



Markham Library's Future

Markham Public Library Board
General Committee
November 16 2020



Thank you for taking the time to receive the Library Board's annual presentation to Council.

My name is Alick Siu, and I serve as the Chair of the Library Board.

Joining me as speakers, please allow me to introduce:

- Board Vice-Chair Margaret McGrory

And Library Board members:

- Raymond Chan
- Edward Choi; and
- David Whetham

This year the Board presentation is focused on our new Strategic Plan which is based on extensive consultation with the community and our City stakeholders, including members of Council.

The Board and staff have developed a new Mission, Vision and Goals that align with Building Markham's Future Together, and reflect your feedback.

As you know 2020 has been an unprecedented year. Markham has gone through so much disruption and change and uncertainty.



**All Branches
Closed March 13th**



**Curbside Service
Launched July 6th**



**Open for Limited
Services October
13th**

First, a quick summary of the Library's COVID JOURNEY.

As you know, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID a pandemic.

All Library branches, along with Community Centres, shut down on Friday March 13th.

In July we launched curbside service.

In October we opened 4 branches for limited services.



At the same time, we pivoted many library services to a digital platform.

This involved activating and ramping up all the library's online and digital service delivery channels for COVID response purposes.

These are existing service channels that normally run in parallel to non-digital services in bricks and mortar library branches.

But during the pandemic period, they have been amplified.



We were fortunately in a position to accelerate the launch of our website pilot project to provide a robust community platform for Library online services and programs during the pandemic branch closures.



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Originally, the virtual story time was used to build a routine for my two kids during these odd times. But as we continue to watch them, I noticed the kids are truly enjoy them. From the different songs and books, I have watched my year old learn to sing different tunes while the year old is picking up basic words. I would like to thank MPL for putting together such a wonderful program and to all the facilitators that are dedicating their time and energy in putting together such an educational and interactive live stream for our children.

~ Kat

”

We also moved programming online, including early literacy programs like story times. These are core programs, based on the science of brain development, and are designed to support parents in preparing children for school. The Board applauds staff in pivoting to online delivery of these critical programs.

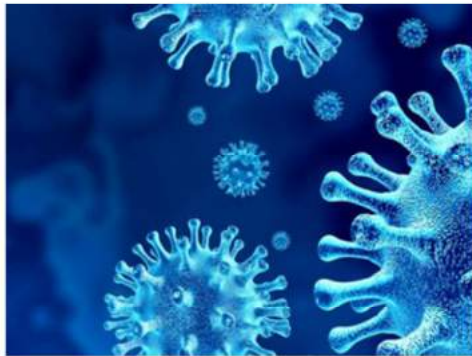


As part of our COVID response, the Library also expanded our ebook collection and launched Instant Digital Cards for residents who do not have library cards but wanted to access library ebooks.

New online products have been rolled out – such as Brainfuse, which provides online homework help.

The Library also expanded access to online content such as:

- Pressreader to help Markham to keep up with mainstream journalism; and
- Ancestry (a genealogical research service) for those who finally have some time to do family research.



**PANDEMIC 1
COVID**



**PANDEMIC 2
SOCIAL INEQUITIES**



And while we pivoted to digital, and as the world moved through lockdown and quarantine and the rise and fall of cases and spread,

It became apparent that we were really facing two pandemics:

1. The COVID Pandemic, and
2. The Pandemic of social inequities that have been exposed and deepened during the state of emergency and closures of public facilities.

This became the context for library strategic planning.....

And resulted in a strategic plan that is more deeply focused on equity.

The concept of social equity and inclusivity is a theme you will hear echoed throughout our Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals.



Strategic Planning in the Age of COVID

A Year Like No Other



8

At the start of 2020, the Library's work plan included the updating of our Strategic Plan.

Of course the disruption of COVID changed the original timeline.

It's taken a lot of hard work to get it to this point.

We have developed a draft Mission, Vision and Goals that:

- Intentionally align with Building Markham's Future Together; and
- Also take a global perspective through the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in terms of how libraries around the world are making an impact in addressing local challenges during and after COVID.



