

Register of Deeds Office

Monthly Report to the Board of Commissioners

Topic: Understanding the Role and Responsibilities of the Register of Deeds

The Register of Deeds Office serves an important role in protecting property rights and maintaining the official land records of the county. While much of my office's work isn't seen by the public, these responsibilities affect property owners, residents, businesses, financial institutions, attorneys, title companies, and other county offices.

What Does the Register of Deeds Office Do?

1. Records Legal Documents Affecting Real Property

My office receives, examines for recording requirements, and records documents affecting real estate within the county. These documents include:

- Deeds
- Mortgages and mortgage discharges
- Liens and lien releases
- Land contracts and assignments
- Easements and rights-of-way
- Restrictions, covenants, and other instruments affecting property
- Plats and other documents relating to land descriptions

Recording documents creates an official public record and helps provide notice of interests affecting real property. My office must perform its duties in accordance with Michigan laws and recording requirements.

2. Maintains and Preserves Permanent Public Records

My office is responsible for maintaining recorded instruments and associated indexes so that historical and current land records remain accessible. This includes protecting records from loss or deterioration, maintaining accurate indexing, and supporting the preservation and accessibility of records through appropriate storage, imaging, and electronic systems.

These records are important when property is sold, refinanced, inherited, researched, or involved in a legal matter.

3. Provides Public Access to Land Records

My office assists members of the public and professionals who need to locate, review, or obtain copies of recorded documents. Our customers include homeowners, prospective buyers, title companies, attorneys, lenders, surveyors, and other government offices.

Providing reliable access to these records supports real estate transactions, property research, and the public's ability to review official records.

4. Collects Recording Fees and Applicable Taxes

My office collects authorized recording fees and taxes associated with the documents that are presented for recording, including real estate transfer tax when required by law. These collections must then be processed and distributed in accordance with applicable laws and county procedures.

5. Supports Property Transactions and the County's Legal Record System

Accurate recording and indexing helps establish a reliable history of recorded interests in real property. My office's records support title searches, real estate closings, lending decisions, estate matters, and legal proceedings.

The Register of Deeds Office does not independently guarantee ownership, determine all competing property claims, or replace the work of attorneys, title professionals, assessors, or other agencies. Its role is to maintain the official recorded documents and perform the duties established by law.

Why This Office Matters to the County

The Register of Deeds Office is an important part of the county's public record infrastructure. Our work helps preserve property-related information, supports the real estate industry, provides access to historical records, and ensures that documents submitted for recording are handled according to applicable requirements.

Although many of these functions occur without public attention, maintaining accurate, accessible, and well-preserved records requires trained staff, reliable technology, secure recordkeeping systems, and adequate resources.

Closing

The Register of Deeds Office is more than a document-recording operation. We are the custodians of an essential body of public records that supports property transactions, protects the integrity of the county's land records, and serves residents and professionals throughout the county.

Our responsibility is to ensure that these records are properly recorded, carefully maintained, and accessible to the public in accordance with Michigan law.