



A Regular Meeting of
the Richmond Hill Public Library Board
will be held in the main floor meeting room of Oak Ridges
on Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 4:00pm

AGENDA

1.0 Call to Order

2.0 Regrets

Stephen Chait, Chair

3.0 Adoption of Agenda

3.1 Opening Remarks Board Vice-Chair

3.2 Adoption of Agenda

4.0 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

5.0 Delegations

None

6.0 Minutes

6.1 Library Board Minutes – January 19, 2023

7.0 Presentations

7.1 Quarterly Strategic Priorities Update

Robin Fribance, Director Experience & Strategy

7.2 Brand Update

Joshua Dyer, Director Content Strategy & Delivery

7.3 Website Preview

Robin Fribance, Director Experience & Strategy

Joshua Dyer, Director Content & Strategy Delivery

Mirza Mehdi, Digital Product Manager

8.0 Reports

8.1 2022 Fourth Quarter Strategic Plan Progress Report SRLIB23.03

9.0 New Business

9.1 New Motions

9.2 Correspondence

9.2.1 Article from Richmond Hill Liberal – February 10, 2023

[‘We’re all in this together’: Iranian-Canadian artists fight for freedom through public art in Richmond Hill](#)

9.3 Member Announcements

9.3.1 2023 OLA Super Conference – highlights & discussion (verbal, D. Solomon)

9.3.2 CBC Toronto Creator Camp - This March RHPL is partnering with CBC Toronto to host our first ever Creator Camp. This full day event will include presentations and workshops on content creation from social media influencers and CBC journalists. At the end of the

day one participant will be selected as a CBC reporter/ambassador and will work with a CBC journalist embedded at RHPL for one week. (verbal, J. Dyer)

10.0 Date of Next Meetings

The next Regular Meeting of the Library Board will be held on:

Thursday, April 20, 2023 @ 4:00 p.m. at Richmond Green Library to be followed by library tour.

11.0 Adjournment

Please advise Darren Solomon and Susan Quinn of regrets for attendance, by noon of the day of the meeting at e-mail: dsolomon@rhpl.ca and squinn@rhpl.ca

The Richmond Hill Public Library Board

Thursday, January 19, 2023

MINUTES

The Richmond Hill Public Library Board held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 19, 2023 in the Boardroom at Central Library, 1 Atkinson Street, Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Present: Stephen Chait, Chair
Jason Cherniak
Councillor Carol Davidson
Councillor Castro Liu
Sofia Ma
Sadra Nasser
Sugantha Raj, Vice Chair
Mona Shahnazari
Councillor Scott Thompson

Staff: Darren Solomon, Chief Executive Officer
Joshua Dyer, Director, Content & Strategy Delivery
Robin Fribance, Director, Experience & Strategy
Yunmi Hwang, Director, Branch Services
Jordan Graham, Collections Manager
Amy McArthur, HR Business Partner, City of Richmond Hill
Courtney Beatty, HR Business Partner, City of Richmond Hill
Tammy Elliott, M. HRM, CHRL, Director/Principal Consultant, Synergetic Workplaces Consulting Inc.
Susan Quinn, Administrative Coordinator

1.0 Call to Order

The CEO called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2.0 Regrets

None

3.0 Adoption of Agenda

Motion:

23:01

Moved by:

Councillor S. Thompson

Seconded by:

M. Shahnazari

THAT the Agenda of January 19, 2023 be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4.0 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

5.0 Delegations

None

6.0 Minutes

6.1 Library Board Minutes – December 5, 2022

Motion:

23:02

Moved by:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

J. Cherniak

THAT the Minutes of December 5, 2022 be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7.0 Presentations

None

8.0 Reports

8.1 Board Committees Report SRLIB23.01

Motion:

23:03

Moved by:

Councillor C. Davidson

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board approve the formation and Terms of Reference, amended to add the Board Chair as ex officio member and to note that RHPL senior management appoint staff to the working groups, for the following RHPL Board Committees: Intellectual Freedom Steering Committee, Master Plan Steering Committee, and Finance Steering Committee.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Motion:

23:04

Moved by:

S. Raj

Seconded by:

Councillor C. Davidson

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board approve the following Board member appointments to each Board Committee so they may begin work.

- a) Intellectual Freedom Steering Committee: Stephen Chait (ex officio), Jason Cherniak, Councillor Scott Thompson and Mona Shahnazari
- b) Master Plan Steering Committee: Stephen Chait (ex officio), Councillor Carol Davidson, Councillor Castro Liu and Sofia Ma
- c) Finance Steering Committee: Stephen Chait (ex officio), Sadra Nasserri and Sugantha Raj

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8.2 Commitment to Intellectual Freedom Report SRLIB23.02

Motion:

23:05

Moved by:

S. Ma

Seconded by:

S. Nasserri

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board reinforce RHPL's commitment to intellectual freedom by joining libraries across North America in approving the

endorsement and signing of the Urban Libraries Council's Declaration of Democracy.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

9.0 New Business

9.1 New Motions

9.1.1 Appoint OLS Board Assembly Representative

Motion:

23:06

Moved by:

Councillor C. Liu

Seconded by:

M. Shahnazari

That Sugantha Raj be appointed as the OLS Board Assembly Representative.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

9.2 Correspondence

9.2.1 Board Press Release

9.2.2 Article from Municipal World January 2023

The relationship between public library boards and municipalities

9.2.3 Article from Municipal World January 2023

New councils must review, ask questions, listen, decide

Motion:

23:07

Moved by:

Councillor C. Liu

Seconded by:

M. Shahnazari

That the Correspondence be received for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

9.3 Member Announcements

None

10.0 Resolution to Move Into Closed Session to consider matters relating to:

10.1 Labour relations or employee negotiations

Motion:

23:08

Moved By:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

S. Ma

THAT the Board move into Closed Session to consider labour relations or employee negotiations.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

At 4:44 p.m. the Board moved into Closed Session.

5:17 p.m. Councillor C. Liu left the meeting

5:30 p.m. S. Raj left the meeting

11.0 Resolution to Reconvene in Open Session

Motion:

23:09

Moved By:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

S. Ma

That the Board reconvene into Open Session.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

At 5:38 p.m. the Board returned to Open Session

12.0 Adoption of Recommendations Arising from Closed Session (if any)

Motion:

23:10

Moved By:

M. Shahnazari

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

That the Board approves the recommendation in the In-Camera Report.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

13.0 Date of Next Meetings

The next Regular Meeting of the Library Board will be held on:

Thursday, February 16, 2023 @ 4:00 p.m. at Oak Ridges Library to be followed by a tour.

14.0 Adjournment

Motion:

23:11

Moved by:

Councillor S. Thompson

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

THAT the meeting be adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

“Signed version on file in the Administration Offices”

Stephen Chait
Chair

Darren Solomon
Chief Executive Officer



Report Subject: Strategic Plan Progress Report Q4 2022

Report For: Information

Meeting Date: February 16, 2023

Staff Report #: SRLIB23.03

To: Richmond Hill Public Library Board

From: Robin Fribance, Director, Strategy & Experience

SUMMARY

This is the Q4 2022 update to the Richmond Public Library Board on the progress against our Strategic Plan. There are no significant blocks in the roadmap, and we are meeting or exceeding our targets.

Detailed charts are included in the attachment. This report is meant to provide accessible documentation of the information contained in the charts, which may not be easily read by individuals using screen reader technology.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board:

- Receive this report and presentation for information.