Board's Decision Criteria

The Library Strategic Goals must:

- Directly support the City's strategies and priorities.
- Be relevant for the Library:
 - The Library must be the right organization to address community needs – we can do the best job.
 - The Library is deeply passionate about meeting those needs
 - The Library's stakeholders (Council) view our role and our goals as important to the City's priorities.
- Fill a gap in the community that is not, and in all probability will not, be filled by another organization.
- Leverage our strengths and opportunities.
- Be based on current evidence and research,
- Advance our Mission and move the Library towards realizing our Vision



We started by defining our Criteria for making decisions about the Library's Goals.

- We knew the Library's Strategic Goals must directly support the City's strategies and priorities.
- They must be relevant for the Library:
 - The Library must be the right organization to address identified community needs – we can do the best job.
 - The Library is deeply passionate about meeting those needs
 - The Library's stakeholders (Council) view our role and our goals as important to the City's priorities.
- The Library's Goals must fill a gap in the community that is not, and in all probability will not, be filled by another organization.
- They must leverage our strengths and opportunities.
- They must be based on current evidence and research.
- And of course they must advance our Mission and move the Library towards realizing our Vision.



Wheelhouse is the organization's key strength or area of expertise.

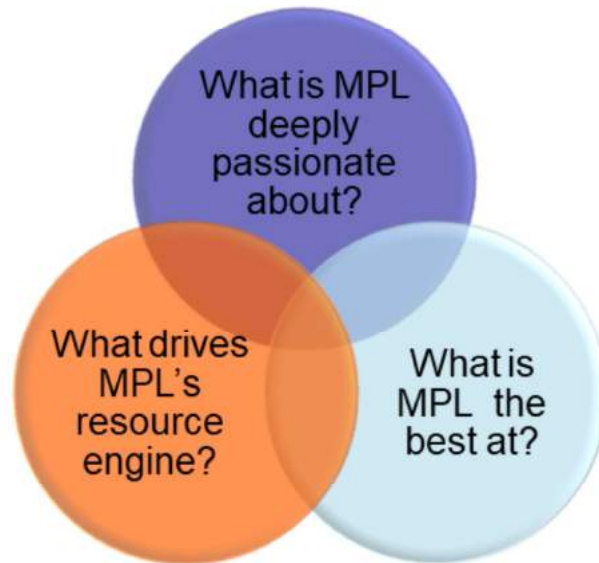


The Hedgehog Concept

We received some excellent advice from Councillor interviews, and particularly from the members of Council who serve on the Library Board.

We heard about the Wheelhouse Concept and focusing on our key strengths and areas of expertise, rather than trying to be all things to all people.

We also considered the Jim Collins principles about finding our “hedgehog” and focusing on where we can make the greatest difference to our community.



At the end of the day, these two concepts guided us to understanding and focusing on:

- Our Passion: What we stand for (our core values) and why we exist (our Mission).
- What We're Best At: What we can uniquely contribute to the community, better than any other organization in Markham; and
- Our Engine: What best drives our time, funding, and brand. Or, in other words, where we can most effectively contribute to City priorities – and sustain our resource engine.

This analysis resulted in:

- Narrowing our wheelhouse;
- Eliminating overlap with other departments or agencies; and
- Focusing on 3 strategic goals.



Values

- We value reading and learning to support literacies of all kinds.
- We are committed to offering excellent customer service.
- We create a welcoming environment that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of our community.
- We provide library spaces and resources that are free, convenient and easy to use.
- We are innovative and collaborative, anticipating and meeting community needs in a changing world.
- We are accountable for the responsible use of public funds.



It all starts with organizational values.

What do we stand for? What is our passion? What are our values?

These core Values were developed by staff in 2016 and are still relevant today.



Vision

You spoke, Markham. We listened. Our Vision is based on what you told us about your aspirations for your future in this City.

