

Doing your home work

A home office is only a good idea if it's functional

BY SANDRA STRIEBY

While most people have been happy to put 2020 in the rearview mirror, last year led to one development that's gotten a high approval rating: working from home.

Gallup polling shows that about a third of workers now always work from home, and a quarter do sometimes. Two-thirds of those who have stayed at home during the pandemic want to continue working remotely.

Tim Hammer, a principal with CAST Architecture, says that COVID "has changed the importance people place on having an office in the home ... people are seeing a greater opportunity to have a more fluid work situation, particularly in a second-home scenario. The whole world has had a crash course in how to work remotely in teams and make it work."

Whether you're building, buying, remodeling, or simply rearranging space, thoughtful design can do a lot to make working at home workable. This article presents guidelines for developing a functional, productive and enjoyable Methow work space.

BEING CONNECTED

Choosing a place from which you can communicate with the outside world is crucial, especially if online meetings are part of your work day. Phone and broadband access are not givens in this valley. Kathy Goldberg, a broker with Blue Sky Real Estate, notes that while the telecom

Come visit us, your homegrown real estate experts!
Across from the Winthrop Homesteam Park



Ina Clark,
Owner



Brian Colin,
Owner



Micki
Thomas



Susie
Gardner



Carol K.
Johnson



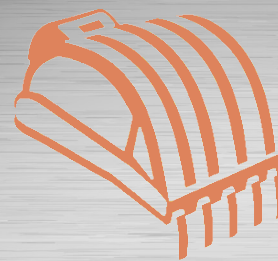
Ski
Zbyszewski



Didi
Burrington

Next to the Arrowleaf Bistro

509-996-3700 • WWW.MOUNTAIN2RIVER.COM



PALM

CONSTRUCTION, INC

*Creative solutions and strong
customer relations*

- EXCAVATION WORK
- ROADBUILDING
- RIVER RESTORATION
- UTILITIES
- DUST ABATEMENT
- BOOM & CRANE SERVICE

#PALMCC1953CW

53 HORIZON FLAT RD

509-996-8178

PALMCONSTRUCTIONINC.COM



landscape is evolving rapidly, there are still places without DSL - notably up the Twisp River, in Pine Forest, and in parts of the upper valley.

Buyers should “absolutely” be sure that they have the connectivity they will need, she said. Even where satellite service is available, terrain and vegetation may mean the signal can’t reach a particular building site or structure, or even a specific room within a house.

A resident who recently built a house in the upper valley said, “We are fortunate that the signal is good most places on our building site, so technology did not impact the specific location, though we continue to work to optimize for better bandwidth.” Optimal bandwidth rose in importance when work that once required travel moved online, she said.

Both Hammer and Goldberg said that although many people need work-at-home space, not everyone requires or has room for a dedicated home office.

“As with any choice for any aspect of your home, it’s important to have a really clear idea of how the space may be used,” said Hammer. If you are going to work from a room that will have other uses, he recommends thoroughly thinking through all of the scenarios to be sure uses and times of use won’t conflict.

Having a separate room with a door you can close can be a key to focus and productivity, and a reminder to others in the house to respect your work boundaries. And it may be essential if you need to hear clearly during phone calls and online meetings. Hammer notes that interruptions can be particularly distracting

Choose local. Choose independent.



Choose The VIP Insurance Agency.



The best local independent insurance agency in the Methow Valley

Offering business, farm, auto, home, secondary home, nightly rental insurance, and more.

info@vipagencygroup.com • www.vipagencygroup.com
 In Twisp: 102 S. Glover St. • 997-5291
 In Winthrop: 505B Highway 20 • 996-4515

Come visit us up at North Valley Lumber for all your Big Green Egg needs.



Start the spring off right.



North Valley Lumber

58 Horizon Flats, Winthrop | 509-996-2264 | northvalleylumber.com

during a video meeting. “Think about what people are seeing when they’re looking at your space,” he advises.

KEEPING THINGS SEPARATE

The office’s location within the house, and its configuration, can make a difference in your ability to be productive, as well. One self-employed valley resident said, “My husband and I share an office, but we keep our spaces separate and facing different directions for purposes of focus. Being separate from the main living area where the kids are keeps us on task as well.”

Some people may prefer to use a separate structure to reinforce the distinction between work and personal life. A Twisp-area resident who traded an office in town for an outbuilding a few dozen yards from the house said, “It’s the best of both worlds. The computer’s not in my home but it’s not far away, either. I still leave that physical location and

walk to a different place. It gives me that going-to-the-office feel.”