Q4 2022 PROGRESS

Strategic Plan Priorities

Priority 1: Inspiring In-person Experiences

| | |
|---|-------------|
| P1.1. Launch New Central Café | Complete |
| P1.2. Modernize Meeting Room Facilities | Not started |
| P1.3. Develop RHPL Master Plan | On track |
| P1.3a. Explore Branch Specialization | On track |
| P1.3b. Assess After-hours Model | On track |
| P1.4. Redesign Service Model | On track |

Priority 2: Accelerated Digital Experiences

| | |
|--|-------------|
| P2.1. Redevelop RHPL Website | On track |
| P2.2. Develop Digital Product Strategy | Delayed |
| P2.3. Integrate Personalization | Not started |

Priority 3: Customer- and Mission-focused Content

| | |
|---|-------------|
| P3.1. Develop Future-ready Content | On track |
| P3.2. Support Entrepreneurs & Small Business | Not started |
| P3.3. Enhance Multilingual Offerings | On track |
| P3.4. Expand Membership to Relevant Organizations | Not started |

Priority 4: Expanded & Deeper Engagement

| | |
|--|-------------|
| P4.1. Develop a Brand Strategy and New Identity | On track |
| P4.2. Build and Execute a Marketing and Media Plan | On track |
| P4.3. Integrate Proof-Points of Library Value into Customer Journey | Not started |
| P4.4 Build Librarians into Personalities | Not started |
| P4.5 Develop a Literacy Initiative | Not started |

Priority 5: Insights & Innovation

| | |
|---|----------|
| P5.1. Create an Innovation & Insights Strategy | On track |
| P5.2. Develop Innovation & Foresight capabilities | On track |

Priority 6: Information & Technology Advancement

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| P6.1. Application Management Program | On track |
| P6.2. Expand Collaboration Tools | Delayed |
| P6.3. Develop Data Strategy | Complete |

Priority 7: Effective Governance

| | |
|---|-------------|
| P7.1. Develop Financial Sustainability Strategy | On track |
| P7.2. Conduct Board Governance Review | On track |
| P7.3. Develop Environmental Sustainability Strategy | Not started |
| P7.4. Develop Department Plans | On track |

Priority 8: Expanded & Deeper Partnerships

| | |
|---|-------------|
| P8.1. Participate at Local/Regional Planning Tables | Not started |
| P8.2. Broaden Library Best Practices | On track |
| P8.3. Expand Volunteer Program | Not Started |

Priority 9: High-performance Organization

| | |
|--|-------------|
| P9.1. Develop Culture | On track |
| P9.2. Develop Performance Management Program | Not started |
| P9.3. Align Org Structure to Strat Plan | On track |

Strategic Plan Objectives

RHPL has identified three indicators of Library health: Customer Use, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Retention and Growth.

Customer Use

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Monthly Average Website Users | Exceeded target |
| Unique Website Visits | Exceeded target |
| Unique Catalogue Searches | Below target |
| Monthly Average Wifi Sessions | Exceeded target |
| In-person Visits (Foot Traffic) | YoY increase |

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction being tracked as of Q1 2023. No data for 2022.

Customer Retention/Growth

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Number of Physical Items Circulating | Exceeded target |
| Number of Digital Items Circulating | Exceeded target |
| Number of Active Card Holders | Exceeded target |
| Percentage of Active Cardholders Relative to the Number of Richmond Hill Residents | Exceeded target |
| Number of New Memberships | YoY increase |
| Number of Renewed Memberships | YoY increase |
| Number of Lapsed Memberships | YoY improvement |

ATTACHMENTS

1. Strategic Plan Progress Report Q4 2022 Presentation

Strategic Plan Progress Report Q4 2022

February 16, 2023



Q4 Summary

Summary

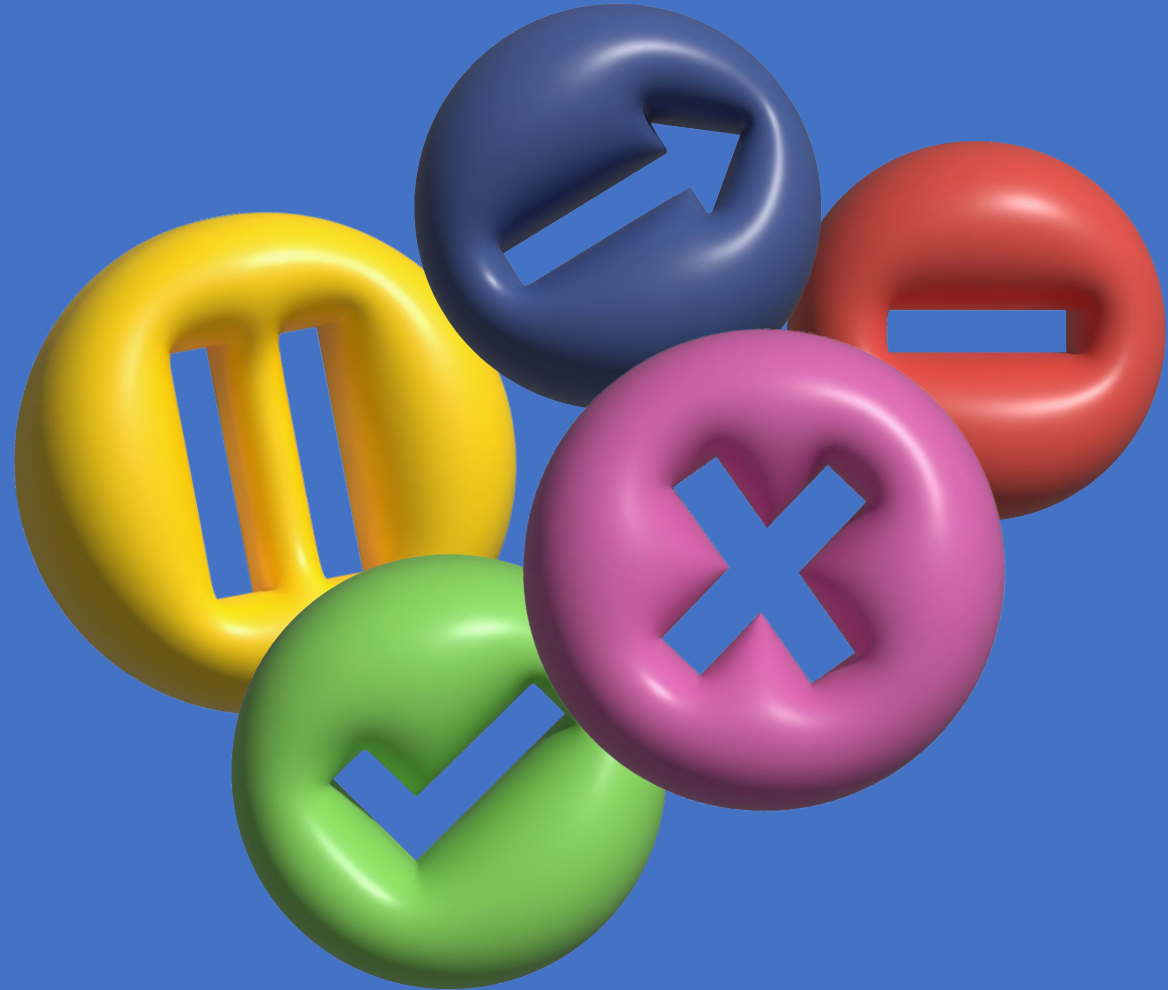


Progress on Strategic Plan Priorities is advancing as planned with minimal delays









Progress on Strategic Plan Objectives is on track and exceeding targets in most areas, although some retention/growth metrics show particular areas for improvement

