

Pandemic House Prototype - “Home-Work-Home”

How have these unprecedented times changed your daily routine? If you had the opportunity to rethink how you live, what impact would that have on the spaces you currently inhabit?

These were the central questions asked by Abramson Architects’ Residential Studio in response to “stay-at-home” mandates aimed at flattening the curve of Covid-19. The sudden and drastic change to our collective daily routines has solidified the need to adjust traditional models of “home” to better support the myriad of functions required by our modern-day shelters.

Our residential team’s initial survey identified several common themes required for a successful “Home-Work-Home” environment. The four most critical elements for a prototypical future home include:

1. Built-in safe-guards and sanitation protocols
2. Visible wellness-focused elements such as natural light and ventilation
3. Biophilic designs which incorporate plants and nature
4. Separation, but not isolation, between work/study and living areas

THE PROTOTYPE

The initial conceptual design we have created for the Home-Work-Home is 2,500 sqft on a 50’ x100’ lot. The flexible layout is based on a family of five with two working adults and three school-aged children. It makes efficient use of every available square foot, inside and out.

KEEPING SAFE: Sanitation Protocols

The Home-Work-Home addresses safety concerns and sanitation needs with the addition of a few simple features.

- A bench at the front door allows visitors to sit and remove their shoes before entering the home
- An outdoor sink, located around the corner from the entry, provides a place for handwashing
- The outdoor shower lets inhabitants or visitors wash off before entering the living quarters if they have been exposed to a potential threat or if a family member is immunocompromised.

FINDING BALANCE: Efficient Planning

This home is designed to support family members of all ages whether they need to work remotely, run a home-based business, or participate in distance learning.

- Across the atrium from the main volume of the home, a series of work/study pods are physically separated from the common living areas
- Three individual pods are sized for a single child to focus on schoolwork. They are outfitted with technology to ensure an ideal environment for study or remote instruction
- One larger pod has been designated as a home office for a working adult, but it can also function as a study area for a college-aged child if needed
- The larger “office pod” has a pocket door that opens to an adjacent study pods when extra adult supervision or intermittent participation is required
- All four pods feature glazed pocket doors to provide a sense of separation without isolation and to makes it easier for parents to casually check in on the children, or vice versa
- A ground-floor restroom is placed at the entry where it can be conveniently accessed from the either the main living area or the pod structure.

In the backyard is a small free-standing studio structure can serve as a home office for remote-working parent, but it has also been designed to support a small business with up to 3 employees.

STAYING CENTERED: Wellness Principles

Wellness is an active process. In this case, the Home-Work-Home facilitates the occupants’ ability to make choices that minimize stress and lead to a healthy lifestyle.

- A soothing water feature, adjacent to the large ground-floor deck and shaded atrium, provides sights and sounds for improved physical and mental well-being
- Plantings in the ground-floor atrium and on second-floor roof deck bring the natural environment deep into the home, combatting “cabin fever” and isolation
- The atrium’s terrain features stepping-stones resting on a bed of soil to promote a calming atmosphere and act as a buffer between the home and work areas.
- The atrium’s landscaping incorporates plant life, including a single specimen tree, and is open to a dramatic staircase leading to a bridge on the second floor

IN CONCLUSION

The planning principles embedded into this prototype can benefit families, even beyond the need for a “pandemic responsive home”. In total, the four-bedroom house dedicates roughly 500 sqft (25%) of its area to work and study. The spacious living area includes a generous kitchen with pantry storage, a dedicated dining area, casual bar-height seating, and a welcoming family room. The bedrooms, which comprise the entire upper level interior space, are kept small since most of the daytime activities will be relocated into the work/study pods. This thoughtful arrangement preserves the sanctity of work spaces, elevates the importance of “downtime”, and supports a restful night’s sleep for a thriving family of five.

Summary/Blurb

In response to the myriad of functions required by our homes these days, our Residential Team looked at flexible ways to create adaptive dwellings. Based on their research to date, they have found a few common themes regarding what people want/need including a separation of work/study, a focus on nature, and sanitation.

For our initial Prototypical Pandemic Home, we have applied these principals to the design of a 2,500 sqft home on a 50’ by 100’ lot. The flexible layout is based on a family of five with two working adults and three school-aged children. It makes efficient use of every available square foot, inside and out, and provides safety features such as a private outdoor shower and a washing station at the entry. Visit the News Section of our Website for more details.