

Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

TRANSFORMATION STORY

Caledonia Public Library

Caledonia, Minnesota

The Community

Every community is unique

Caledonia, Minnesota

- **Service Population:** 2,786
- **Location:** Southeastern corner of Minnesota
- Designated the Wild Turkey Capital of Minnesota



**“We’re a touchstone for the
community.”**

Ashley Dress, Library Director

Before the Changes

Small libraries can create Smart Spaces

“Our space is pretty small, only 2,679 square feet. However, I think with some innovative shelving units and design techniques, we could make the space feel more spacious but cozy at the same time.”

Ashley Dress, Library Director

The Caledonia Public Library

The town of Caledonia is the designated Wild Turkey Capital of Minnesota and the Heart of Quilt Country. From Caledonia, it's easy to explore parts of three states: Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

The Caledonia Public Library is led by Director Ashley Dress. The library's central location in the town places it within walking distance for residents from all over the city.





“I would like our space to better reflect the reality of our community.” —*Ashley Dress*

The Caledonia Public Library serves a variety of patrons with children under 15, adults over 55, and adults with disabilities spending the most time there. Says Dress, “this may be the only time they talk to another person all day.” Dress wanted to transform the space into one that “uniquely serves these different groups and their learning needs.”

The current space is great for quiet work but does not provide space for interaction and collaboration. “People come in to visit with their neighbors and friends, and with the staff as well.”

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

Using stakeholder interviews, a community survey, and open brainstorming sessions, the Caledonia Public Library discovered what the community needs and wants.

The Community Discovery Process

“I've done a few stakeholder interviews with high school seniors, daycare providers, public health, the historical society, a group of seniors, and a couple of people from the food shelf. It's interesting that some similar themes are emerging even from those very different groups.”

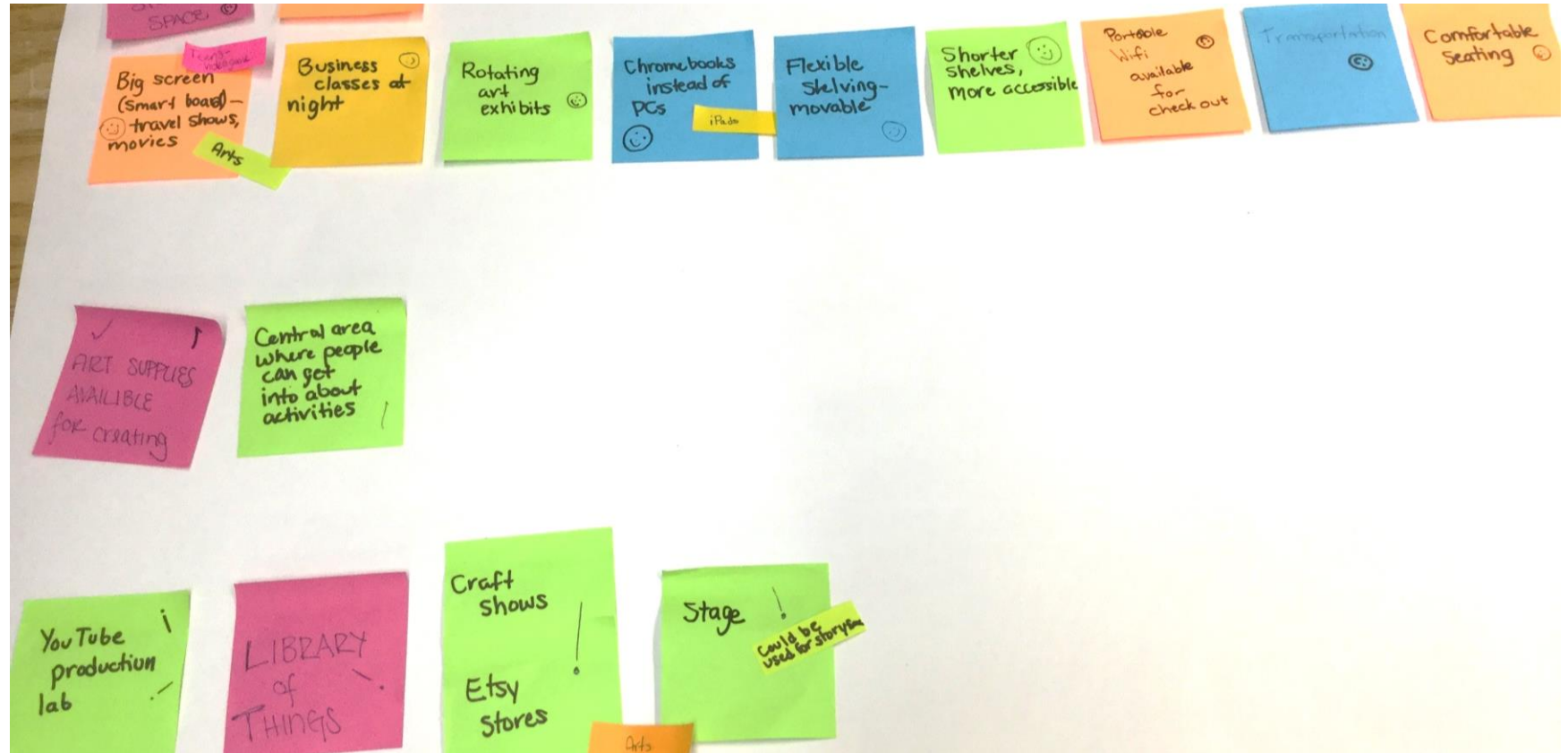
“We had a small group at the open brainstorming session that included some interested community members that were not frequent library users, so it was nice to get a broader perspective. The interviews were good to get some opinions about what people would like to see changed in the community.”

