



VISIT

LIVE

WORK

STOR
E

ABOU
T

MAGA
ZINE



BATTLE LAKE'S NEW SMART ROOM OFFERS ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

February 3, 2022

By Heather Rule

Battle Lake has a new smart room at city hall. The space is free and open to the public (residents and visitors) and can be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis during regular city hall hours (M-F from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.).



Battle Lake City Hall's smart room is great for remote workers, virtual meetings, job interviews, and more.

Smart rooms can be used for a variety of tasks that rely on technology, including job interviews, video calls or access to Wi-Fi. It can be a better option than parking outside the public library or other public buildings to try and connect to the Wi-Fi, said Erin Smith, executive director of Viking Library System. The technology needs became greater with the pandemic leading to online schooling and meetings.

The pandemic heightened the need for people to have access to public Wi-Fi and technology so that they could use software for things like Zoom meetings, telehealth visits or virtual legal appointments. Having the space and technology to do that in a public place is the essence of a smart room. Money from the federal CARES Act, an economic stimulus bill, went toward smart rooms in Otter Tail County for communities that didn't have a public library. Those were Battle Lake and Vergas.

As part of Otter Tail County being named a Blandin Broadband Community, it received grant funding to focus on broadband and digital inclusion projects throughout the county, according to Smith. A steering committee formed and surveyed county residents asking what they'd like to have in regard to broadband and digital inclusion options. Smart rooms were one of the projects identified, and therefore had some money allocated toward the project.

Arvig set up a separate network connection for the room. A TV was installed, along with a microphone-video combo. Video and audio can be picked up throughout the smart room. The TV monitor can be used as a computer, too, with tablets and separate keyboards. Users can also connect to the monitor with a personal laptop or another device. The smart room made sense for a few reasons. One of the things the steering committee talked about was increasing public Wi-Fi at public parks to give people more access. Continuity and dependability of service are better indoors. "An outdoor space for public Wi-Fi isn't always the best environment, especially if you're going to do something that's going to take more than a few minutes," Smith said.

So, the idea of bringing the smart room to Battle Lake was born. It's beneficial, especially when Smith sees so many people come to public libraries for a couple of hours to work on tasks like resume updates, working on school projects, connecting to video calls for legal help or telemedicine visits.

"Now in these communities that didn't have a space like that, they have a dedicated space. People can comfortably be inside, access the technology, and take the time needed to complete whatever project or appointment or class they're working on," Smith said.

[< Back to All News Posts](#)