

BUDGET 2026

Douglas County Libraries

2026 Budget Message

This 2026 budget continues to sustain the investments our customers have prized for years.

- Consistent and convenient Library hours of availability.
- Clean, contemporary, and well-maintained facilities.
- Premium service delivered by talented, well-trained, and engaged staff.
- Fresh, curated content that tracks with customer demand.
- Bespoke, premium, reading-centric events and activities.

Revenue

Douglas County citizens directly support our libraries. From that support in 2025, our Libraries will provide those prized services, break ground on a new facility in Sterling Ranch, Colorado, and return approximately \$5,000,000 in previously committed funds to taxpayers from 2025 revenues.

People

The Library continues to show value to our most important resource, our staff, by evaluating wages and salaries against the Denver-area market. This year's increases sustain our competitiveness with reasonable outlays following several years of catch-up work.

Content

Douglas County customers consume library content (both digital and physical) at very high rates compared to national averages and peers.

Events & Activities

The 2026 budget sustains and grows our investment in bespoke, high-quality events and activities.

Capital Maintenance

The 2026 budget supports multiple capital projects to maintain facilities at a high level.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Pasicznyuk

Douglas County Libraries

Description of Services

Douglas County Libraries serves a population of approximately 384,275 Douglas County residents at libraries in Castle Pines, Castle Rock, Highlands Ranch, Lone Tree, Louviers, Parker, Roxborough, and online at DCL.org. Services may be divided into the following broad categories:

Inspiring Reading

Douglas County Libraries encourages lifelong reading. Staff collaborate with customers of all ages to determine their likes and dislikes and recommend good reads. We introduce community members to new authors and experiences through conversations, promotions, displays and events. Many staff have advanced readers' advisory skills, helping them find suitable reading level materials for young people. From picture books to early readers, to research and recreational reading, staff recommend books well suited to advancing and challenging readers. The library also hosts a variety of book clubs, providing opportunities for readers to critically explore stories and discuss their meanings in their lives.

Circulation

Circulation consists of the provision of books, e-books, periodicals, audios, videos, and other library content for lending use to the public. Through September of 2025, we had total circulation of 4,539,355, an increase of 5.7% over the same period in 2024. Our holds service accounts for about 16% of our annual physical circulation.

Library Content

Our process for selecting materials for our collections is three-pronged and includes centralized collection development, input from staff, and use of materials requests by customers. Online materials requests allow community-driven purchases and borrowing from other libraries. We received 4,037 customer materials requests from January-September 2025, 16.6% more than the same period in 2024. Of those, 64% were fulfilled through purchase, ILL (interlibrary loan), or Prospector; the remaining 36% were not yet published, were unavailable from vendors, could not be borrowed from any other U.S. library, or did not meet selection criteria. Throughout the first nine months of 2025, we loaned 8,600 items (+4.7% over 2024), and our customers borrowed 32,109 items via Prospector/ILL (+14.1% over 2024).



Online Services

In 2025, from January-September, we had 1,423,581 visits to our website, a 7% decrease from the same period in 2024. However, customers visited our catalog 2.5% more than during the same period in 2024 (2,360,613 times), suggesting that more customers may have bookmarked the catalog, bypassing the website. During the same period, downloadable materials, including music, books and audiobooks, accounted for 37% of total circulation.

We offer self-paced online learning programs on languages and computer software, real-time homework and résumé help, plus access to full-text magazine and journal articles for students of all ages. Our online databases were used 66,949 times in the first nine months of 2025, a 5.6% increase compared to the same period in 2024.

Community Gathering Spaces

The library serves as a key community gathering place. We welcomed 1,072,965 visitors at our seven locations from January through September 2025, a 7.7% increase over the same period in 2024. Our public computers and wireless access offer a comfortable environment in which to work, study, stay up with current events, or keep in touch with friends. Visitors used our wireless services about 714,327 times in the first nine months of 2025, about 4.7% more than in 2024. In the same period, more than 40,000 customers logged on to a public computer, for 27,000 hours of use. Customers checked out 7,000 Tech It Out computers for in-library use.