“A lot of talk about the computer space (computer carrels) – talked about a charging cart with laptops. Flexible furniture, chairs that can be put away.”

“A smartboard for the library. Presentations have been done at the library, but no real place to do them. No screen for projection. Could work for storytimes, and can be used by a greater range of ages.”

The Ideation Process

Arts, technology, accessibility, and variety were hot topics from the ideation process.



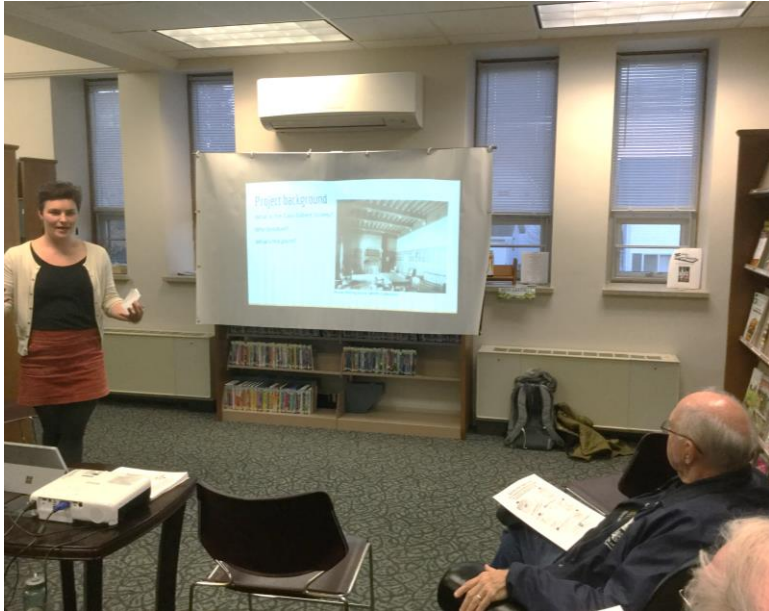
Prepare for Change

Making way for transformation

“The purpose for our project is to create a space that can be used by patrons from all generations for multiple uses.”

