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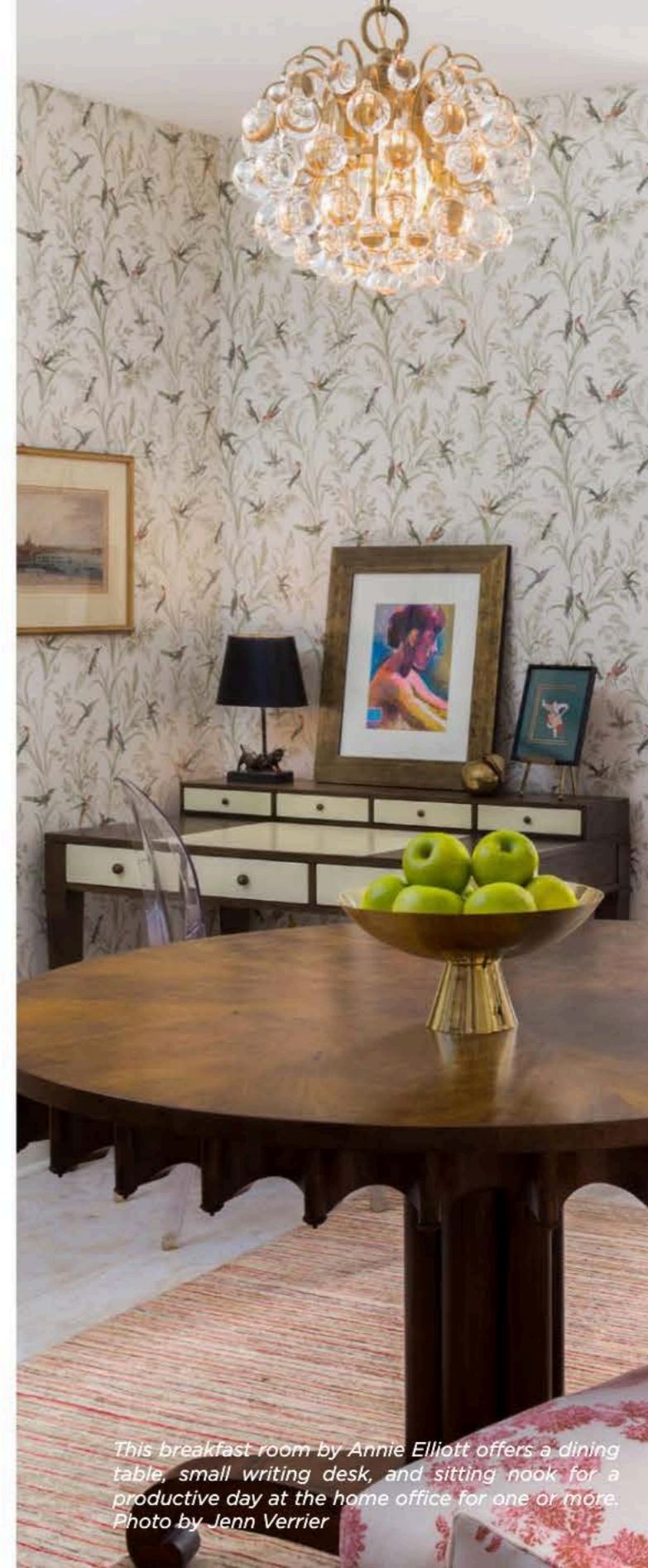
Tracy Morris set up her home office on the lower level to include separate desks, shelving to divide spaces, and standing work stations for collaboration. Photo by Greg Powers

WORKING FROM *Home*

A room-by-room guide on how to make any space a productive place

By Sherry Moeller

Since working from home has become the norm, and may be here to stay at least for the near future, most of us have settled into a routine in a certain spot in the house or may be in the process of renovating to make a space more functional - or might still be searching for that place that works for them. Designers share their top tips for making each space a productive work from home environment.