Civic groups, groups planning special events, nonprofits, and organizations of all kinds used our popular meeting rooms 10,893 times from January through September 2025. Most of our libraries also offer small meeting and study rooms that double as office space, tutoring classrooms, or just a quiet place to contemplate or meet friends.



Inspiring Connection: Storytime and Other Events

Library events address a variety of interests and are designed to meet the needs of all age groups. Summer Reading 2025 reached 17,043 participants, 2% more than 2024 and our highest participation since 2015. In January-September of 2025, we offered 3,739 children's events (up 12.9% over the same period in 2024) that reached 151,156 attendees, up 32.3% from 2024. In the first nine months of 2025, we served more than 12,120 adults (an increase of 108.6% over 2024) through 783 events (up 36.6%).

Storytime attendance alone accounted for 128,161 attendees, a 24.9% increase. Staff trained in preparing children to read emphasize narrative, vocabulary, rhyming and song in a fun and interactive environment that enlivens minds and introduces young people and their caregivers to the joy of reading. The early literacy skills that children learn in Storytime help them translate words to images, develop their brains, and nurture the cognitive, emotional and social skills they need to develop the habits of lifelong learners. We extend this program beyond library locations with library outreach, in which Book Start staff and volunteers read and tell stories at child daycare centers and schools in Douglas County. In the first nine months of 2025, Book Start provided DCL Storytime to 26,906 children.

In addition to Storytimes, children's events employ a wide variety of techniques and activities to allow young children to explore new ideas and develop advanced skills. From pairing teens with struggling young readers, to group reading comprehension competitions, to fun hands-on science experiments, young people have many opportunities to advance their skills in a safe environment. Teen events engage young people in creative activities and community service.

Adults benefit from programs and events that highlight adult literacy, high school equivalency (HSE), English as a second language (ESL), local economic development and current affairs, and technology literacy. Much of our adult event growth in the first three quarters of 2025 was in hands-on events, covering arts and crafts, cooking and tasting, and wellness activities such as yoga and sound therapy. Family events such as Storybook Holiday offer ways for people to connect and celebrate, all while making lifetime memories. Author events give customers the opportunity to mingle with writers, celebrate reading, and hear authors read from their latest works. Our annual DCL Brew Tour helps us engage hundreds of adults who might not otherwise visit the library, and strengthens our partnerships with local businesses.

Community Engagement

Douglas County Libraries strives to create connections throughout our community to help it continue to thrive. We deliver engaging events, offer hospitality services and meeting spaces, build strong civic, community and business partnerships, and provide meaningful community outreach. Our staff ensure DCL is connected with our community and seek to find new and meaningful ways to support the growth of our community. As we build partnerships with our government partners, schools, local businesses, and community nonprofits, we promote library services and work to keep DCL's brand strong within the community we serve.

Our Cuddle Up & Read service, which encourages parents of new babies to get baby a library card and begin reading together from day one, touched 2,900 families in January–September 2025. In the same period, our partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library grew to 8,985 active participants in the county, each of whom receive a new book to keep each month from the time they are signed up through age five. This equates to 85,914 books added to kids' home libraries in nine months. Advertising and community sponsorships create tens of millions of brand impressions annually, reaching people across the county as they engage in non-library activities such as youth sports and recreation.

Volunteers

Volunteerism at DCL grew by more than 6% in the first nine months of 2025, with 1,187 active volunteers donating 22,960 hours of service. Opportunities to work with adult learners and seniors, helping with book sales, shelving, reading to children, supporting birthday parties, and preserving local history make our volunteer opportunities a vibrant service that also provides job skills, personal growth, and community involvement.

Inspiring Discovery: Reference Services

Our staff members provide informational and research assistance to thousands of customers each year. In the first nine months of this year, we answered 56,641 reference questions. Staff respond to requests for information through in-person interviews, phone requests, instant messaging, email, and community interviews, doing so in a timely fashion with well-researched answers. Our collection of current and in-depth reference materials supplements staff efforts and supports the community's interest in pursuing answers on their own.

Our DCL for Business service offers dedicated staff and resources trained to support the needs of entrepreneurs and small businesses with timely market analysis, in-depth research, and business startup plans. Business librarians served more than 100 business clients from January through September 2025.

