kalamazoo County. The Register of Deeds is a constitutional office established by the Michigan State Legislature as the custodian of legal documents pertaining to real property.

Our office uses the latest technology available to maintain land records for Kalamazoo County that date back to the mid-1800's. Once a document is recorded it can be reviewed and/or copied by anyone. All records are open to the public during business hours. We do not prepare documents, nor do we answer legal questions.

The Register of Deeds is also the Chairperson of the County Plat Board, whose job is to oversee the subdivision of land within Kalamazoo County.

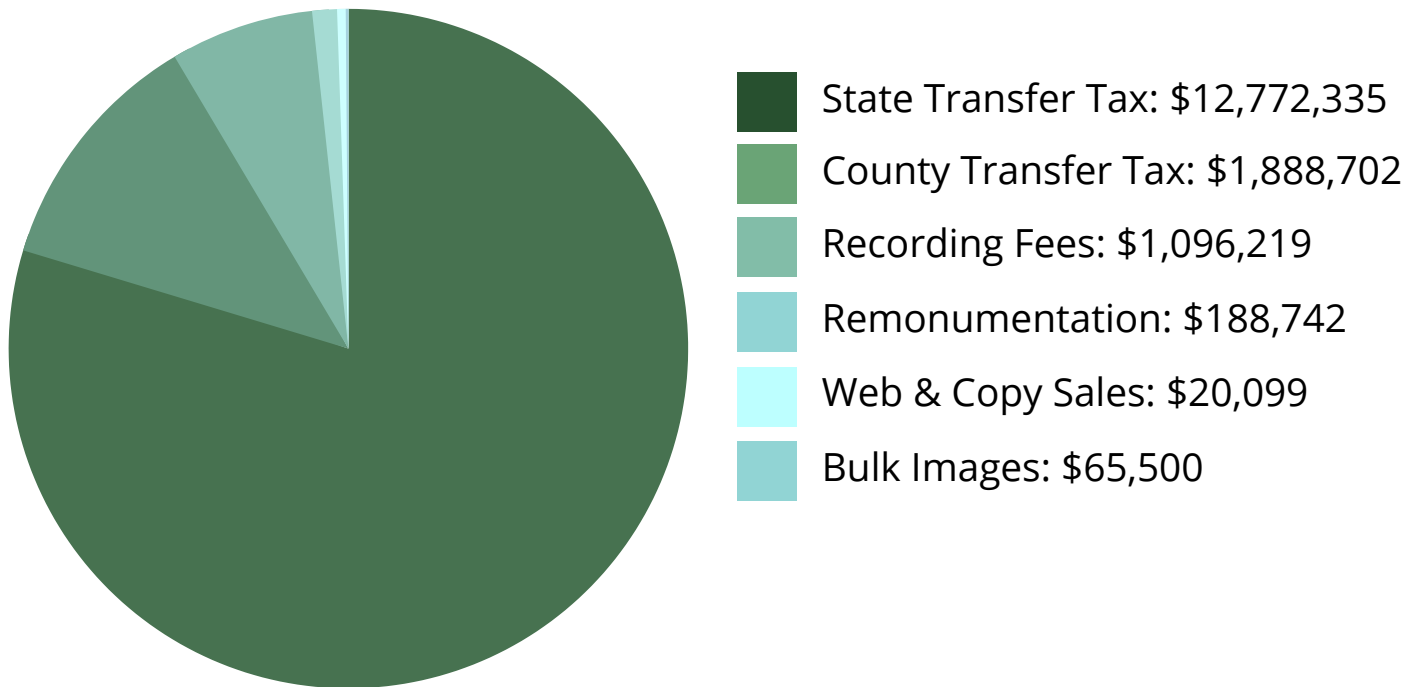
Lending institutions, abstract offices, realtors, surveyors, attorneys, and the general public are among the many researching the recordings and filings housed at the Register of Deeds.

The work of the Register of Deeds Office does not end after a document is recorded. After the document is imaged, certain important information contained in the document, such as the legal description and the name of the buyer and seller, is indexed in our computer system so that the public can easily review information regarding the ownership history of a particular piece of property. Maintaining an accurate index system is crucial as it is used to prove a chain of title or property ownership. All documents are handled many times before the recording process is complete and instruments are ready to be returned.