Progress on Priorities



1. Inspiring In-person Experiences

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|---|
| P1.1 | Launch new central Café |  | | Soft opening Nov 2022; Full service February 2023 |
| P1.2 | Modernize meeting room facilities |  | | |
| P1.3 | Develop RHPL Master Plan |  | | Expected completion Q3 2023 |
| P1.3a | Explore branch specialization |  | P1.3 - RHPL Master Plan | |
| P1.3b | Assess after-hours model |  | P1.3 - RHPL Master Plan | |
| P1.4 | Redesign service model (single point of contact) |  | Organization realignment | Expected completion Q4 2023 |



Blocked



Delayed



Not Started






On Track







Completed

2. Accelerated Digital Experiences

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|--|---|-----------------------------|---|
| P2.1 | Redevelop RHPL website |  | External dependency: CRH IT | Design complete; Development in progress Expected Completion Q4 2023 |
| P2.2 | Develop digital product strategy |  | | Expected completion Q1 2024 |
| P2.3 | Integrate personalization into experiences |  | CRM System onboarding | CRM system is a recently approved capital project. Expected start will be determined in conjunction with CRM project planning and in relation to other IT projects |

 Blocked
  Delayed
  Not Started
  On Track
  Completed

3. Customer- & Mission-focused Content

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|---|---|--------------|--|
| P3.1 | Develop new future-ready content offerings |  | | Ongoing |
| P3.2 | Support development of entrepreneurs and small businesses |  | | Expected start 2024 |
| P3.3 | Enhance multilingual offerings |  | | Ongoing across multiple departments, and will be documented in department plans starting Q2 2023 |
| P3.4 | Expand membership to include access to other mission-relevant organizations |  | | Expected start late 2023 |



Blocked



Delayed



Not Started








On Track



Completed

4. Expanded and Deeper Engagement

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|--|--|--|---|
| P4.1 | Develop a brand strategy and new identity |  | P2.1 - Website | Brand strategy complete; brand assets under development |
| P4.2 | Build and execute a marketing and media plan |  | | Expected completion Q2 2023 |
| P4.3 | Integrate proof-points of library value into customer journeys |  | P4.1 - Brand Identity P4.2 - Marketing Plan | Expected start Q1 2024 |
| P4.4 | Build librarians into personalities |  | P2.1 - Website | Expected start Q1 2024 |
| P4.5 | Develop a literacy initiative |  | | Expected start 2024 |



Blocked



Delayed



Not Started





On Track



Completed

5. Insights & Innovation

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| P5.1 | Create an innovation and insights strategy |  | | Expected completion Q2 2023 |
| P5.2 | Develop innovation and foresight capabilities |  | Organization realignment | Ongoing, but will be clarified with (a) the organization realignment and (b) with the innovation and insights strategy |



Blocked



Delayed



Not Started






On Track



Completed

6. Information & Technology Advancement

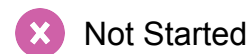
| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| P6.1 | Execute IT digital application management program |  | External dependency: CRH IT | |
| P6.2 | Expand collaboration tools pilot |  | External dependency: CRH IT | Microsoft 365 capital budget approved; project planning to begin February 2023 |
| P6.3 | Develop a data strategy |  | | |



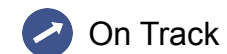
Blocked



Delayed



Not Started







On Track






Completed

7. Effective Governance

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| P7.1 | Develop a financial sustainability strategy |  | | Feasibility study competed Q4 2022 |
| P7.2 | Conduct Board governance review |  | | Ongoing Expected completion Q4 2023 |
| P7.3 | Develop and launch an environmental sustainability strategy |  | | Expected start 2024 |
| P7.4 | Develop department plans cascading from RHPL Strategic Plan 2021-25 |  | Organization realignment | Expected completion for Marketing, Collections, Programming, Innovation/Insights Q2 2023 |




 Blocked
  Delayed
  Not Started
  On Track
  Completed

8. Expanded & Deeper Partnerships

| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|---|
| P8.1 | Become a participant in local and regional social policy and planning tables |  | Organization realignment | Q1 2023 |
| P8.2 | Broaden library best practices and learnings |  | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership on CULC Futures Lab • Steering Committee for OLS “Valuing Ontario Libraries” initiative (social return on investment) • Member of ULC Strategic Plan Steering Committee • Initiated multicultural community advisory group • York Region Collaborative Programming Partnership |
| P8.3 | Expand volunteer program |  | Organization realignment | Expected start 2024 |

 Blocked
  Delayed
  Not Started
  On Track
  Completed

9. High-performance Organization

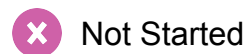
| Priority # | Priority / Strategic Action | Status | Dependencies | Notes |
|------------|--|---|--|---|
| P9.1 | Develop culture to improve performance |  | | Ongoing; Next culture survey in Spring 2024 |
| P9.2 | Develop and launch staff performance management program |  | External dependency: CRH HR Organization realignment | Expected start tbd |
| P9.3 | Align organization structure and operations to RHPL 2021-25 Strategic Plan |  | City Council budget approval | |



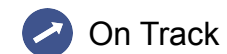
Blocked



Delayed



Not Started



On Track



Completed

Progress on Objectives



3 Indicators of RHPL Health



Indicator: USE

The extent to which customers are interacting with our services

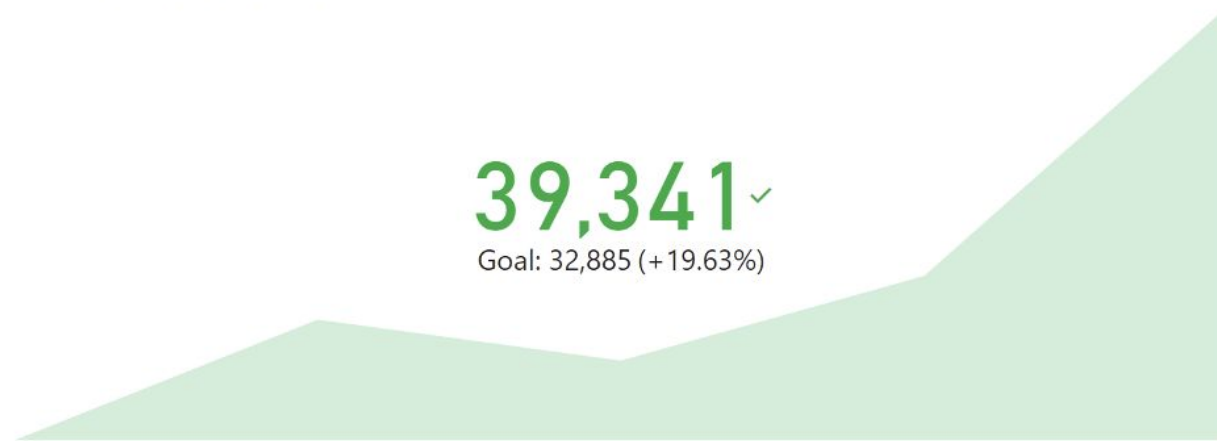
Monthly Average Website Users

The monthly average # of users who initiated at least one session in the month.