- At your library, Markham comes together to imagine, create, learn and grow as individuals, neighbourhoods and a City.
- Everyone in Markham benefits from exceptional library experiences and intellectual pursuits through reading, studying, exploring ideas, solving problems, gaining knowledge, engaging in civic discourse, and connecting with others to build social cohesion and create Markham's shared future.
- The library is a place where no one is left behind.
- Those living and working in the City are inspired and transformed as they experience library services, spaces and curated resources in ways that are uniquely meaningful for them.



13

Our Vision is about where we want to be in the future.
It is aspirational, long-lasting and goes beyond 2026.
It is addressed to the community.

You spoke, Markham. We listened.

Thank you Markham for participating in our surveys and focus groups and interviews.
Community consultation has been essential to developing our Vision, Mission and Goals.

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- Those living and working in the City are inspired and transformed as they experience library services, spaces and curated resources in ways that are uniquely meaningful for them.

At the End of 2026

- Our physical and virtual spaces, services and curated resources are seamlessly integrated.
- Markham residents and businesses have the literacies required to fully participate in a digital society and economy.
- As our City and communities changed, we changed. Through a unique blend of service, collections and technologies, we continuously deliver new ideas that inspire and promote innovation.
- With our data competencies and community knowledge, we have worked hand-in-hand with City colleagues and partners. Together we deepened our collective understanding of Markham residents' and businesses' preferences, behaviours, challenges and aspirations – and we responded collaboratively with exceptional, impactful and action-ready services.



14

By the end of 2026, this is what we want to have achieved:

- The Library's physical and virtual spaces, services and curated resources are seamlessly integrated.
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- As our City and communities changed, we the Library changed. Through a unique blend of service, collections and technologies, we continuously deliver new ideas that inspire and promote innovation.
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At the End of 2026

People are building the lives they
desire in a thriving city, and
we are an essential catalyst.



15

And at the end of 2026:
People are building the lives they desire in a thriving city, and
The Library is an essential catalyst.



Mission

You spoke, Markham. We listened. Our Mission is based on what you told us about how the library can best serve you and support your life in Markham.

- We are your library, connecting you to lifelong learning, the world's knowledge, cultural experiences, community building, personal growth and greater opportunities.
- We champion the transformational power of reading.
- We are a force for inclusivity, ensuring equity of access to welcoming spaces, resources and opportunities, and upholding democratic values that empower you for success as engaged global citizens.
- We enhance the educational experience, focusing on the development of key literacies in reading, digital skills, mathematics and sciences, so that you can be resilient in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.



This is Our Mission. It describes our wheelhouse. And our hedgehog.

Mission is about WHY WE EXIST and speaks to our unique role in Markham.

Going forward, this Mission will help us make decisions about each year's work plan and priorities.

It is addressed to the community.

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Our Strategic Goals are what we want to accomplish by the end of the planning time frame.

They help us to focus the Library on fulfilling our Mission and reaching our Vision.

They uphold the Mission and Vision.

They capitalize on the Library's strengths and capture opportunities in the environment.

They ultimately "put the puck in the net".

With the winner being the City of Markham.



Goal 1. Reading to Transform



Goal 1 Reading to Transform builds upon a long-term core mission of libraries – the promotion of reading.

It leverages our unique reading-related assets (collections, expertise, services and programs) to improve basic English literacy and develop critical life skills such as reading and writing.



Goal 1. Reading to Transform

- We are the reading organization, celebrating reading, and its power to transform lives and engage residents in building an inclusive, livable, caring and culturally vibrant community.
- We engage individuals and families in transformative reading experiences.
- The Library promotes reading as a means to literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and empathy.



Our Goal Statement puts it out there.

The Library is Markham's reading organization. There is no other organization in Markham that can do this.

- We are a unique place that is focused on celebrating reading, and its power to transform lives
- And also its power to engage residents in building an inclusive, livable, caring and culturally vibrant community.
- We engage individuals and families in transformative reading experiences.
- The Library promotes reading as a means to literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and empathy.



Goal 1. Reading to Transform

Objective 1.1 Leverage our unique reading-related assets (collections, expertise, services and programs) to engage families with the Library's literacy programs, collections and services in both digital and in-person formats.

20

Goal 1 has 5 Objectives.