DCL Archives & Local History

This entity collects and preserves the history of Douglas County in order to provide historical research resources to the public through reference assistance and events in the library, in schools, and for historical societies. Archivists connect with customers in the library and via outreach, a robust website, and social media.

Archives & Local History enjoyed significant growth in the first three quarters of 2025. Its website had 27,877 visits, a 149.7% increase over 2024, and engaged sessions were up by 48% (a user is engaged when he or she visits two or more pages after their first interaction with the site, achieves a goal such as navigating to a specific page, or stays on a page for at least 10 seconds before navigating away).

Net Promoter Score

In 2025, we continued measuring the degree to which our customers would recommend or promote DCL to friends and family. Through September, we received 870 survey responses with an NPS of 93 (out of 100; 5.7% higher than our average score over the same period in 2024); 801 respondents gave individual scores of 9 or 10. Positive comments mentioned staff and customer service (41%), our collections (34%), the DCL customer experience (34%), and our physical spaces (27%).

As of September 2025, 87% of Douglas County households included at least one DCL cardholder. This market penetration figure, about 44% higher than reported in 2024, was created manually without the assistance of address verification software. In prior years, it was reported via Gale's Analytics on Demand, which was retired by the vendor in early 2025.



Key Features of 2026 Budget

The 2026 Budget provides strong support to enable execution of Douglas County Libraries' vision to elevate our community by inspiring a love of reading, discovery and connection in a fiscally responsible manner.

Key Features have been updated to highlight only budget lines showing significant year-over-year growth, as smaller fluctuations typically reflect normal operational adjustments rather than material impact.

Revenue

The assessor's report indicates that the Library is projected to receive approximately \$408,000 less in property tax revenue this fiscal year compared to the previous year. This decline is primarily due to recent legislation that reduced the residential assessment rate from 6.7% to 6.25%, which directly impacts the amount of property tax collected.

In addition to this reduction, the Library will be administering the 2025 property tax rebate by issuing refunds against 2026's collected revenue. This approach further decreases the net property tax revenue for the current year, contributing to an overall 12.87% reduction in total revenue.

Despite this significant decline in property tax income, the Library anticipates a positive shift in "Other Revenue," which is largely generated through Charges for Services. This category is expected to increase by \$55,956, or 16%, driven by increased demand for hosted special events. These additional funds are intended to help offset the corresponding increase in expenses, enabling the Library to continue expanding its engagement and programming while maintaining overall financial stability.

Compensation

The Library's total compensation expenses for the current fiscal year amount to \$18,174,034, reflecting a 4.85% increase compared to the previous year. This increase is composed of several strategic components aimed at maintaining competitive and equitable pay practices.

The largest portion of the increase—3.50%—is attributed to the annual compensation adjustment. This rate was recommended in a brief prepared by Herronpalmer, which drew on data from Payscale and the Flex Index Report for Q4 2024, ensuring that the adjustment aligns with broader market trends and benchmarks.

In addition to the standard annual increase, the Library has allocated a 1.00% compensation adjustment pool. This pool is specifically designed to address market shifts and ensure that pay remains competitive across key roles. It allows for targeted adjustments where needed, helping to retain talent and respond to evolving compensation expectations.

The remaining 0.35% of the increase is a true-up related to turnover forecasting. Each year, the Library anticipates a certain level of staff turnover and budgets accordingly. If the previous year's forecast was

overly aggressive—meaning more turnover was expected than actually occurred—additional resources may be added to correct the discrepancy. Conversely, if the forecast was too conservative, resources may be scaled back. This true-up ensures that compensation budgeting remains responsive and accurate, reflecting actual staffing dynamics.

Benefits

Staff benefit costs are expected to rise by \$442,000, or 33% YoY, in 2026 due to several factors: prior-year credits that understated the 2025 baseline, higher-than-anticipated enrollment and costly plan selections, and elevated claims activity that increased Cigna's premium quote. This is the second year offering Cigna benefits, and while we plan to maintain stability through 2026 per broker guidance, all market options will be reviewed for 2027.

Library Content

\$4,753,185 is allocated for library content including books, e-books, audiobooks, e-audiobooks, electronic databases, digital products, DVDs, periodicals, and nontraditional resources. This represents a 3% increase from FY2025, as the library continues to shift its collections strategy in response to customer demand.