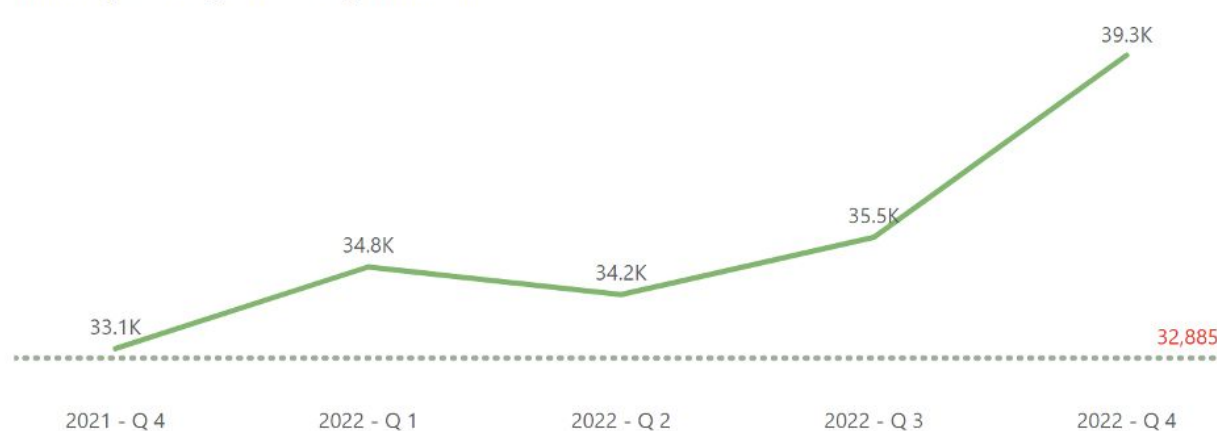
The target was set at 10% growth over the 2021 average values (previous year).

The monthly average users at the end of 2022 has increased by about 20% from the target value of 32,885.

Monthly Average Users by Quarter



Monthly Average Users by Quarter



Indicator: USE

The extent to which customers are interacting with our services

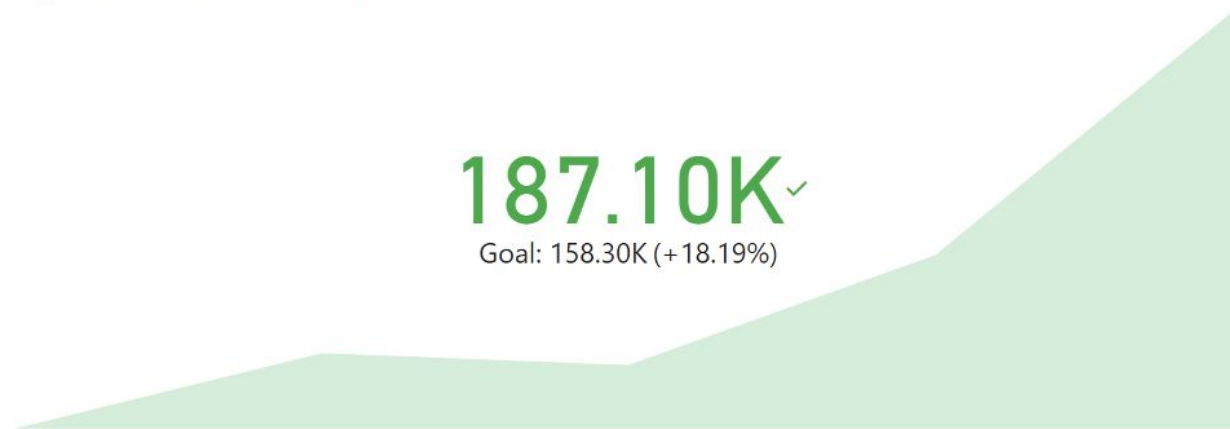
Unique Website Visits

The # of unique visits (users) to the website

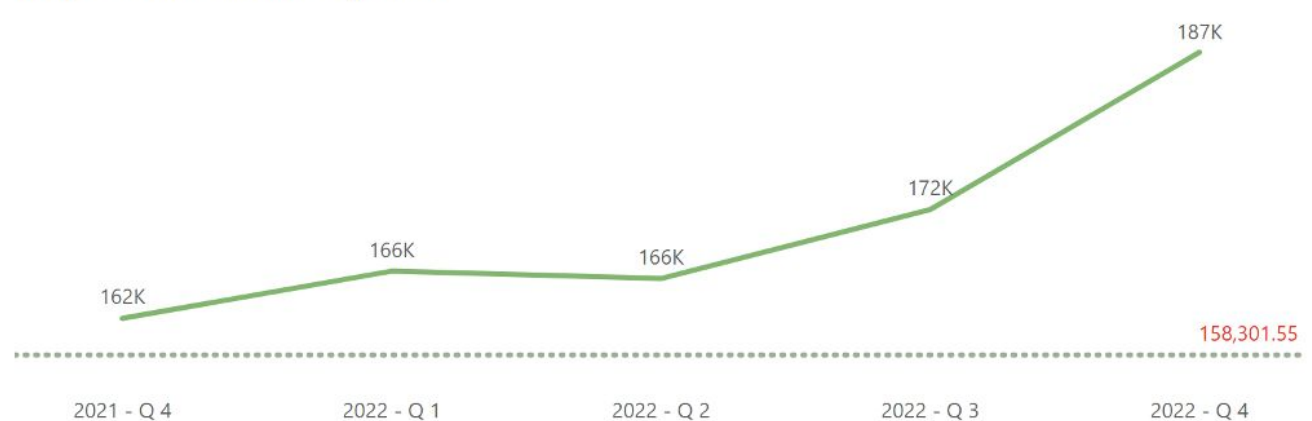
The target was set at 10% growth over the average quarterly value in 2021, which was 143,911.

The number of website users steadily increased over the last five quarters by about 18%.

Unique Website Visitors by Quarter



Unique Website Visitors by Quarter



Indicator: USE

The extent to which customers are interacting with our services

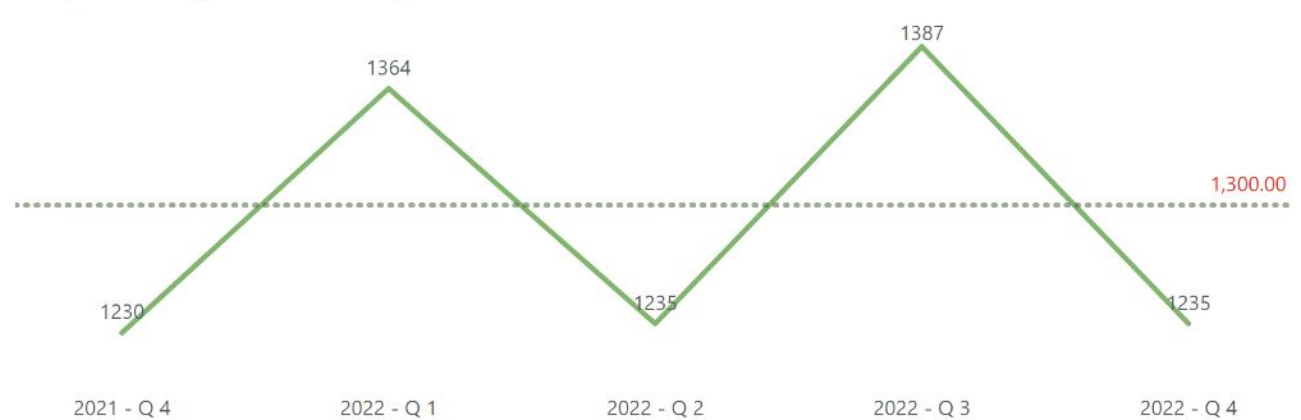
Unique Catalogue Searches

While the number of unique catalogue searches has increased above the target a couple times, the current level as of Dec 31, 2022 is about 5% below the target of 1300.