The first is to leverage our unique reading-related assets...to engage families with the Library's literacy programs, collections and services in both digital and in-person formats.



wavebreakmedia



Goal 1. Reading to Transform

Objective 1.2 Promote Library content that supports formal and informal learning opportunities for lifelong learners, as well as the academic success of students.

21

Reading is about more than formal education.

Objective 2 is about promoting Library content that supports BOTH formal and informal learning opportunities for lifelong learners OF ALL AGES, as well as the academic success of students.



Goal 1. Reading to Transform

Objective 1.3 Reduce barriers to membership and Library use.

Objective 3 is about reducing barriers to membership and Library use.

Such as the Ready to Read membership program, that allows young children to borrow early years library materials without parents needing to worry about fines.



Goal 1. Reading to Transform

Objective 1.4 Provide resources in a range of formats and languages to ensure collections are balanced, inclusive and accessible.

23

Objective 4 identifies the core principles of collection development:
Provide resources in a range of formats and languages to ensure collections are **balanced, inclusive and accessible.**

If the question is asked: “inclusive” means inclusive of LGBTQ materials

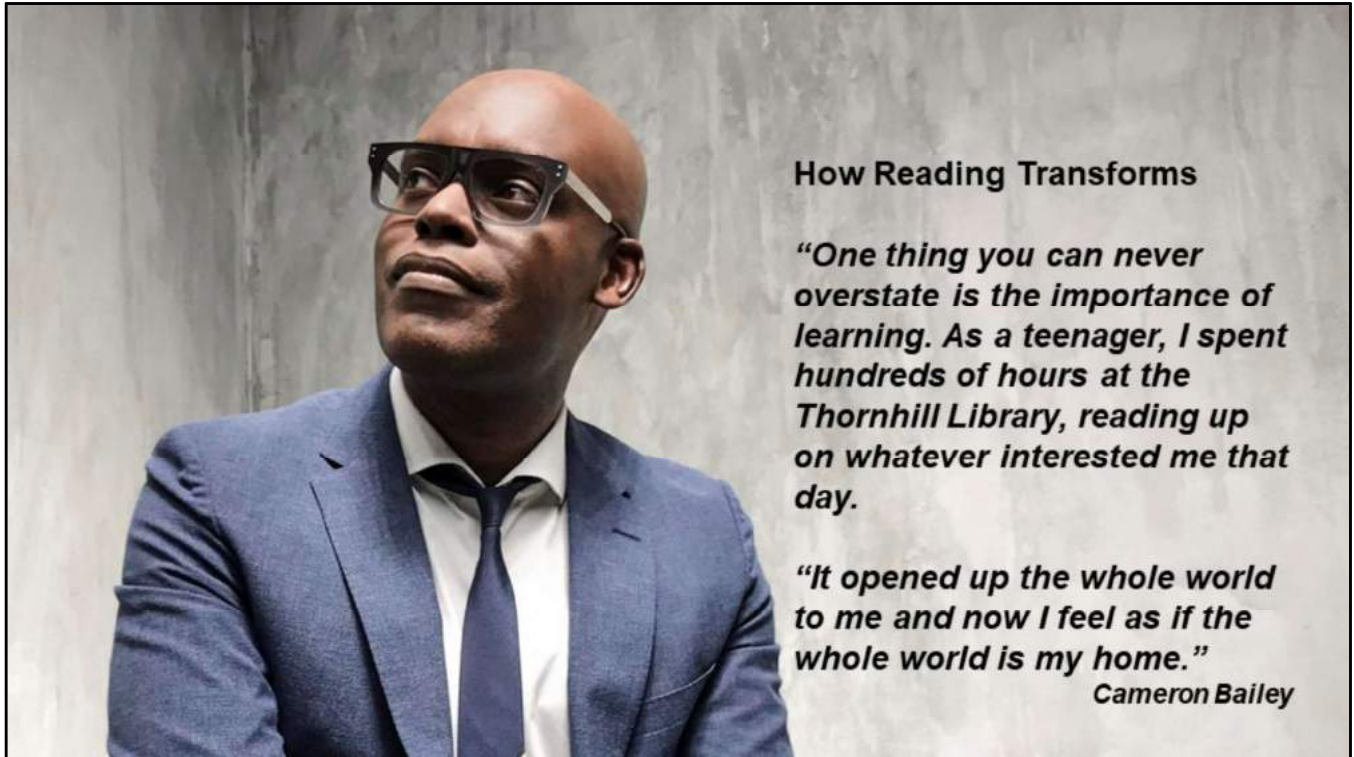


Goal 1. Reading to Transform

Objective 1.5 Promote the value of reading for pleasure as something that supports strong educational outcomes, increased empathy, improved relationships with others, better mental health and overall wellbeing.

24

Objective 5 connects “the value of reading for pleasure” to “strong educational outcomes based on literacy skills, increased empathy, improved relationships with others, better mental health and overall wellbeing.”



How Reading Transforms

“One thing you can never overstate is the importance of learning. As a teenager, I spent hundreds of hours at the Thornhill Library, reading up on whatever interested me that day.”

“It opened up the whole world to me and now I feel as if the whole world is my home.”

Cameron Bailey

An example of how reading can transform a life is Cameron Bailey, now the Artistic Director & Co-Head of the Toronto International Film Festival.

Mr. Bailey grew up in Thornhill and has reflected upon how access to Markham’s library collections transformed his life.

“One thing you can never overstate is the importance of learning.”

As a teenager, I spent hundreds of hours at the Thornhill Library, reading up on whatever interested me that day.

“It opened up the whole world to me and now I feel as if the whole world is my home.”



Goal 2. Limitless Learning



Goal 2: Limitless Learning is about providing opportunities for learning without limits. And how libraries go beyond formal education, and beyond age limits.



Goal 2. Limitless Learning

- The Library complements formal education and extends learning beyond the academic experience.
