

Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

TRANSFORMATION STORY

Hot Springs Library

Hot Springs, North Carolina

The Community

Every community is unique

Hot Springs, North Carolina

- **Service population:** 560
- **Location:** Madison County, Western North Carolina, near the Tennessee border
- **Library website:**
www.madisoncountylibrary.net
- One of two public libraries in the United States located on the Appalachian Trail



The Madison County Public Libraries

Madison County is a beautiful rural county with a large land mass comprising 449 square miles and a population of 21,157. Located in the mountains of Western North Carolina, the Madison County Public Libraries (MCPL) are comprised of three libraries that serve three distinct towns with their own unique personalities. Under the leadership of Library Director Melanie Morgan, each library strives to provide relevant, informative, and interactive programming to all community members.

“Located at the junction of the Appalachian Trail and the French Broad River, Hot Springs is a rustic town well-known for its natural mineral hot springs and stunning vistas, and for playing host to Appalachian Trail hikers.”



“The town of Hot Springs is a town made up all walks of life from outdoor enthusiasts, artists, small business owners, farmers, retirees, and young families. It truly has a quirky small town charm.”

Melanie Morgan, Madison County Public Libraries Director

Before the Changes

Small Libraries can create Smart Spaces

The *Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces* project would provide resources for the Hot Springs Library to create learning spaces focused on the user experience, and establish the library as an anchor in the community.

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

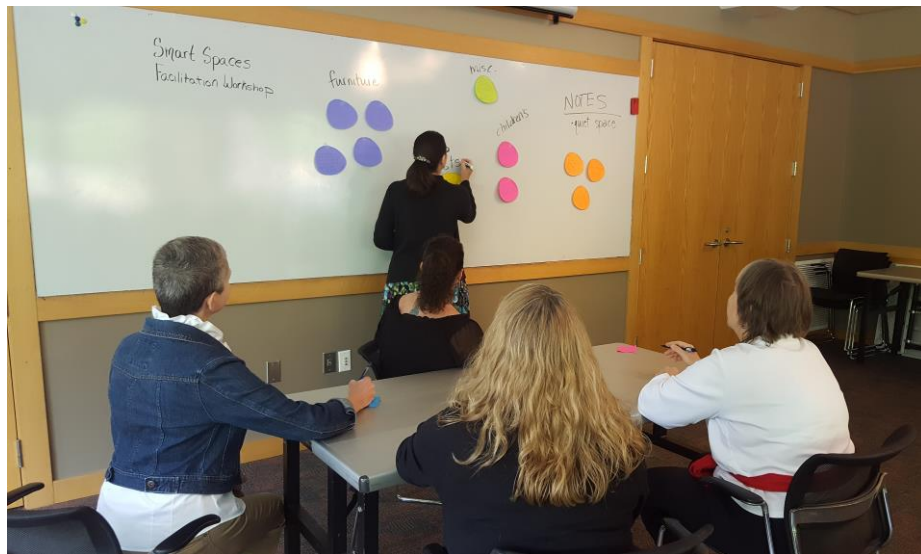
**The library asked and listened
and the community shared
their aspirations.**

During the process of creating the library's action plan, the MCPL staff engaged community members through both formal and informal facilitation workshops and during community meetings. It was as simple as passing out post-its and allowing stakeholders the opportunity to dream big if there were no monetary obstacles.

All participants were asked to answer two questions:

1. What three things do you value most about the Madison County Public Libraries?
2. If there were no barriers, what three things would you do to make it even better?

As participants shared their responses, Melanie wrote them on a whiteboard. Responses were then read out loud with time for comment, and later the data was compiled to share with stakeholders.



MCPL Staff participate in an ideation brainstorm.

“While the community would like a smart, versatile multi-use room, we also want to develop hands-on creative play centers in the children’s area, with emphasis on environmental preservation linking the community’s connection to the surrounding Pisgah National Forest and French Broad River. Our aha moment was coming up with the idea of creating STEM-based play centers that can be rotated quarterly to keep the children’s play area fresh, and ultimately keep families coming back to our libraries.”

—Melanie Morgan



MCPL staff participate in an ideation brainstorming exercise.