Unique Catalogue Searches by Quarter



Unique Catalogue Searches by Quarter



Indicator: USE

The extent to which customers are interacting with our services

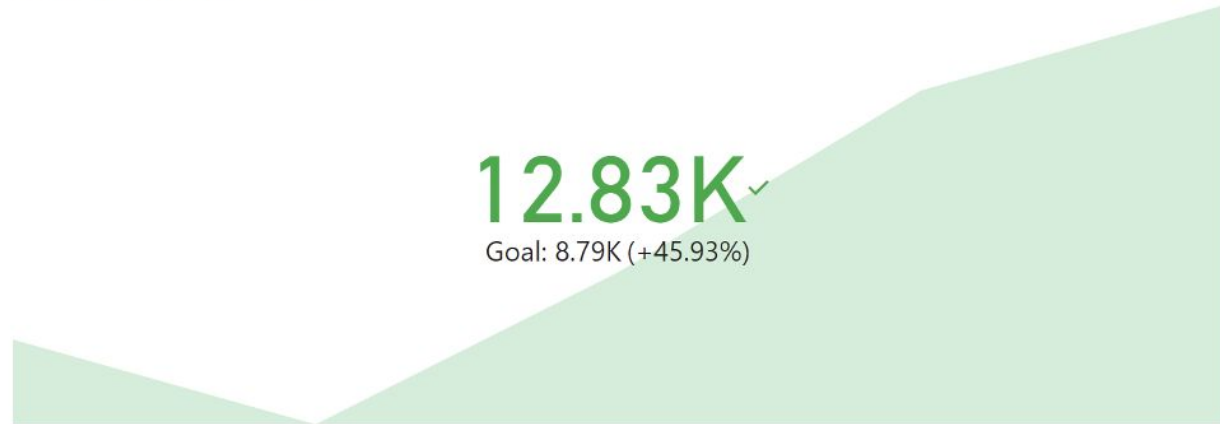
Monthly Average Wifi Sessions*

**Excludes Richmond Green Branch Oct-Dec 2022 due to lack of data as a result of equipment change*

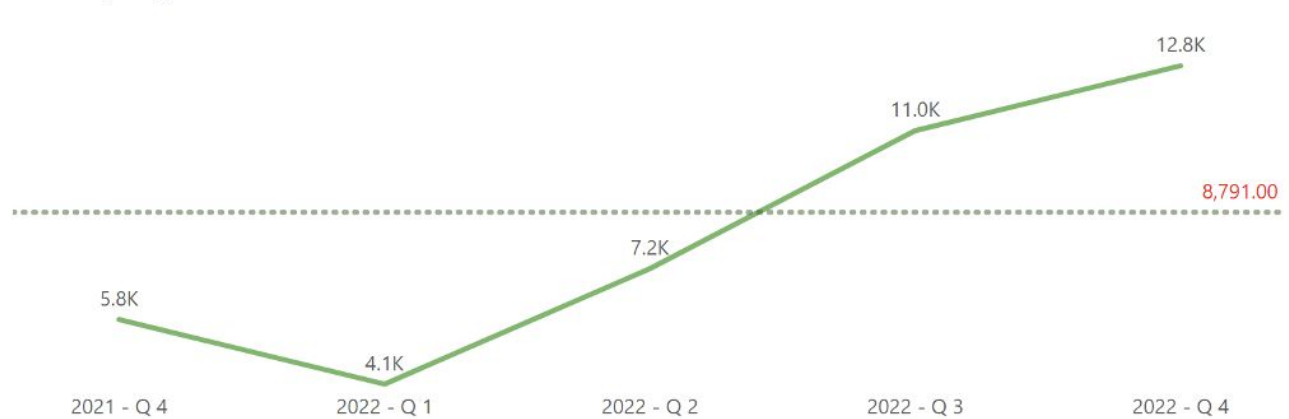
The target was set at 10% growth over 2021 values (previous year).

Monthly average wifi sessions were on the rise in 2022, and exceeded target as of Q3 2022.

Monthly Avg. Wifi sessions



Monthly Avg. Wifi sessions



Indicator: USE

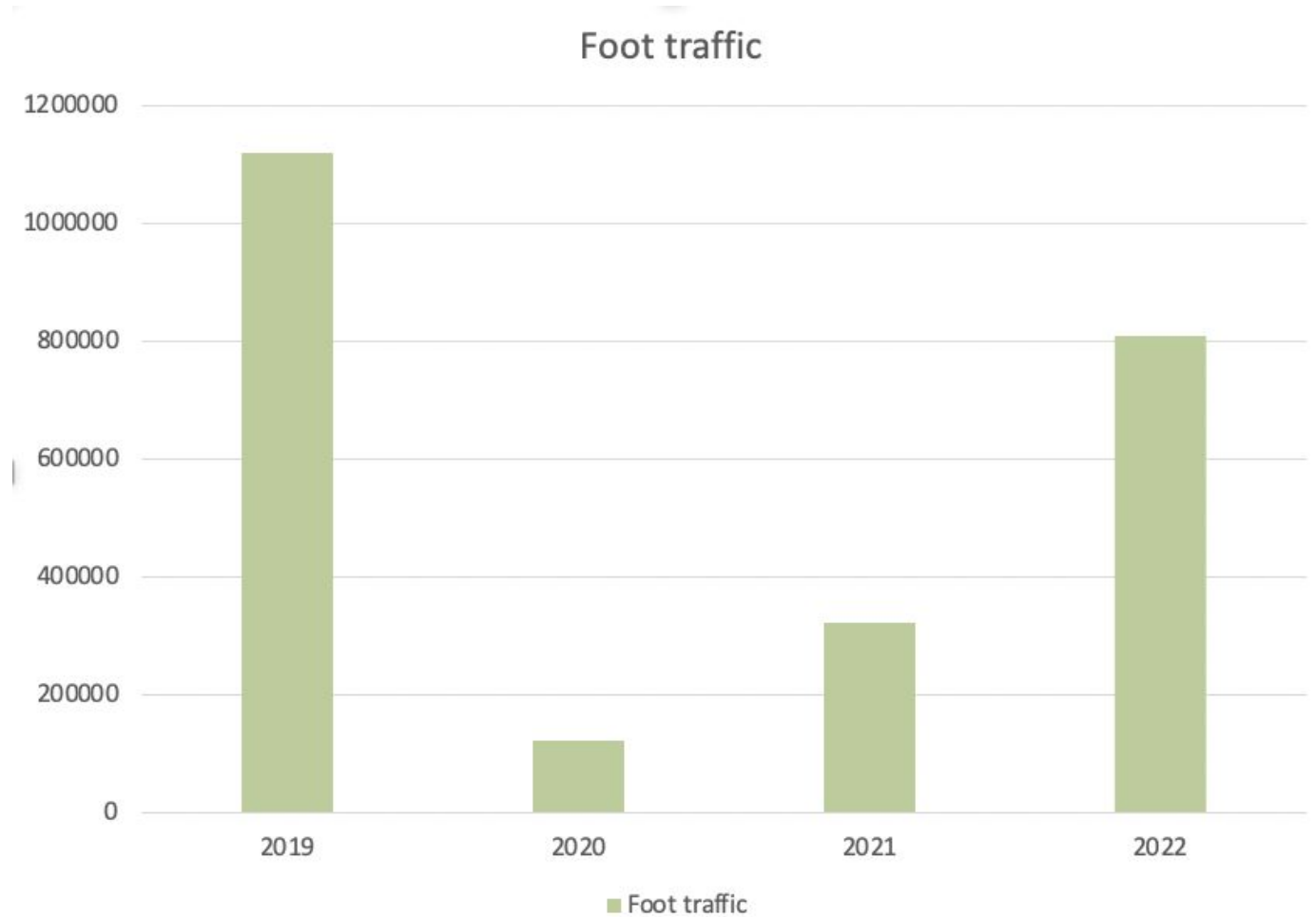
The extent to which customers are interacting with our services

In-person Visits*

**Estimated based on a two-week average.*

Number of customer visits made in person to all RHPL branches*

Due to pandemic closures and uncertainty, a target was not set.