- The Library facilitates curiosity, self-directed learning and personal growth through all stages of life.
- We concentrate on readying children for school, providing opportunities for individual development, preparing people for employment and citizenship, and helping people build skills they need for the digital environment.
- We grow a community of learners through all phases and stages of life.



The Goal Statement provides our guideposts:

- The Library complements formal education and extends learning beyond the academic experience.
- The Library facilitates curiosity, self-directed learning and personal growth through all stages of life.
- We concentrate on readying children for school, providing opportunities for individual development, preparing people for employment and citizenship, and helping people build skills they need for the digital environment.
- We grow a community of learners through **all phases and stages of life.**

And by all stages of life, we of course include adults of all ages.



Goal 2. Limitless Learning

Objective 2.1 Provide tools and resources that support individual learning goals throughout every stage of life.

28

This goal has 4 objectives.

The first: Provide tools and resources that support individual learning goals throughout **every stage of life.**

And for retired people, this can mean things like pursuing new interests, hobbies, learning a new language or how to play a musical instrument.



Goal 2. Limitless Learning

Objective 2.2 Deliver a multi-faceted, inclusive and equitable lifelong learning strategy to address barriers to success in formal education.

29

Objective 2: Deliver a multi-faceted, inclusive and equitable lifelong learning strategy to address barriers to success in formal education.

Ontario is fortunate to have a strong education system, but inevitably some students need additional support.

For example, some children struggle with math. That's why, going forward, the Library will build upon our very successful lineup of STEAM programs, and will strengthen our focus on developing literacies associated with math and science.



Goal 2. Limitless Learning

Objective 2.3 Provide Markham residents and entrepreneurs with skills and literacies to build their confidence and resiliency to participate fully in the economy, including the local job market.

30

Objective 3 focuses on the Library's role in developing entrepreneurship and workplace skills.

- Provide Markham residents and entrepreneurs with skills and literacies to build their confidence and resiliency to participate fully in the economy, including the local job market.



Goal 2. Limitless Learning

Objective 2.4 Equip community members with digital literacy skills to enable them to learn, connect, engage and work online.

31

Objective 4 focuses on digital literacy and how the Library can facilitate the community's uptake of technology by equipping "community members with digital literacy skills to enable them to learn, connect, engage and work online."