If you work with any kind of confidential materials, you’ll need to be sure you can keep them under lock and key. Some employers may have specific security requirements, and it’s vital to be sure you can meet those. How much space you will need deserves some thought, too. If

your work is more or less paperless, a nook may suffice. Do be sure you have enough space to accommodate properly ergonomic furniture, including whatever work surfaces you will need for the type of work you do.

If you store files or reference materials, or have bulky equipment, make sure both the square footage and the configuration of

the space will work - and check placement of outlets, too. A wall-mounted power strip can give you plenty of places to plug in without having to scramble under the desk. Think about whether you’ll need a shredder, and how much space to allow for a power back-up (another Methow essential) and a fire-proof storage box for critical records. Remember that you can use vertical space, too. Tall file cabinets and walls lined with bookshelves help make the most of a small space.

ABOUT ACCESS

Physical access may be a consideration if, post-pandemic, clients will be visiting. You might want a separate entrance, a location near the front door, or a stand-alone building. And be sure to think through any needs for meeting space once face-to-face get-togethers become feasible.

A remote worker who’s created an office in just under 50 square

TAX BREAK?



If you are self-employed and use a room or separate free-standing structure “exclusively and regularly” for your business, you may be able to deduct some costs, so having a dedicated office space can make financial sense. Check with the IRS at www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/home-office-deduction or consult your accountant.

Howard Construction & DESIGN LLC



- CUSTOM HOMES
- DESIGN
- ADDITIONS
- OUTBUILDINGS
- CONCRETE SERVICES



Dustin Howard
(360) 317-6757
HOWARDCL830ND

howardconstructionllc@gmail.com
HowardConstructionDesign.com



Local

Experience the Windermere difference by working with the Methow Valley’s truly local, leading real estate experts.

Windermere Real Estate

METHOW VALLEY

313 E. Methow Valley HWY
Twisp, WA 98856
509-997-6562

MAZAMA BRANCH

42 Lost River Rd.
Mazama, WA 98833
509-996-6562


Windermere
REAL ESTATE

WindermereMethow.com

feet says meeting with a single client was possible, pre-COVID, “but I could not have more than one person visiting me in the office.” That office has been thoughtfully laid out to accommodate two four-drawer filing cabinets, 12 feet of counter space, a wall of shelves, a desktop computer, two printers, and a comfortable office chair. There’s even art on the walls, and windows with a view of the river.

“There’s very little space for anything else in there. Sometimes I have to move my chair to stand where I want to stand,” says the owner. “But for one person who works alone, it’s enough.”

Light is another important factor, especially in a space where you’ll spend time during hours of darkness - which can be considerable during a Methow winter. Be sure the room has good general lighting, then experiment with task lighting to meet your own needs and create an effective video experience.

Window placement is worth considering, as well. Views of the natural world can be soothing, inspiring, and provide a much-needed mental break when you can’t be out there yourself. CAST Architecture’s Hammer says that “having a space ... that can be connected to views and nature is a definite bonus” for people living and working in the Methow. “The opportunity to visually, even physically, connect an office to the outdoors is quite nice.”

Hammer goes on to say, “In the current and, I assume, the post-COVID world, I believe home offices will see a lot more importance in terms of a dedicated office. Several firms have committed to remote work forces in perpetuity.”

The world of work has probably changed forever, and with some planning, doing your work at home can be productive without interfering with all the other facets of life, or impinging on the pursuits that brought you here in the first place.



Landscaping & Irrigation Contractor

- Landscaping
- Irrigation

- Concrete Pavers
- Water Features
- Retaining Walls

Design through Installation



Windy Valley Landscaping

See our project gallery at windyvalleylandscaping.com

email: wvlandscaping@aol.com
Cathy Habermehl 509-733-1090
Eddy Layne 509-429-9239
 Lic. #HAPPYLL937D2



CASCADE CONCRETE PRODUCTS



**CONCRETE REDI-MIX
SAND & GRAVEL**

*Concrete, Boom & Dump Truck
Delivery to your site*


CRUSHED GRAVEL FOR DRIVEWAYS
Spread on your road or in a pile!

* Sand & Gravel	* Concrete Color & Sealer
* Ecology Blocks	* Landscape Rock
* Well Rings & Precast	* Stucco Supplies
* Road Dust Control	* Snow Removal

Serving The Methow Valley Since 1977
(509) 996-2435
 54 Horizon Flat Rd, Winthrop

Design by Pinto Design



Design by Johnston Architects
Photo by Benj Drummond

James Salter • Jeremy Newman
 509-341-4326 • jlsalt@msn.com
blackcapbuilders.com