Indicator: Satisfaction

How customers perceive their interaction with our services

Quarterly reporting on Customer Satisfaction to begin later this year



Indicator: Retention / Growth

The outcome of customer interaction with and perception of our services

of Active Cardholders by Quarter

An active card holder is an individual who has used their card within the last 2 years.

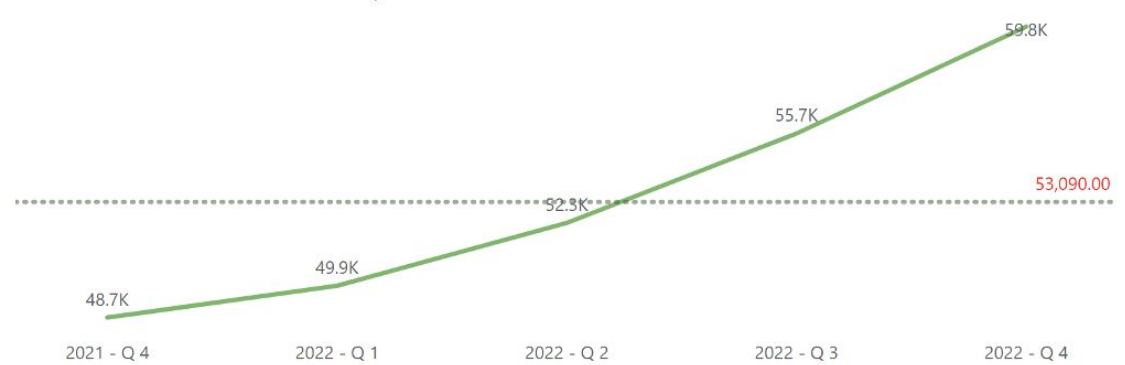
The number of active cardholders is increasing steadily since Q4 2021 and is currently about 12.6% over the target value.

While the population of RH has grown by 0.7% over last year, the increase in active cardholders has grown by 23%.

Number of Active Cardholders by Quarter



Number of Active Cardholders by Quarter



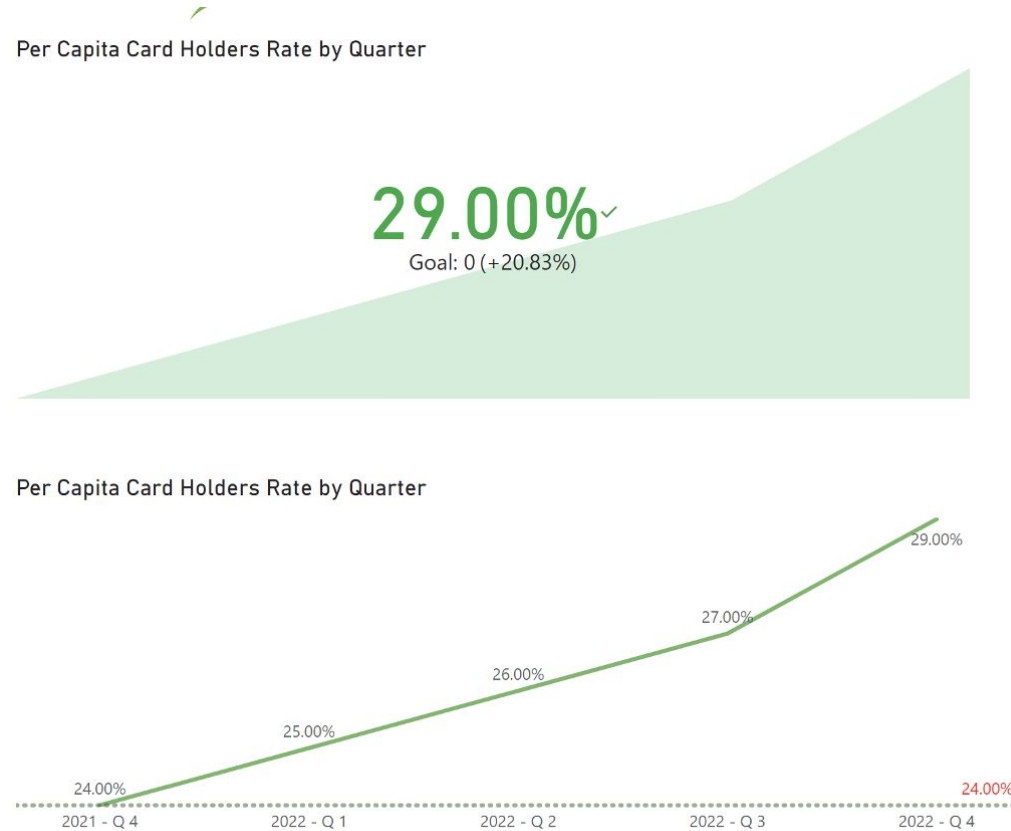
Indicator: Retention / Growth

The outcome of customer interaction with and perception of our services

% of Active Card Holders* Relative to the # of RH Residents

The per capita cardholder rate has increased from about 24% in Q4 2021 to 29% in Q4 2022.

The population of RH has increased only 0.7% in this period.



*An active card holder is a member who has used their card within the last 2 years.

Indicator: Retention / Growth

The outcome of customer interaction with and perception of our services

Membership

Active: a member who has used their card within the last 2 years

Renewed: a member who has renewed their membership (annually prior to 2022, biennially 2022 and later)

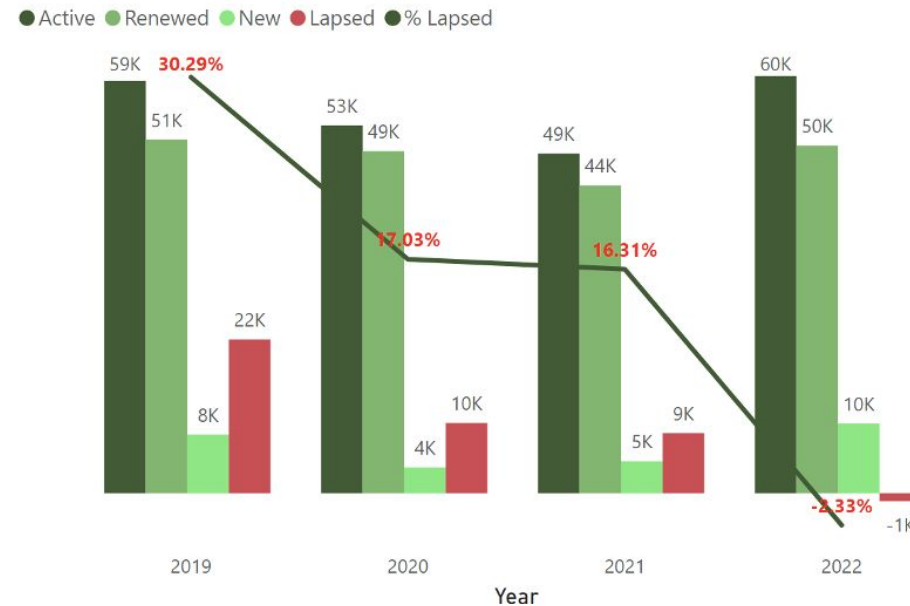
New: new members

Lapsed: customers who do not use their card within two years and do not renew

The total number of cardholders declined from 2019 through 2021 but increased by about 23% in 2022 alone.

From 2019-2021 we lost more customers than we added. This trend reversed significantly in 2022 when we gained back some customers lost over the years.