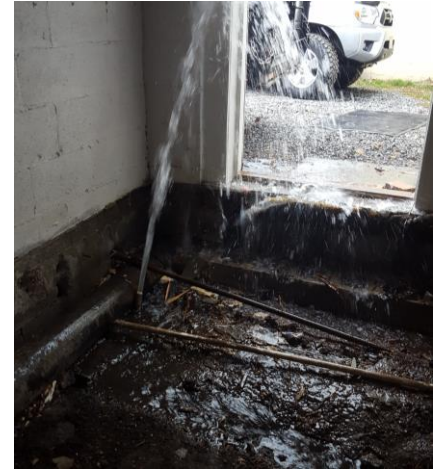
Prepare for Change

Making way for transformation

Purpose statement

The Hot Springs Library will turn a bare storage room into a versatile hip space for active learning.

Demo Day at the Hot Springs Library



Demo day at the Hot Springs Library was certainly eventful. Using labor provided by a nearby correctional facility, the space opened up quickly but not without issues. Structural issues with the ceiling plagued the demo and just when Melanie said out loud, “well, nothing else can go wrong,” a pipe burst in the floor, flooding the area. Left with nothing but laughter, the plumbing was repaired and beautiful new hardwood floor was installed.

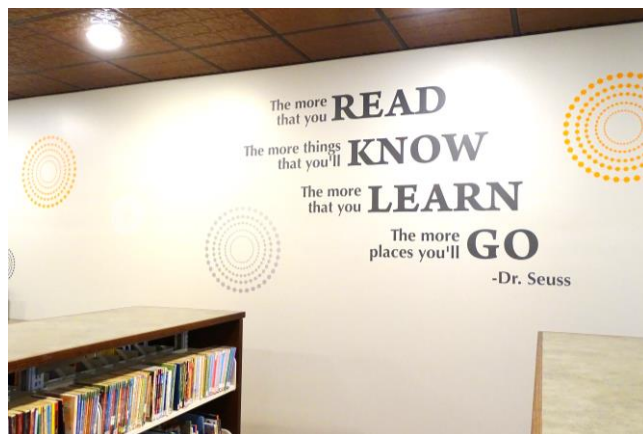
Transform

Make it happen!

The New Space

Warm orange and cool gray compliment natural wood tones in the new Hot Springs Library space. Flexible, mobile furniture, including shelving units on castors, adds to the versatility of the space.

Geometric shapes adorn the walls in the multi-use space while a classic Dr. Seuss quote greets library patrons in the children's area. Also in the children's area is the new sensory wall, taking a cue from nature right outside the library's door.



Learn

Activate the space with programming

Programming at Hot Springs Library



Hot Springs first-graders enjoy storytime in the new space.



A QR Barcode Scavenger Hunt takes first-graders all over the library finding clues and answering Junie B Jones trivia.



Hot Springs Elementary students participate in rock painting after school.



Hot Springs children play with the new oversized LEGOs and "vet station," one of several kits that rotate through the MCPL.

Celebrate & Sustain

Continual community connection

Literacy Leaps at the Hot Springs Library

Melanie is particularly excited about *Literacy Leaps*.

This free program targets second through fifth graders. Literacy Leaps will be offered once a week from 3:15 to 4:30 pm. Students will ride the bus from their designated elementary school to the library, which will help working parents with afterschool care and transportation. Once students arrive at the library, they will be provided with a healthy snack. Literacy Leaps will focus on homework help and tutoring in math, reading, and writing. STEAM enrichment activities will also be offered monthly at each learning session. In addition, students will have the opportunity to checkout a laptop and hotspot to help support their educational achievement at home.”



The town of Hot Springs is excited for the changes. The library moved into their current location shortly before the project began, and now they are looking forward to the future!



"Melanie Morgan had a vision: She knew what we needed, whether we knew it or not!"

"She [Melanie] is my hero. I brag about her all the time."

"She [Melanie] knows how a library is evolving, and she is ahead of that."

"We now have a big, bright, happy place to enjoy the library. Kids can play but also check out books."



"There's excitement. The new space gives kids room to spread out and do their own things."

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

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