

# THE HOME OFFICE

## ENVIRONMENTS FOR INSPIRATION

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The home office of the mid-20th century was primarily for the man of the house. During this decade, the male managed the finances of the home and escaped from the family to continue his work in quiet. These spaces held heavy furniture and were often dark. Mainly located at the front of the house, they had no view. They were very intentional spaces, solely for work and the occasional gathering of other menfolk. Surprisingly, the wife often knew nothing of the family finances and didn't really ever use this space.

The home office is a beautiful space, intended to inspire.

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Today is a very different time...and thank goodness. Both sexes are often working professionals and contribute to the finances of the household. The integration of mobile technology has completely transformed the way we work as well as the way we archive important documents. File storage is minimal. Printers are almost obsolete. Fax machines are extinct. So why exactly do we have home offices?

Well, we need a place to make our piles other than on the kitchen counter. We might want to get away from others under our same roof. This work space can be a respite place, disguised as an “office.” Families with children may use this space for everything related to school, activities and sports schedules. Sometimes, the office seconds as an art store with supplies needed for school projects. Maybe it’s a space we just feel we need to give us a sense of order, since so much chaos exists today in our lives.

These “office” spaces translate into one of two ways, depending on the homeowners. Either it is a true dedicated

separate room, or it is a dedicated space within another room, such as a desk in a butler’s pantry or laundry room, or a built-in within the family room.

What is important today for these spaces? First, if it is a separate room, it often commands the best view in the house. The view helps balance the labor of work with play. Second, it is a beautiful space, intended to inspire. Third, it contains other pleasures—a fireplace, a wine cooler, a cool hidden safe, an extra-large television, gym equipment, or a large folding or wrapping counter.

As in any room of the house, the home office reflects the character of the homeowners. The office may be a serious space, paneled in walnut with a coffered ceiling. Or it can be a whimsical space, decorated with fun and colorful wallpaper. Shelves can display books, collections, or works of art.

New about the way we work at home is that technology makes us mobile. We can work literally anywhere there is a WiFi connection. We may choose to be



poolside, dockside, or bedside. In the bathtub or the hot tub. Because of this flexibility, offices are slowly evolving. The entire home is an office! Couples can choose to work in common spaces to be close to their partners. Parents can work next to their children as they do their homework. The designer has an exciting opportunity to use their imagination to create unique spaces for work in home environments—customized for their clients’ particular needs.

Perhaps we should stop referring to the space as an office—it should be called a “dream room.” In the next century, I believe the future of the traditional, dedicated home office is likely destined for extinction. The potential exists now for integrated technology that allows work access through all screens within the home: laptop, tablet, telephone or television. This trend will continue and change the way we work both in and outside the home. The home office will transition from a secluded room to a multi-use space located wherever it is needed, where one can dream.



Born and raised in Virginia, **Cathy Purple Cherry** ultimately landed in Annapolis where she grew a large architectural firm specializing in high-end custom homes and estates. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients’ dreams with the reality of the built environment. Cathy’s intense love for the mountains has always been deeply rooted in her, and as such, Cathy is passionate about extending her 27-year old practice through DC and down the range to Charlottesville. She and her husband are building their second home, which they will one day retire in on Ennis Mountain. While Cathy revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, Cathy is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts and her work serving the special needs community through the firm’s Purposeful Architecture studio.

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