Capital Expenditures

Routine capital expenditures for FY2026 are categorized into three key areas: brand and maintenance, legal and code compliance, and safety and security. These investments support the library's long-term infrastructure, operational integrity, and public presence.

Brand and Maintenance: \$1,870,583 is allocated to initiatives that enhance the library's visibility and identity within the community. This includes furniture, interior and exterior improvements, and other elements that reinforce the library's role as a welcoming and recognizable public space.

Legal and Code Compliance: \$766,150 in capital expenditures address compliance-related needs and legal infrastructure updates necessary to meet evolving regulatory standards, such as lighting upgrades.

Safety and Security: \$435,010 is invested in improving the physical and digital safety of library facilities. This includes upgrades to IT infrastructure systems, access controls, emergency preparedness, and cybersecurity measures to protect customers and staff.

New Construction:

In addition, \$11,495,216 is budgeted for Sterling Ranch year 2 construction, supporting continued development and expansion of library services in the county. Our investment portfolio is timed to provide cash according to the construction schedule.

These capital investments are funded through operating and designated capital reserves ensuring that the library can maintain a safe, welcoming, and future-ready environment while remaining fiscally responsible.

Accounting Method

Douglas County Libraries uses the modified accrual-accounting method.



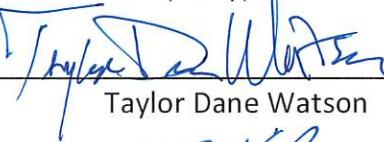
	2026 Budget	Amendment	2026 Final Budget
Revenue			
Property taxes	\$36,421,248	\$172,737	\$36,593,985
Specific Ownership Taxes	1,631,347	0	1,631,347
Contributions/Grants	408,119	0	408,119
Charges for services	402,954	0	402,954
Interest Income	1,395,739	0	1,395,739
Total Revenue	\$40,259,407	\$172,737	\$40,432,144
Operating Expenditures			
Salaries & Wages	\$18,174,034	\$0	\$18,174,034
Benefits	1,533,523	267,970	1,801,493
PERA Pension	2,871,497	0	2,871,497
Library Content	4,753,185	0	4,753,185
Facilities	2,753,462	0	2,753,462
Technology, Equipment & 3rd-Party Services	1,937,064	0	1,937,064
Library Programs & Outreach	1,733,582	0	1,733,582
District-Wide Support Costs	1,818,946	4,796	1,823,742
Capital Maintenance Projects	2,008,593	0	2,008,593
Total Operating Expenditures	\$37,583,886	\$272,766	\$37,856,652
Debt Service	\$2,116,699	\$0	\$2,116,699
County Treasurer's Fees	546,319	2,591	548,910
Total Operating, Interest & Fee Expenditures	\$40,246,904	\$275,357	\$40,522,261
Total Revenues Over (Under) Operating Expenditures	\$12,503	(\$102,620)	(\$90,117)
Non-Operating Revenues (Expenditures)			
Tax Relief	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital Improvement Projects	(12,558,366)	0	(12,558,366)
Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenditures)	(\$12,558,366)	\$0	(\$12,558,366)
Total Revenues Over (Under) Total Expenditures	(\$12,545,863)	(\$102,620)	(\$12,648,483)
Beginning Fund Balance	39,235,722		\$39,235,722
Ending Fund Balance	\$26,689,859		\$26,587,240

DOUGLAS COUNTY LIBRARIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF NOTICE AND
APPROVAL OF RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

We, the undersigned members of the Board of Trustees of the Douglas County Libraries, Douglas County, Colorado, do hereby acknowledge receipt of proper notice of the public hearing of the Board held Wednesday, December 3, 2025 informing of the date, time, and place of the meeting and the purpose for which it was called, and do hereby waive any and all other notices which might be required by law, and we do hereby approve said record of proceedings and the actions taken by the Board as stated therein.



TR (Terry) Nolan



Taylor Dane Watson



Ted W. Vail



Suzanne Burkholder



P (Pam) Hampton



Zachary McKinney



Amy Windju