*"Just a note to compliment your staff. I had to record 3 transactions a week or so ago and they were super helpful" -Customer Comment
April 17, 2021*

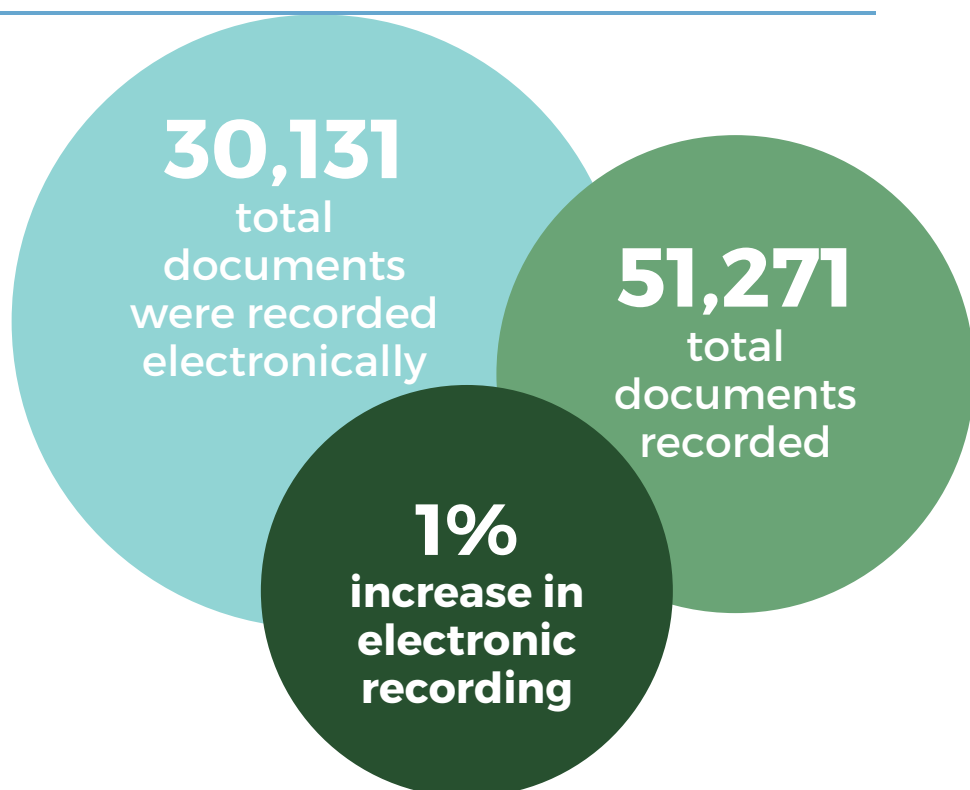
MORTGAGE RECORD 43 COUNTY

FUNDS RECEIPTED



DOCUMENT RECORDING

"I am writing to inform you of the excellent customer service I received from your office today. During these challenging times, it was a pleasure to work with your staff. Their customer service was excellent and professional."
- Customer Comment
June 22, 2021



ELECTIONS



Shardae Chambers
Elections Coordinator

Overview

The Kalamazoo County Clerk is the chief election officer in Kalamazoo County. This includes overseeing the programming, printing, and distributing of ballots and coordinating the county canvass of federal, state, county, city, township, and school elections.

The Elections Division provides guidance and instruction to the local jurisdictions who conduct many of the day-to-day elections operations and performs oversight to ensure that the proper administration of elections is being adhered to. Other duties include assisting local clerks and citizens in interpreting Michigan Election Law and Campaign Finance Law according to State statutes.

Campaign Finance

In addition, we maintain the many election files that serve Kalamazoo County candidates, residents, and the public at large.

Our Elections Coordinator makes every effort to align Kalamazoo County filing policies with the ever-changing Campaign Finance Law governed by the Bureau of Elections in Lansing.

During 2021, we held two campaign finance trainings, oversaw, and accepted campaign filings from 85 candidates and 17 ballot initiative groups.

