

Live/Work



Working at Home, Living at Work

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INTRODUCTION

Working at home is becoming more commonplace as corporations downsize, employees telecommute, and entrepreneurs start their own businesses. The Census Bureau's Working at Home 2000 report estimated that 4.2 million self-employed Americans worked at home, and five years later the federal government's American Housing Survey revealed that 5.75 million were spending forty hours or more working from home. The numbers, understandably, keep growing. Who doesn't want the freedom to be her own boss, work in his own personal space, and set flexible hours away from the pressures of corporate life?

Yet despite the millions of Americans working at home, most are making do with casual, even uncomfortable environments. They are discovering that the average home's rooms are not easily converted into spaces suitable for full-time work. With this realization has come the need for intentionally configured spaces that mesh the worlds of living and working within a single property. Successfully working from home requires more than a desk shoved into an extra bedroom, a laptop opened on the dining room table, or a basement corner converted into an office. It demands the same attention to design as is paid to "real" offices and work spaces in commercial buildings.

Living and working

Matthew Hood, a Michigan developer, liked the model apartment in one of his projects so much that he moved in himself. Now he works from the mezzanine that opens onto his airy two-story live/work space in the Detroit suburb of Royal Oak.

Converting

When a light industrial area was rezoned, Hood moved quickly to convert an old lumber warehouse into eight apartments. Sleeping bays added to the front and generous walls of glass inserted at the back help create the feeling of urban loft spaces.