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion



Strategic Goal 3 is about Community Social Cohesion.

It builds upon the Library's experience and expertise in community-building programs and outreach, as well as in data discovery and analysis.

Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

- Markham is economically and socially connected. People in all circumstances and at all stages of their lives benefit from the information, ideas, relationships and resources shared at the library.
- People contribute to their local government and to their community because they know that they are respected and that their City thrives on everyone's rich diversity, equity, opportunity and digital readiness.
- We close the digital divide and build social cohesion.
- Markham is the best place to live, invest, and work.



33

- The Goal Statement talks about achieving a connected Markham, “where information, ideas, relationships and resources are understood and shared”.
- Our Goal is to enable people to contribute to local government and their community because they know that they are respected and that their City thrives on everyone's rich **diversity, equity**, opportunity and digital readiness.
- We close the digital divide and build social cohesion.

This is all part of the Library's role in making Markham “**the best place to live, invest, and work**”. (wording borrowed from **Building Markham's Future together**.)



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.1 Achieve an inclusive, equitable and accessible workplace and library service through a policy and procedures review and through engagement with the City's Diversity and Inclusivity Action Plan Update.

34

To achieve Goal 3, we have six objectives.

Objective 3.1 Achieve an **inclusive, equitable** and accessible workplace and library service through a policy and procedures review and through engagement with the City's Diversity and Inclusivity Action Plan Update.

Through the City's Update of the Diversity and Inclusivity Action Plan, and along with our colleagues in other business units, the Library will address rising community concerns about structural racism.



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.2 Leverage partnerships and the knowledge and expertise of local organizations to deliver social capital initiatives and contribute to the community's social well-being.

Our second Objective is about leverage:

- Leveraging partnerships and the knowledge and expertise of local organizations to deliver social capital initiatives and contribute to the community's social well-being.



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.3 Reduce social isolation and bridge social divides by providing physical and virtual spaces that instill a sense of welcome and belonging for all community members.

36

Objective 3 is about reducing social isolation and bridging social divides by providing physical and virtual spaces that instill a sense of welcome and **belonging for all** community members.

This means community members of all ages and backgrounds.

It also means that our Library spaces will be reflective of people living in the local community.



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.4 Enhance knowledge of the community through data and research, and facilitation of community engagement initiatives.

Objective 4: Enhance knowledge of the community through data and research, and facilitation of community engagement initiatives.

PICTURE: Library's facilitation of the Smart Cities challenge.



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.5 Champion civic discourse to advance social cohesion and broaden community understanding of global and local issues.



Objective 5: The Library will continue to serve as a place that champions “civic discourse to advance social cohesion and broaden community understanding of global and local issues”.

