

Questions & Answers About Orange County Funding for Chapel Hill Public Library

What's the difference between the libraries?

- Chapel Hill Public Library (CHPL) is a municipal public library operated by the Town of Chapel Hill, with a single facility.
- Orange County Public Library is a county library system, with a main library in Hillsborough and a recently opened branch library in Carrboro.

How much funding does Orange County provide to the Town for library services?

The County currently provides \$621,323 to the Town for library services, which represents 14.4% of CHPL's total Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget of \$4,297,174.*

CHPL's total budget is comprised of two different budgets:

- Operating budget for collections, programs, supplies, etc. \$864,641
- Personnel budget for staff, insurance, etc. \$3,432,533

The Town does not use County funding for full-time staff, so if County funding were eliminated, the operating budget of \$864,641 would be reduced by 72%

**This does not include the Community Arts & Culture budget of \$686,371*

Why does Orange County provide funding for Chapel Hill Public Library?

County funding for municipal libraries is a common practice, rooted in two reasons:

- **The municipality provides library services to a portion of county residents, rather than the county doing so.** The Town of Chapel Hill provides library services to approx. 64,000 Orange County residents who live within the town limits, or 40% of total county population.
- **The funding allows county residents that don't live within town limits to have an account at the municipal library without paying an out-of-area fee.** Currently, that amounts to 14,813 county residents who, if county funding were zeroed out, would have to either pay for an account or lose access.

What would happen if Orange County stops funding Chapel Hill Public Library?

- As with any public library, ALL people – regardless of where they live - would still be welcome into the facility, be able to use study spaces and WiFi, and attend programs.
- Since CHPL would then be funded primarily by municipal tax dollars, the Town would charge an annual out-of-service area fee (currently \$65) for anyone who doesn't live within the Town's corporate limits and wants to check out materials from CHPL.
- It is highly unlikely that all 14,813 county residents would be able to pay that fee, therefore there would still be a significant funding gap.

- To make up that remaining funding gap, the Town could consider one or all of the following measures:
 - Increase revenues by raising property taxes
 - Increase revenues by increasing printing fees and charging for meeting room use
 - Reduce costs by cutting collections budgets
 - Reduce costs by laying off part-time staff and reducing weekend hours, as part-time staff primarily provide service on weekends and evenings

What's been talked about in the past?

- Orange County funding for CHPL has been discussed many times over the past decade, most recently with the Library Funding Task Force. This interjurisdictional group took a deep dive and developed several recommendations – none of which were to do away with the funding altogether.
- One of the task force recommendations was to wait and see what, if any, the impact the County's Southern Branch would have on CHPL usage. Data collected thus far shows that the Southern Branch has had little to no meaningful impact on usage:
 - CHPL library visits in March 2025: 33,348
 - CHPL library visits in March 2026: 33,545

 - Circulation in the year prior to Southern Branch opening: 1,276,091
 - Circulation in the year since Southern Branch opening: 1,209,403

 - Program attendance in March 2025: 1585
 - Program attendance in March 2026: 1622