Purpose Statement

Caledonia Public Library Space – Before the Transformation



Before the changes, the library utilized a makeshift screen and projector for presentations. Heavy and bulky furniture dominate the space. The library also undertook a large weeding project which made it possible to remove some shelving units to open up floor space.

Making Space by Weeding

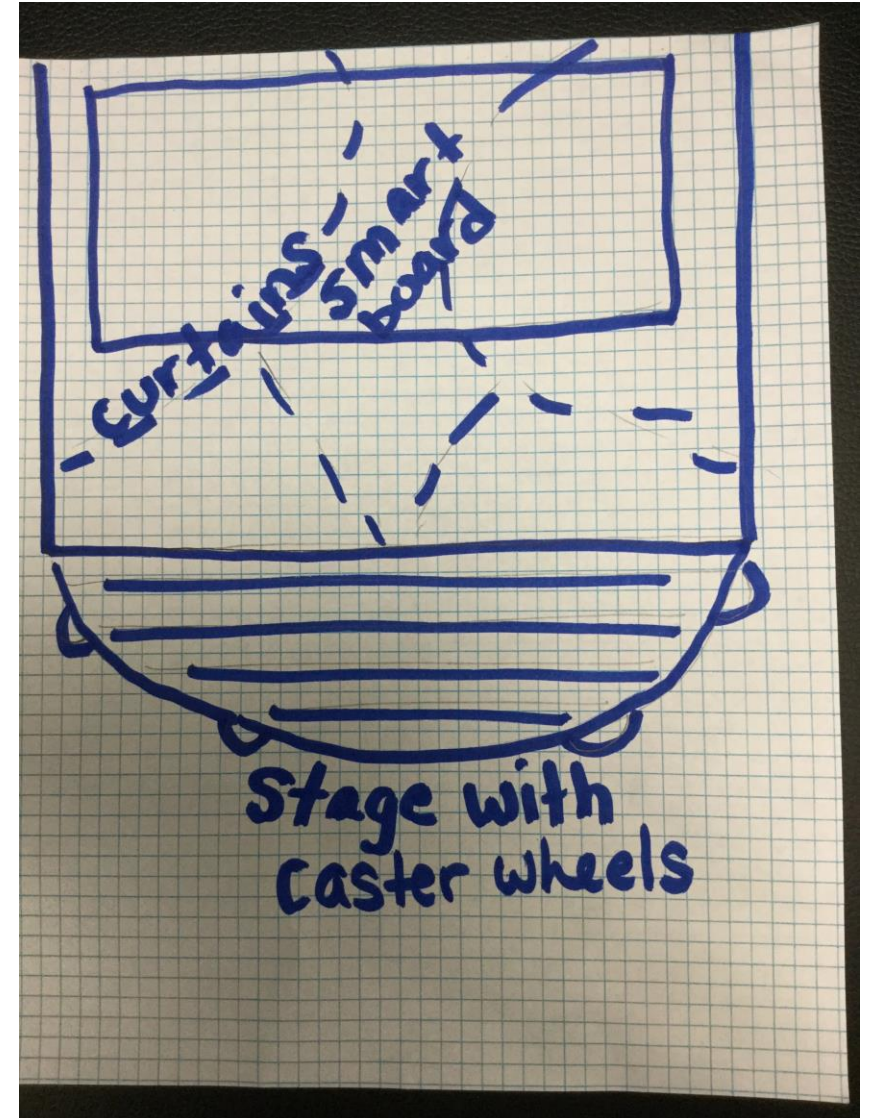
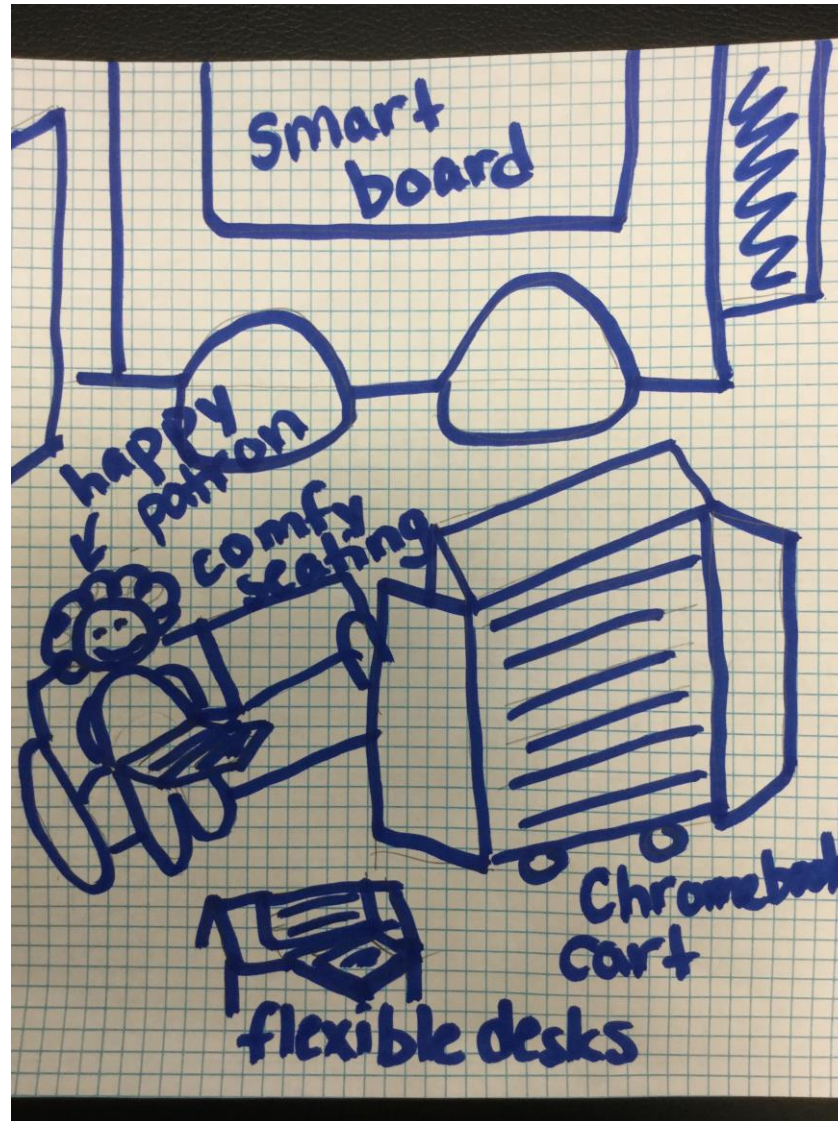