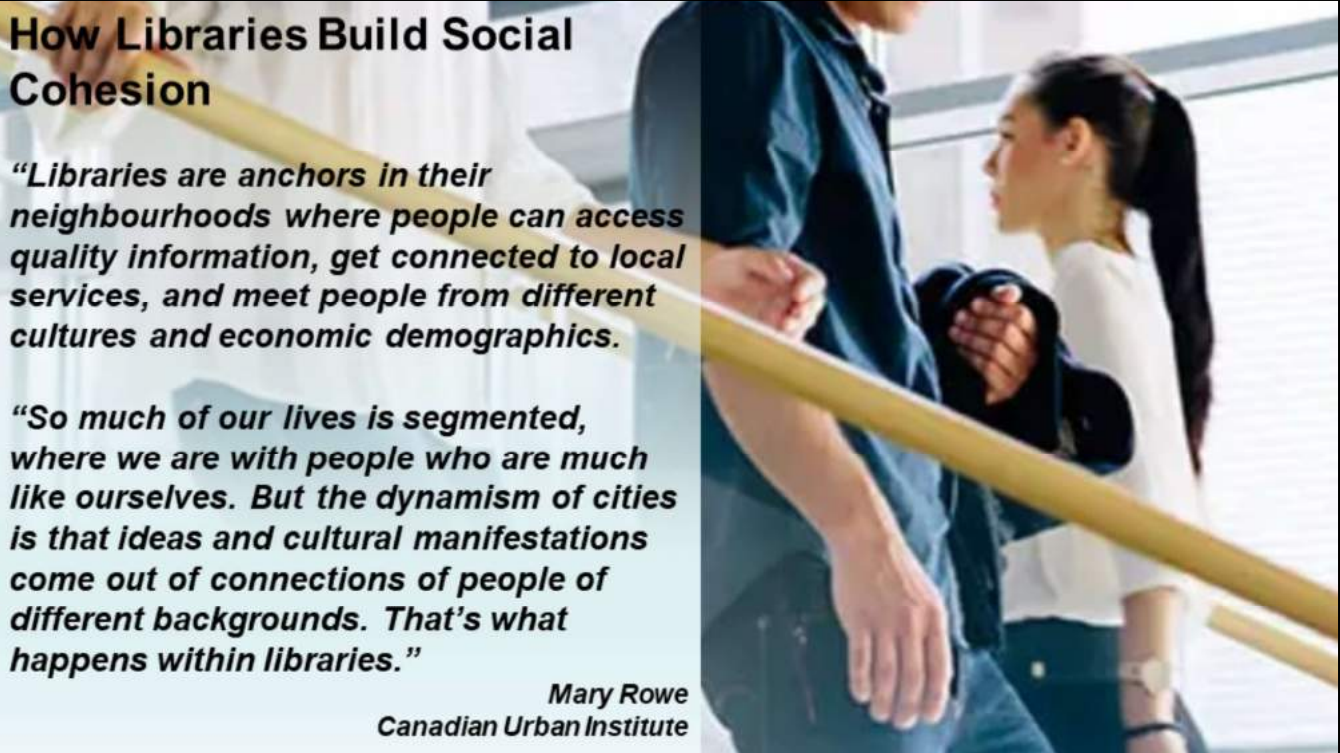
Examples: All-Candidate meetings
York University speaking series



Goal 3. Community Social Cohesion

Objective 3.6 Address the digital divide by providing equitable access to technology and resources for success in the digital world.

Objective 6 is linked to the Library's role in the Digital Markham Strategy, in terms of addressing "the digital divide by providing equitable access to technology and resources for success in the digital world".



How Libraries Build Social Cohesion

“Libraries are anchors in their neighbourhoods where people can access quality information, get connected to local services, and meet people from different cultures and economic demographics.”

“So much of our lives is segmented, where we are with people who are much like ourselves. But the dynamism of cities is that ideas and cultural manifestations come out of connections of people of different backgrounds. That’s what happens within libraries.”

*Mary Rowe
Canadian Urban Institute*

Thinking more broadly about the Library’s role in building social cohesion, and going outside the library bubble, we note the words of Mary Rowe, President and CEO of the Canadian Urban Institute,

Ms. Rowe views libraries as:

“anchors in their neighbourhoods where people can access quality information, get connected to local services, and meet people from different cultures and economic demographics.”

Viewed through the lens of urban planning, and the segmentation of life patterns, libraries are places where we connect with people of different backgrounds. These are kinds of connections that drive the “dynamism of cities” in terms of ideas and culture.

Ms. Rowe also views libraries as circulating more than library materials. They are also **critical civic hubs that “circulate” social cohesion.**



