2026-2027 Archive Plan
Presented By
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(Exhibit #4)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to define the restoration and preservation, digital capture, storage, retention and management of archived records belonging to the District Clerk's Office. Records maintained in the District Clerk's office have been identified to fall under the category of "Preservation and Restoration Plan" that will provide reproduction and archiving of such records and assist in maximizing storage space and making records readily available for optimum viewing. It is the intent of the District Clerk to follow guidelines set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commissioner for preservation of such records.

Currently, this office has criminal cases from 1996 digitized. We hope to transfer records that were initially on microfilm to digital format for faster and easier retrieval. In 2022 I presented a plan and requested Commissioner's Court to utilize a portion of the $7,343,490 our county received in ARPA funds to digitize and preserve old records including microfilm to avoid losing them. The Commissioner's Court did not act on my request. The court said it would prioritize all the requests and make decisions according to the needs and what was best for the county.

The Net Data system was installed in October 1995, and they have an imaging system which allows us to create digital images. The District Clerk's Office was unable to use this system at that time due to lack of funds. We started using it in 2000, imaging minutes and criminal cases. The ultimate goal is for all criminal and civil cases to be imaged for easier access. We began to scan and image all documents into each case within the case management system (excluding setting letters and subpoenas) in all cases in 2015 when I took office. Our office is in the process of changing case management software from Net Data to Tyler Enterprise Justice system. It has the potential to take 18-24 months to complete the process. The goal is to import all court data from Net Data over to Tyler Enterprise Justice. Once completed and we are live on Tyler EJS, we will be integrated with E file Texas and ResearchTX. Brown County will go live with Tyler EJS on November 9, 2026.

Designation of Court Documents subject to the plan:

All civil, divorce, tax and criminal case files, pending and final or closed.

The Process

Active case documents are scanned into Net Data Real Vision Image System for Record Storage and retrieval convenience.

After a case is final, all case's records will be digitized as time will permit Digital images will be stored in each case and will be available to anyone searching for anything in that file and may be photo copied for a fee.

Original documents are returned to this office for storage until the retention period has been met. The exception per State Library and Archive Rules are criminal judgments or docket sheets upon which defendant's finger prints have been placed. They remain as a permanent paper document. This is a continuing process as new cases are filed daily. Our goal is to back image all cases that have not been imaged for convenient retrieval and to serve as backup.

Purpose

H.B. 1513 created a dedicated district court **records technology fund** and authorized District Clerks to collect an additional fee $5.00 not to exceed $10.00 per filing. We were authorized through this Court to collect $10. The bill provided that these funds be used only for the preservation and restoration of the district court records archive. The bill authorized the district Courts to effectively preserve and efficiently retrieve the large amount of legal documents that are required to be preserved. SB 658 effective September 1, 2019 allowed the archive fund to remain $10 permanently.

This bill authorized the Commissioner's Court to adopt a records archive fee for deposit in the District Court Records Technology Fund (Archive Fund) as part of the county's annual budget. This additional revenue will be dedicated to helping district clerk's focus on preserving older records.

The effective date of this Act was June 19, 2009 and should expire upon completion of the projects necessary to preserve and digitize the district court records. This appears to be a process that could take years to complete.

This was repealed as of 1/1/2022 as a part of SB41 where the State has restructured Civil filing fees into one consolidated fee of $30.00 that is collected and placed in a separate fund to be used for records preservation and records management.

GOAL

The goal is to reproduce and archive all documents, regardless of type, as efficiently as possible. The District Clerk's Office is also looking at restoring records, suspending or reducing deterioration of public records, improving the public access to these documents in a manner that reduces the risk of deterioration, and possibly reducing or eliminating paper documents.

The goal is to digitize and archive all documents, regardless of type, as efficiently as possible. Digital images will be easily searchable through Net Data and or Enterprise Justice.

To complete our efforts toward electronic storage of all case files, we envision maintaining civil closed cases on our shelves until they have met their retention and use computers to access all records with a view to the future of using the computers entirely for court activity.

With less cost to the County, we may continue this ongoing process by using the archive fee to cover the cost of scanning paper source documents. In addition to preserving the documents, the images will be added to our existing imaging system and improve customer service.

Our goal is to eventually get all records scanned from January, 1996 forward and eventually be able to scan all records as each case is closed. The ultimate goal is to back scan all closed files prior to 1996 for easy access and protection of the records from elements such as natural disasters. I realize this will take a lot of time and work but will be well worth it to Brown County.

Expenditures, including but not limited to:

Computer hardware, including any and all peripherals necessary,
Computer software,
Service Provider and other out- sourcing services to provide scanning and records retention for paper file and micofiche.
Relevant staff salary
Data storage and data storage supplies
Travel expenses to and from a service provider to deliver and pickup case documents, if necessary

SECTION ONE: RECORDS CURRENTLY IN REPOSITORY

INVENTORY

Currently the District Clerk's office holds docket books, microfiche and files that are related to civil and criminal actions which have occurred throughout the years.

PERMANENT RECORDS

After reducing and/or reproducing these records, the District Clerk plans to utilize the space for the growing number of cases occurring daily. The reproduction will allow better access to the records and should alleviate over crowding of the basement and storage areas by assisting in eliminating items that are not required to maintain permanently. Please keep in mind that some requirements impose the County to keep the actual paper file such as fingerprints.

SECTION THREE: FUTURE PLANS

Records are currently imaged by case file and the District Clerk has inquired into the possibility of a third-party vendor housing these images off sight. This would assist in archiving the imaged records and provide the capability of viewing them on-line at anytime for approved users. This would be an addition to our main system to avoid not being able to access records if our main system is down or court needed to be performed off-site. This would be an ongoing service that would be available for judges, court staff and the general public when the need arises. In our world today, paperless ideas and processes and technology are around the corner. We need to be working in that direction.

PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL ACCESS

It is the intent of the District Clerk's Office to make public records more accessible. This will allow additional access to District Court records, and provide an archive of records.

Currently the District Clerk has archived and preserved old bound Criminal books that were in a state of deterioration from 1884-1925. It is the intent of the District Clerk to continue this preservation project until all books and records are safely accessible. Kofile has provided this service and has digitized the records they have restored for accessibility. This project was approved through Commissioner's Court March 23, 2020. The District Clerk intends to continue restoring old books. The District Clerk has now completed a restoration project utilizing Revolution Data Systems that included archiving Civil books from 1884-1925. This is a process the District Clerk will continue until fragile historical records are safe from the elements and to protect them from aging. The District Clerk has recently completed the

project of archiving and preserving all of the microfiches held in the District Clerk's office through Revolution Data Systems. Completion of this project will allow access to the records on microfiche that were in jeopardy of being lost by the process of the film going bad and loss of records. This project was approved by Commissioner's Court and began in September of 2025 and was completed in September 2026. We plan to have these records uploaded into the new Tyler EJS CMS if it is deemed necessary.

Since 2020 digitizing these records has allowed a decrease of foot traffic within the courthouse and allowed the public access through mail and email during the pandemic which was a safer option for obtaining records for the public and for court staff. Once we go live with Tyler EJS there will be public accessibility to most of the District Clerk records for attorneys, courts, and the public which should also make the court process more transparent and bring our county into the 21st Century.