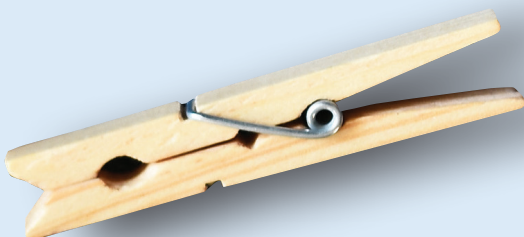




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A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FOR A FAMILIAR SPACE



The laundry room has evolved from simple functional rooms in which the space (usually a disaster) is kept behind a closed door to a room of great pride.

The “new” laundry room fills the soul of every woman. Both a purposeful room and a stunning room, laundry rooms have developed into shrines of organization. And they now are one of every woman’s favorite room in the house!

Why has this happened? If we are honest with ourselves, we (mostly women) love being organized. Everything needs a place. We perceive that if we design it well, it will be maintained in a pristine state. If we take pride in the space, we will work harder to keep it presentable. We hope that visiting guests are inspired to order and beauty when seeing our perfect laundry room. We reap great joy when a space can be maintained to ultimate perfection because every need has been addressed, allowing us to put everything away. And we hope that because the space is beautiful, we and others will be compelled to keep it in order.

This is all a far cry from the 1950s, when the laundry room was seen as a utility space, containing washer, dryer, hot water tank, freezer, tool kit and electrical panel. Or it was a pass-through hall or closet off the informal entrance to the home. The dry cleaner was used more frequently, because the equipment of the times didn’t do anything gently. In fact, the washing machine frequently “walked” across the floor! The kitchen sink was the hand-washing area. Completed laundry went into large plastic bins that got dumped on the master bed or family room sofa for folding. While the space served its purpose, it did not bring any joy to the process of laundering. Can that joy actually be achieved? Absolutely.

So, what should the laundry room do besides hold the washer and dryer? There are two paths that occur in custom homes today. One is that the laundry room is dedicated to exactly what it is named for—doing laundry. This makes a smaller yet incredibly well-organized space. Standard must-haves include a

drip/dry rod or cabinet, a fold-out ironing board in a drawer or built into a wall cabinet, a pretty little sink and faucet with a view, and storage for cleaning supplies, a sewing kit, overflow bulk storage, and household tools. And, most importantly, enough countertop area for folding—this is always the greatest request when designing a new home.

The second path is where the laundry room is also the craft/wrapping/home office/school project room. This room now often has the scale of a child’s bedroom. It includes a center work table for projects and folding, typically two desk/computer areas, and ample dedicated storage cabinets. A place for everything—wrapping paper, school supplies, household bills, a painting easel, a dog wash station, linens, cleaning supplies and sometimes a reading nook. It is the haven for all of us moms. And if it is a disaster due to the exploding volcano school project, the pocket door can be closed!

So, what are the “new” elements of the current times? The shut-off valves of the washer are no longer visible. Amazing sensors are attached to the floor under the washing machine that immediately shut off all water flow in the case of a waterline break. Long gone are the fluorescent ceiling lights with plastic protectors. A Visual Comfort hand-rubbed antique brass pendant light highlights the white bead board ceiling. A beautiful Kohler polished nickel faucet accents a soapstone or porcelain farmhouse sink. Glass or mosaic tiles embellish the walls. Micro-LED under-counter lights bring beauty and function to the stone countertop. Polished, honed, or leathered, stone has replaced the long gone plastic laminate tops of the 20th century. The front-loading washer and dryers can be placed on pedestals that lift the appliance access points, thereby saving our back muscles from strain. Or large counters float over front-facing appliances. And when room provides, built-in monogram hampers are part of this space for each member of the household. This engages the children into the laundering process! And lastly, natural light and view.

Laundering is a sad reality of life. Making the laundry space a happy-feeling

room is significant to improving our attitude towards this mundane task.

What are the biggest mistakes made in designing a laundry room? Making sure the units fit through the door without taking the door slab off the hinges or actually removing the thin astragal along the frame of the door. That means the door must be 2’-10,” allowing 2’-8” of clearance for all units to pass through without dismantling your house! What are other potential pitfalls? Getting the proper clearances for good function; understanding the preferred handedness of the user and getting the related appropriate location for the ironing board to function accordingly; and providing the proper hanging amount and height for the user’s patterns of drip/dry. And, overall, making sure there is a folding area that is not just two feet wide!

When asked what is your favorite room of a house, the kitchen will always claim first place. But, the new laundry room runs a close second to the pantry for every woman!



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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