

How Digital Records Empower Hidalgo County's Local Economy

Hidalgo County, Texas

Population: 927,197

Age of oldest record: 1857

The need: Digitizing millions of historic records while increasing public access to new records from six months to three days.

"My relationship with Kofile goes back a long way. They've been good partners, so I would recommend them."

— **Arturo Guajardo Jr.**
Hidalgo County Clerk



Modernizing Records for Efficiency and Growth

Over five terms as Hidalgo County Clerk, Arturo Guajardo Jr. has modernized how hundreds of documents are digitized and made available to the public each day. The work of his office ensures that one of Texas's most populous counties continues to grow.

"People might not realize how records have an actual effect on the economy of your community," Guajardo said. "Sharing data digitally and instantly changes the game."

Hidalgo County partnered with Kofile to preserve, digitize, and automate its public records, including land deeds, marriage and birth certificates, Commissioners Court minutes, and probate cases. The initiative spanned more than a decade and involved hundreds of millions of pages. Deed records alone exceeded 900 million documents.

"It's become much more efficient," Guajardo said. "If you want to be a visionary, you should definitely be open-minded about using the latest technology."

The Move to Digital Records

When Guajardo first began working at the Clerk's Office in 1999, Hidalgo County had a six-month backlog.

"Now that's crazy to be six months behind in certifying records," he said. "Say I'm a developer borrowing \$1 million from the bank for a subdivision. I'm paying interest for six months on that million dollar loan without even being able to get started."

Today, the turnaround for certifying a land record is 72 hours. Developers, bankers, and title companies receive updates electronically rather than traveling to the courthouse to pick up stacks of papers each day.

Guajardo was part of a group of visionary clerks who lobbied the Texas legislature for a \$10 fee dedicated to records preservation and management, which was first approved in 1991.

"The majority of the clerks throughout the state of Texas had no desire to change," Guajardo said. "Now, we are doing the same functions for our communities, but in two totally different arenas. We migrated towards the digital world, and they stayed on paper."

At every step of the journey, the team at Kofile has supported Guajardo's vision, providing the expertise and technical support that allows him to serve his community efficiently.

"The relationships that we have with the team — from the salespeople to the upper management — are important," Guajardo said. "If I pick up the phone and call them, I'm going to get somebody to answer me, and I'm going to have their attention."

A Legacy and the Next Chapter

At the front of the new courthouse, restored volumes are housed in a dedicated Hall of Records designed to preserve Hidalgo County's history for generations. About 8,000 books are displayed on bookshelves and color-coded by record type: marriage licenses in black, deed records in maroon, and county records in green.

"Every time someone comes in who has never been in this building, I walk them through the Hall of Records, and they're all in awe," Guajardo said.

The project to preserve and digitize Hidalgo County's oldest records is nearing completion. Guajardo continues to work with Kofile to usher in the next chapter in the clerk's office.

"It's interesting to see where we're going with it with all this AI that's out there. There are some pretty cool things down the pipeline that we're excited about," Guajardo said.