Renewed Ballot Printing Contract

In September 2021, the Elections Division put out a request for proposal (RFP) for ballot printing and elections supplies. Over the course of 4 months, we held several meetings with vendors and local clerks from all 19 jurisdictions in the County. We concluded a competitive bid process by awarding a contract to Plerus, formerly MER, a Kalamazoo-based printing company we've had a relationship with for over 20 years. The RFP process has already resulted in thousands of dollars in savings for the County.



74,136

Ballots
cast
in 2021

2021 ELECTIONS RUNDOWN

206,218
registered county voters

**May 4th
Special
Election**

**VOTER
TURNOUT:
15.6%**

29,416
**Total Ballots
Cast**

**80%
BALLOTS
CAST BY
ABSENTEE**

**August 3rd
Special
Election**

**VOTER
TURNOUT:
20.7%**

9,010
**Total Ballots
Cast**

**76%
BALLOTS
CAST BY
ABSENTEE**

**November 2nd
City General
Election**

**VOTER
TURNOUT:
19.2%**

35,710
**Total Ballots
Cast**

**70%
BALLOTS
CAST BY
ABSENTEE**

COUNTY IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Kalamazoo County Identification Card is a photo identification (ID) available to Kalamazoo County residents age 11 and older.

The Kalamazoo County ID is intended to recognize all Kalamazoo County residents and enable them to connect with public safety, civic, and community services.

Without a form of identification, a person is not recognized as a member of the community and not afforded the same opportunities as other community members. Having a form of credible identification enables people to become fully participating members of the community.

To receive an ID card, you must be able to show proof of residence in Kalamazoo County and provide proof of identity. Applicants must produce documents totaling 300 – 400 points following the ID program's point system to qualify for a County ID.

2021 COUNTY ID PROGRAM ADVISORY BOARD

CHAIR, FRANCISCO VILLEGAS

CLERK MEREDITH PLACE

SHERIFF RICHARD FULLER

COMMISSIONER JEN STREBS

CHARMELLE ABDULLAH

EVA ALVAREZ

TIFFANY BURNS

KESHIA DICKASON

KATIE HURLEY

LARRY PROVANCHER

ANDY SANFORD

ADRIAN VAZQUEZ

A black and white photograph of a young woman with dark hair, smiling and holding up a Kalamazoo County ID card. She is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored collared shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a public setting.

1,715

IDs issued in
2021

COUNTY ID PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

	2018	2019	2020	2021
New IDs Issued	1517	1152	226	996
Replacement IDs Issued	50	209	53	355
Renewal IDs Issued	0	0	0	364
Gift of Life Sign-ups	46	51	62	68
Mobile Unit Events	0	0	0	27

2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Launched ID Card Mobile Unit

In May 2021, we launched County ID mobile unit making the ID program accessible to the people who need it most in their communities. Staff works with local organizations to set-up the mobile unit and advertise to community members so they obtain an ID without having to travel to the Administration Building and, instead, receive an ID on the spot.

In 2021, the mobile unit worked with over 10 local organizations and held 27 mobile units where we issued 244 new, 112 renewal, and 9 replacement IDs.

Received \$25,000 Grant

In 2021, we received \$25,000.00 in grant funding from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to support the County ID program.



2022-2023 GOALS

Build and Develop Our Team

The Clerk/Register's Office is not adequately staffed. We lack a supervisor position and full-time staff in the County ID Program. We will be seeking ways to add a supervisory position to our team while requesting adequate staffing allocation in order to deliver consistent high-quality programs and services.

In addition, we recognize that strong teams are built intentionally, and our goal is to help each member of our team grow and develop personally and professionally. We will be seeking to expand educational opportunities for staff as well as maintain a strong focus on the County's strategic priorities as we onboard new members of our team.

Improve Software System

After a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process in 2021, our office plans on implementing a new software/point of sale system through Fidlar Technologies in 2022. The new software will expand options for customers to request and apply for documents in our office online, thus making it easier for customers to interact with our office.

Digitization Project

In 2022, will be expanding access to land records. Currently, land records available online to the public do not go back far enough to meet industry standard of 40 years, which leaves lenders, abstractors, title companies, attorneys with no choice but to physically come into the office to view documents. While will be expanding access we will also be preserving and protecting the County's permanent records.

THANK YOU

MEREDITH PLACE
KALAMAZOO COUNTY CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS

KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT
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KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT
In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...



2021

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