Active, Renewed, New, Lapsed and % Lapsed by Year



| Year | Active | Renewed | New | Lapsed | % Lapsed |
|------|--------|---------|-------|--------|----------|
| 2019 | 59,093 | 50,676 | 8,417 | 22,018 | 30.29% |
| 2020 | 52,711 | 49,027 | 3,684 | 10,066 | 17.03% |
| 2021 | 48,684 | 44,115 | 4,569 | 8,596 | 16.31% |
| 2022 | 59,788 | 49,817 | 9,971 | -1,133 | -2.33% |

Indicator: Retention / Growth

The outcome of customer interaction with and perception of our services

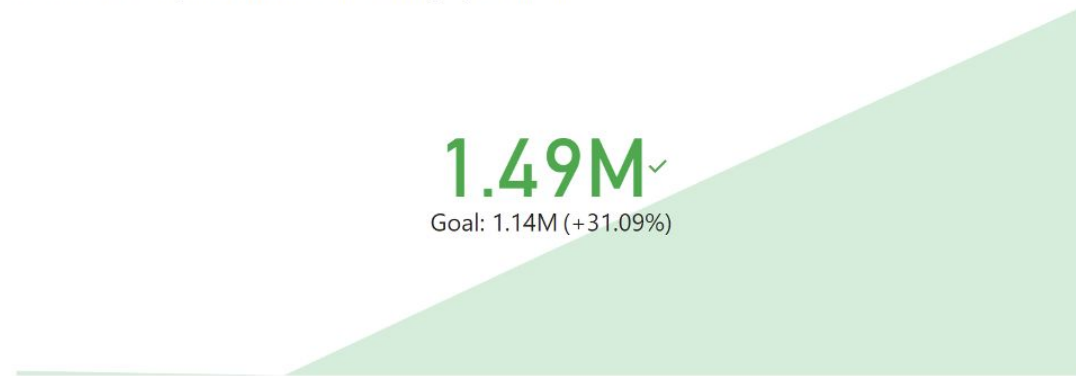
Physical Items Circulating

The total number of physical items circulating is about 31% over target as of Dec 23, 2022.

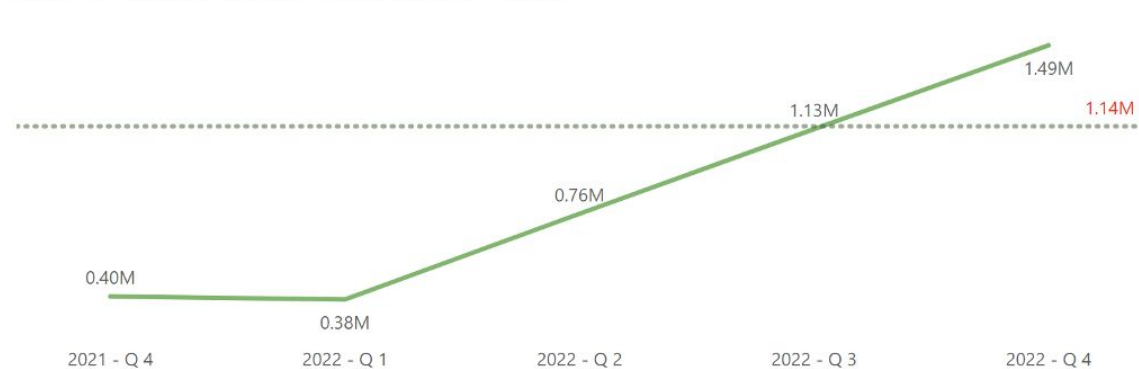
While the annual cumulative total of items circulating shows an impressive growth story, the quarterly numbers have been declining slowly from about 382,000 to around 366,000.

| Quarter | # Physical Items Circulating | Cum # Physical Items Circulating |
|------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2021 - Q 4 | 396K | 396K |
| 2022 - Q 1 | 382K | 382K |
| 2022 - Q 2 | 374K | 757K |
| 2022 - Q 3 | 369K | 1,126K |
| 2022 - Q 4 | 366K | 1,492K |

Number of Physical Items Circulating by Quarter



Number of Physical Items Circulating by Quarter



Indicator: Retention / Growth

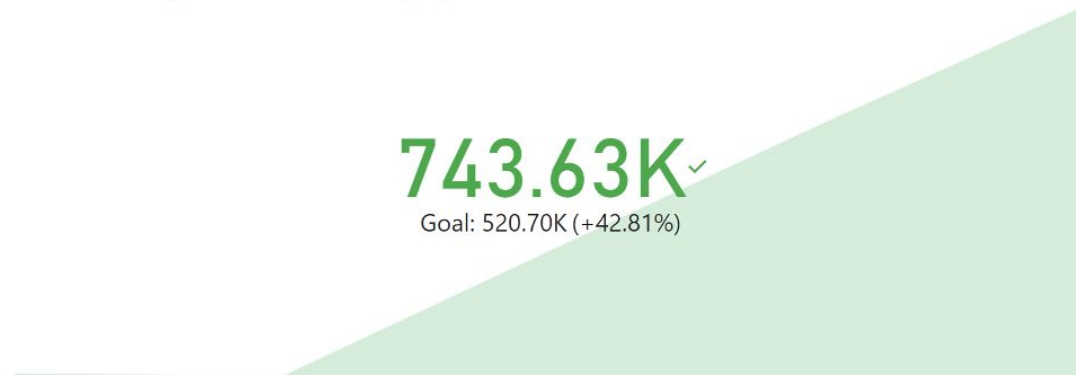
Digital Items Circulating

Cumulatively the total number of digital items circulating shows a similar trend to that of physical items and is about 43% ahead of target.

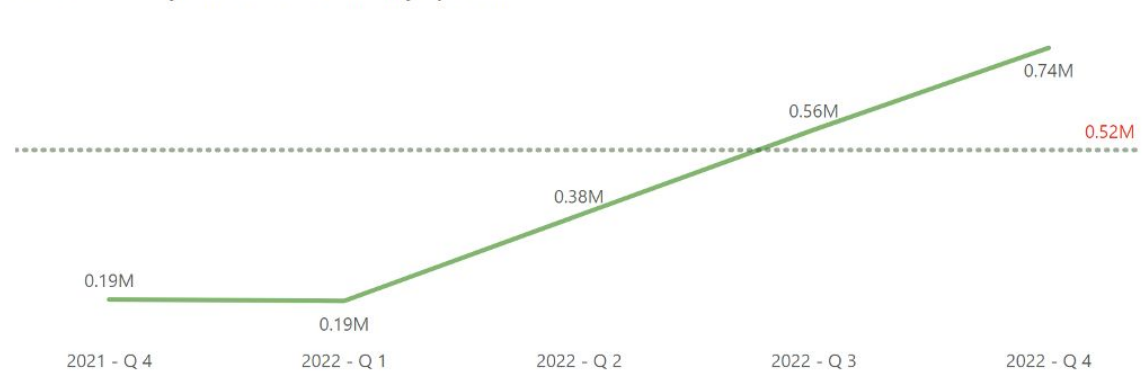
There is, however, a slowdown in the quarterly numbers, showing a decline from about 191K in Q1 2022 to 179K in Q4.

| Quarter | # Digital Items Circulating | Cum # Digital Items Circulating |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2021 - Q 4 | 195K | 195K |
| 2022 - Q 1 | 191K | 191K |
| 2022 - Q 2 | 187K | 378K |
| 2022 - Q 3 | 187K | 565K |
| 2022 - Q 4 | 179K | 744K |

Number of Digital Items Circulating by Quarter



Number of Digital Items Circulating by Quarter



Q4 2022
Highlights
Behind the Scenes



Cafe Opening

Cafe Louise had a soft opening in November, with expanded hours in January-February.