This breakfast room by Annie Elliott offers a dining table, small writing desk, and sitting nook for a productive day at the home office for one or more. Photo by Jenn Verrier



THE DEDICATED HOME OFFICE

If the office is just for you, how much space do you need to spread out? Do you want or need to put everything away at night? Is it visible from other rooms or tucked away? All considerations dictate the ideal work place.

"The key for functionality is simplicity," says Tracy Morris of Tracy Morris Design, www.tracymorrisdesign.com. Tuck away cords, keep the surface space clutter free, and consider mounting your monitor or incorporating floating shelves, she adds.

Furniture pieces can have dual uses, too. "A standup desk, a stylish writing desk, coffee tables that turn into desk space, storage ottomans, and flexible shelving units add versatility to an office," says Keira St. Claire of Anthony Wilder Design/Build, www.anthonywilder.com. "The desk doesn't need to be the centerpiece of the room."

"To give an office a cozy feel, add lamps for a warm glow and other homey touches, such as candles, plants, throw pillows, and blankets," says Morris.

"Lighting doesn't get enough attention in home offices," Elliott adds. Overhead lights can be harsh whereas ambient light from floor and table lamps are much more practical and appealing, and offer as much light. "Place a modestly-sized accent lamp on your desk to make the room feel especially inviting," she says.

This bright home office/library designed by Tracy Morris offers the best of all worlds with a dedicated desk, plenty of open and closed storage, and a comfy sitting area for an alternate work space. Photo by Greg Powers



THE LIVING/FAMILY ROOM

Even if you prefer working on the sofa with a laptop, you can create a functional home office space, says Elliott. "The trick is to have a small cabinet or a table with drawers or shelves nearby where you can stash office supplies and papers, plus recharge your laptop." An attractive bookcase offers a place to neatly organize items, plus a wireless printer can be in another room and out of sight. "A chest that doubles as a coffee table keeps papers tucked away at the end of the day, too," Elliott adds.

*Top: A warming fireplace, soft throw, and ample seating provide a comfortable place to work on a laptop for a few hours in this Annie Elliott-designed family room. Photo by Angie Seckinger
Above: Tracy Morris tucked a desk under a window in this living room setting. Photo by Greg Powers*