Caledonia Public Library completed a much-needed weeding project during their transformation. Weeding items allowed for shelving to be rearranged and in some cases, eliminated. It also made browsing easier and more accessible for patrons by moving items from the very bottom and very top shelves. The top shelf was then available for front-facing book displays.

Prototype

Turning ideas into tangible models

Sketches were used to help visualize the project. The library initially considered creating a stage with caster wheels, but opted for a more open space instead.



Transform

Make it happen!

A New, Open Space for Learning



Heavy, dark furniture gives way to flexible, easily movable tables and chairs that can be reconfigured to fit a variety of learning needs. A charging cart holds Chromebook laptops for in-library use. The makeshift screen and projector has been replaced by a smart TV on wheels that can be moved to accommodate different programs.

Community Reaction to the New Space and the Library's Place in the Community



"I love the new arrangement. It creates separation between spaces."

"I'm surprised by how open it looks, how comfortable it looks. It's more inviting."

"What a great utilization of space!"

"Chromebooks were a great addition."



"The [library] board knows what it has [in library director, Ashley Dress]. She has a real energy—moving the library forward."

Learn

Activate the space with programming

Future Programming at the Caledonia Public Library

The library is excited for future programming in the new space. Movie nights, art shows, discussion groups, and teen poetry slams are just a few of the ideas being planned for the space.



For more information on how Small Libraries
Create Smart Spaces and more case studies
please visit oclc.org/SmartSpaces.

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