Sustainable Courier Labels Pilot

A staff-led project to make our courier box labels sustainable. It's also shaved significant time off of day-to-day Page duties. "It's a game changer!" Scaling across RHPL in Q1.



New RHPL Board

In November a new Library Board was appointed by Richmond Hill City Council. Welcome!



Team Appreciation Event

The team got together to celebrate the season and toast one another's success



Partnership with Hillcrest Mall

Partnered with Hillcrest Mall to offer Library services in between Santa's visits



CULC Futures Workshop

Led a team of CULC members in the design of a futures-thinking workshop for the CULC executive



What People Are Saying



Our Community Says..



Supporting Families During Labour Action



 **10bluedragons** Libraries stepping up to the task as usual 🙌🙌🙌🙌
13w 1 like Reply

Repair Cafe Program



 **Lisa Der**
I love every part of this! Community building and supporting a circular economy 🙌
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 7 w

 **Centre for Therapeutic Massage Richmond Hill** [Follow](#)
What a great idea! A win-win for everyone!
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 7 w

 **360kids** [Follow](#)
Such an amazing way to interact and to lessen our burden on the environment!
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 7 w

 **Linda Courtster**
What a wonderful initiative! Ill have to bring in some of my broken household items, next time!! 🙌
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 7 w

 **Vicky Schick**
That's amazing!!!! 🙌
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 7 w

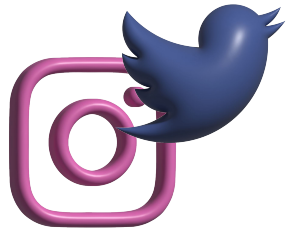
Our People



 **Sheliza Dawood**
Donna is the best!!
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 15 w

 **Afsheen Hameed Khan**
Lovely Donna! Always there with a warm smile, great reading recommendations and a chat! ❤️
[Like](#) [Reply](#) [Hide](#) 15 w

Our Community Says...



Light Therapy Lamps



Kathryn Landon
Another reason to love Richmond Hill Public Libraries!
Like Reply Hide 1w

Space Enhancements



hidz81 8w
Looks so nice! So glad you did this! 🍌❤️
Reply Send

squirrrely 8w
❤️❤️❤️👏
Reply Send

ckellycharles 8w
Lovely Reno!!
Reply Send

Indie Author Day



ashokemohanraj Thanks for having me! It was a blast!! 🍌🍌

Iranian Protests



menowshe 14w
Incredible. So proud to be a Richmond Hill resident!
Reply Send

bitakhosravi 14w
🍌🍌🍌
1 like Reply Send

tinahasheminasab 14w
Thanks for being our voice ❤️ #mahsaamini
Reply Send

Adria Scarano
This is why public libraries are so important.
Like Reply Hide 17w



Our Community Says ””

“Thank you for your love and care when we come, as it makes us feel at home.”

- *Richvale Library customer*

“The new book return machine is so easy to use, and I appreciate getting the ‘returned’ receipt printed out for my records.”

- *Richmond Green Customer*

“Thank you in organizing the ‘family maker hour’ for the past weeks. My two grandkids have enjoyed them all and looked forward to coming every Wednesday.”

- *A Central Library Customer*

Questions





‘We’re all in this together’: Iranian-Canadian artists fight for freedom through public art in Richmond Hill

[Sheila Wang](#)

Richmond Hill Liberal

Friday, February 10, 2023

Tossing turbans and burning head scarves, the anti-government protests in Iran continue to sweep across the country following the death of Mahsa Amini in September.

Some 10,000 kilometres away from their homeland, four Iranian-Canadian artists came together in Richmond Hill to demonstrate the civil rights struggles through public art in support of the ongoing fight for freedom.

The artists have launched a unique art exhibition, one which will run until March 18, with the theme of “A Trilogy of a Revolution: Women Life Freedom” at the central branch of the Richmond Hill Public Library this winter.

The three-piece exhibition is a collaboration of artists Aitak Sorahitalab, Azadeh Pirazimian, Sara Tamjidi and Shahrzad Zadmajid from different parts of the GTA.

“It was very important for all of us that we put our work in a space where it would be best received by the people who experience the impacts of what’s going on at home the most intensely,” Tamjidi said.

The artists said they chose the local library not only because they each had a unique connection with the community, but also because a rally of 50,000 people took place in the city last October in solidarity with the anti-regime protests in Iran.

It took them almost four months to put together the exhibition, guided by the slogan “Women Life Freedom” — translated in 19 languages at the exhibition and first coined by Kurdish women fighters, which has become a rallying cry during the protests in Iran.

“We’re all in this together,” is one of their messages, said Sorahitalab, who is working on a thesis at York University on public art and human rights.

The first art piece is a wall of square mirrors of different sizes with red writing in Farsi, English and French, reading “This is the face of someone who can revolt!”



It was inspired by stencilled paintings on a restroom mirror created by anonymous students at the Tehran University of Art, Pirazimian, a Toronto-based art educator, said.

“I was in awe. These people are actually changing a semiprivate space into a site of resistance,” Pirazimian said.

By recreating the messages on the mirrors, the artist said she wanted to honour the art students who risked their lives to push against the institutional repression and call on onlookers to join the fight for freedom.

The second installation is a digital art piece featuring a woman in a thinker pose in three different angles, interspersed with poems and historical facts about the women's rights movements.

“It came from just echoing the voice of women from Iran,” Sorahitalab, who lives in Holland Landing, said. “Women from Iran should have the same rights that women in Canada have or anywhere else. So we want to bring that idea here.”

Sorahitalab, who came to Canada with her husband from Iran nine years ago, said she remembers the constant fear she had to live with under the regime.

Shortly after Amini died in the custody of Iranian “morality police” for allegedly wearing her hijab “improperly” in September, Sorahitalab said she participated in a movement where she and eight other women cut their hair in front of the provincial parliament building in Toronto.

“I was aware of my privilege here because nobody would have shot me in the head because of doing this. I wanted to create a visual for people in Canada to see our solidarity with them,” Sorahitalab said, while fighting back tears.

Next to the digital piece stands a colourful display of craft lanterns made of paper, glue and tea lights.

The 70 lanterns float in the air, each representing a young life under 18 years old that has been lost during the protests in Iran since September.

Iran's Generation Z — those born between 1997 and 2010 — has been at the forefront of the ongoing protests across the country despite the regime's violent, sometimes deadly crackdowns and threats of arrest.

"We want to represent the fact that they were vibrant, colourful beings that had dreams and hopes for their own lives and futures that they wanted to build and aspirations that they had. And all of that was cut very aggressively, way too short," Tamjidi said.

A list of names of the Iranian children and youth are posted alongside the art piece to honour the lost lives — as young as eight years old.

"No one person is free if their neighbour is not free," Tamjidi said, noting they wanted to show the "interconnectedness" of the civil rights issue worldwide.

When the artists first approached Anete Ivsina, a librarian at Richmond Hill Public Library, about the exhibition, Ivsina said she knew it would resonate with the community.

"The library is a safe space for people to connect, to tell others about their experiences. Everything that's happening on a global landscape, it comes to us immediately. So we want to be part of the conversation," Ivsina said.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Reporter Sheila Wang visited the exhibition and sat down with the artists to find out how the collaboration came together and what messages they'd like to deliver.

Sheila Wang is a reporter for the Richmond Hill Liberal, YorkRegion.com and their sister papers. She can be reached at swang@yrmg.com. Follow her on Facebook @JournalistSheilaW or Twitter @SheilaWang_.