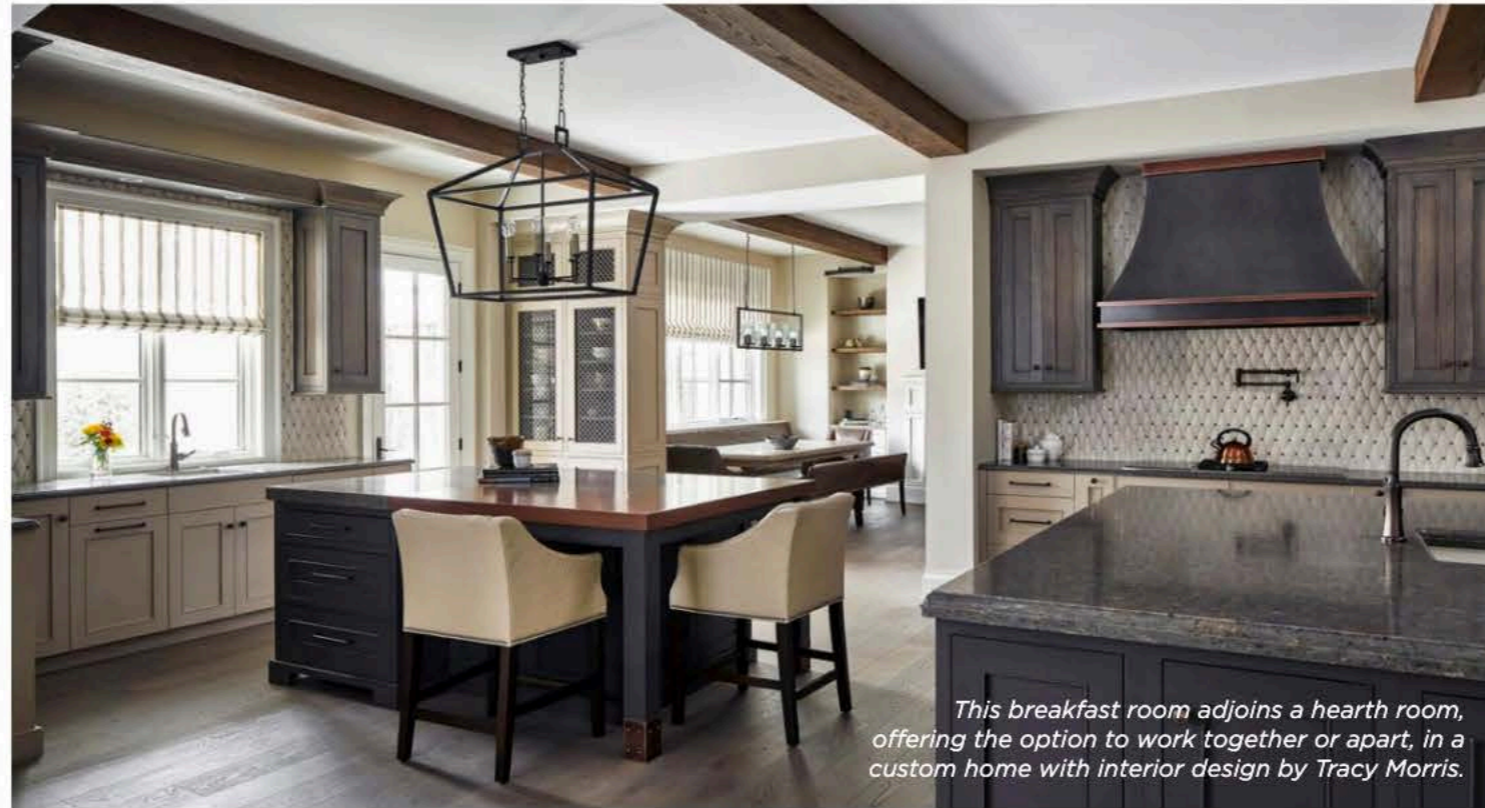
Having a water view is a bonus in this dining room that doubles as an alternate and peaceful work from home space designed by Keira St. Claire. Photo by John Cole

THE DINING ROOM

“There are many places in the home you can set up to work without needing a formal desk, such as a dining room table,” says St. Claire. A dining room table often is the single largest surface in a home so it can accommodate papers and desk supplies, as well as several family members. A dual purpose storage cabinet in the dining room offers a place to tuck away office items when not in use.



The slant top desk in a bedroom designed by Josh Hildreth offers a cozy spot to work from home, with the option to close up the desk at the end of the day. Photo by Stacy Zarin Goldberg



This breakfast room adjoins a hearth room, offering the option to work together or apart, in a custom home with interior design by Tracy Morris.