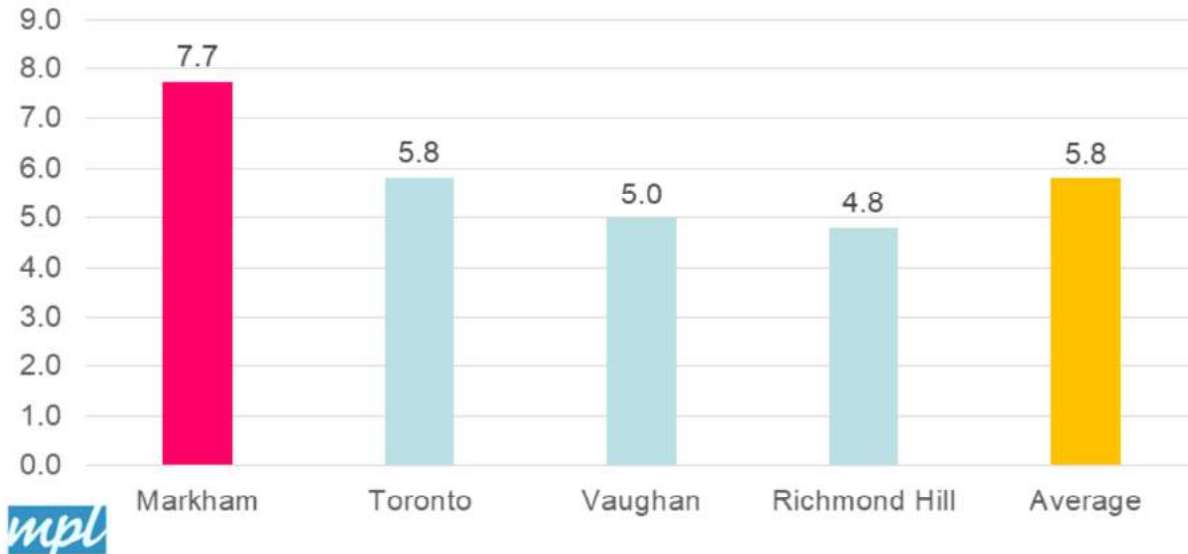
Operating Budget Per Capita 2019



We continue to be one of the most efficiently operated library systems in Canada. Among adjacent municipalities, we have the lowest operating budget per capita. This metric refers to the municipal property-tax-supported operating budget.



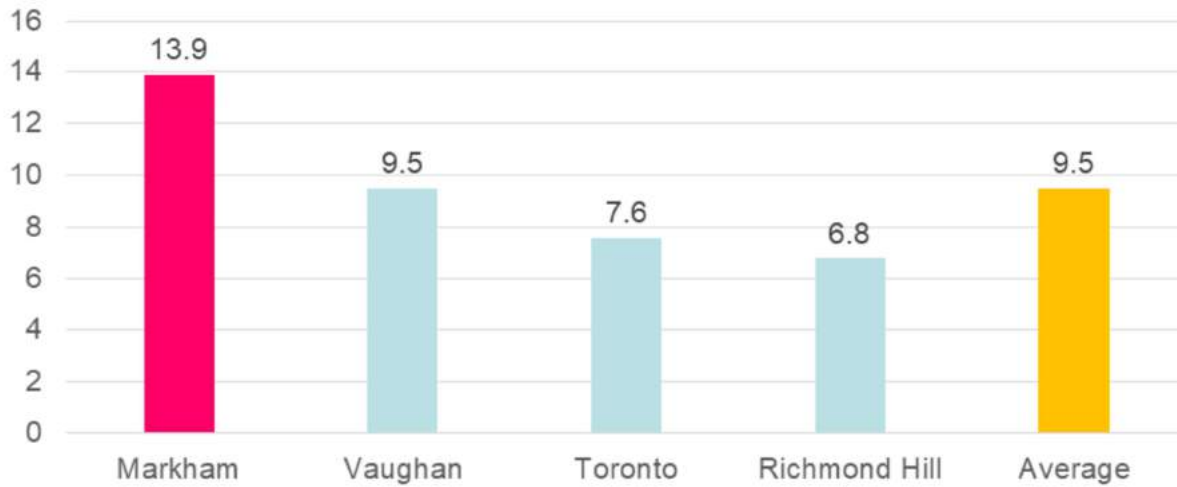
Visits per Capita 2019



At the same time, and in terms of the return on investment in a critical community service, Markham has 7.7 visits per capita – the equivalent of every person in Markham using the library more than bi-monthly.



Borrowing per Capita 2019



Markham continues to enjoy the highest rate of borrowing per capita, which demonstrates another aspect of our strong ROI.

This is the equivalent of everyone in Markham borrowing nearly 14 items a year.

It is also an indicator of how residents value their libraries and their collections of library materials.



Questions?



Thank you.
Are there any questions?