THE KITCHEN/BREAKFAST ROOM

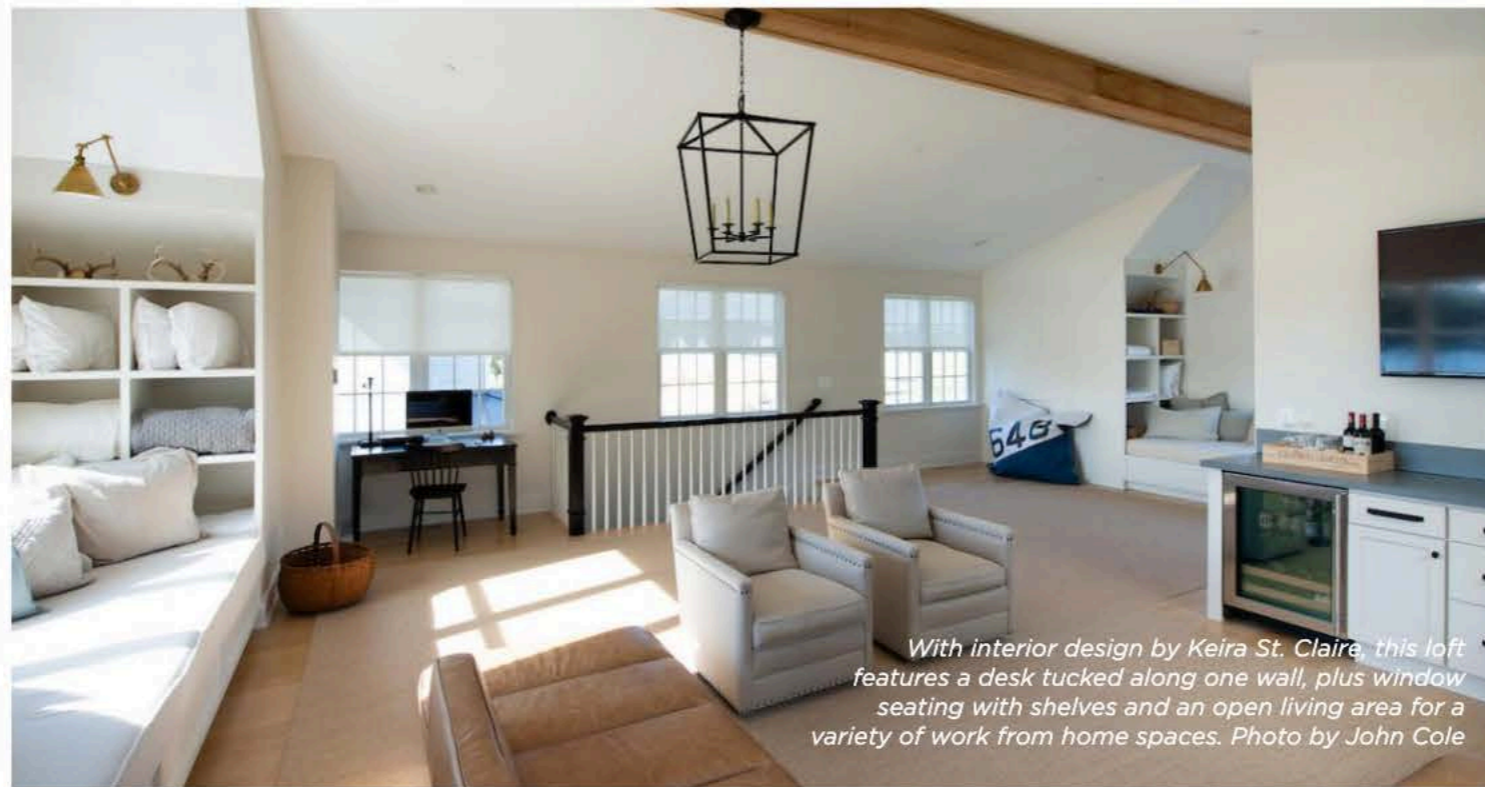
“We have an old Swiss farm table in our kitchen that I enjoy working at when I need to spread out a project,” says Hildreth. Kitchen islands typically offer extra seating, too, and are especially ideal for group projects. Consider creating multiple seating areas in adjoining spaces, so you can work together or apart.

THE BEDROOM

Since a bedroom is often one of the quietest rooms in the house, it can be an ideal option for working from home. An antique slant top desk is a beautiful addition to a bedroom for an elegant surface. “Slant top desks serve as chest and desk and allow you to close your office at the end of the day by folding up the top,” says Hildreth. A small writing desk is also functional and beautiful, especially if placed in a window setting, adds Elliott. The extra light from the window enhances the soft lighting of a table lamp.

THE LOFT

“Creative sitting spots can make all the difference in rooms that aren’t dedicated home offices,” says St. Claire. “These will help inspire you when you want to take a break from a desk and also offer a variety of places to sit throughout the day to enhance productivity,” she adds. The additional seating areas can double as meeting spaces if the need arises.



With interior design by Keira St. Claire, this loft features a desk tucked along one wall, plus window seating with shelves and an open living area for a variety of work from home spaces. Photo by John Cole