

Country Home

The Magazine of New Country Style™

the
before
& after
issue

make it pretty



BEFORE
& AFTER

What's the best part about turning this...



into this?



The trip to the office is measured in steps, not miles.

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL WESCHLER

“As dilapidated as the garage was, I tried to preserve its look when we rebuilt it.”

Salvage sense: Improvisation and recycled goods helped this home-office project stay within budget. Metal pendant lights were recycled from an old showroom; the half-round windows in the gable ends of the room were culled from the original garage.



Built for business: Housed above the garage, Leslie Allen's office is expansive, bright, and inviting. The lofted ceiling reaches 13 feet high, while few furnishings, an open staircase, and multiple windows add to the sense of space.

Room for everyone: The office is part art room for son Sam, 9, and daughter Phoebe, 7. "It provides an environment where they can be more creative," Leslie says.

The loftlike home office that interior designer and editor-at-large Leslie Allen created above her family garage in wooded Weston, Connecticut, owes its classic good looks to Leslie's love of 1930s home designs, light-hued wood, and crisp white surfaces. It owes its functionality to her knowledge of the way she works, the essential starting point for any office design.

"I'm one of those horizontal people when I work," says Leslie, whose first requirement was a "really long desk." She got that and more: a 4x8-foot worktable on wheels, perfect for laying out room palettes of tiles, paint chips, and fabrics; a wall of storage cabinets, drawers, and baskets; a sofa for her children to curl up on after school; different heights of work spaces and seating to accommodate various tasks; and plenty of natural light flowing into the 21x24-foot room.

Throughout the space, Leslie mixed favorite antiques and

objects with brand-new home-center materials and catalog finds. Her 11-foot-long desk, for example, spreads across five old file cabinets; the top is a standard 24-inch-deep kitchen counter created by a home center and wrapped in new laminate that resembles corrugated kraft paper.

The exterior of the new structure, built in the exact footprint of a 1930s one-story garage, also combines old and new. Leslie worked with architect Jeanne Stoney, of Stoney-Disston Architects, and builder Joe Giglio to create a structure that, from the outside, looks like an old carriage house. Garage doors set the tone: They resemble old-fashioned bifold originals, but they are actually remote-controlled overhead doors.

The best thing of all, though, is the convenience. "I can run to my office in my pajamas," Leslie says. "At day's end, I can see the school bus pull up and know the kids are home."

BEFORE & AFTER HOME OFFICE

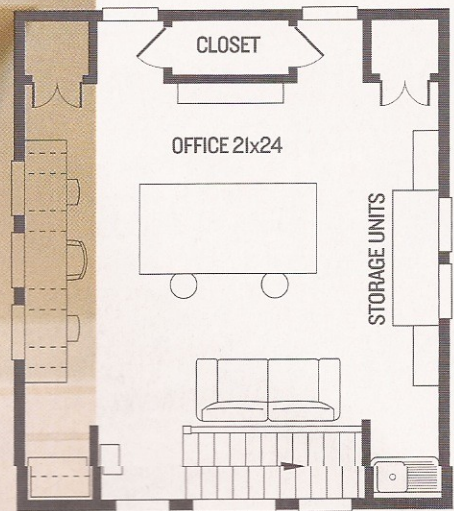
Paint finishes: A serene palette features soft white flat latex on the walls; when Leslie had the paint mixed, she asked that the formula be doubled to intensify the hue. Trim is painted with a white interior oil paint made for metal and wood. "It gives a more solid finish, and it's one of the glossiest paints out there," she says.

Easy-care flooring:

The materials for 4-inch-wide tongue-and-groove Southern yellow pine flooring cost about \$1,340, or about \$4.50 per square foot. Treated with a clear coat of polyurethane, the floor is strong enough to withstand heavy traffic, yet light enough in color to enhance the office's neutral palette. Unencumbered by rugs, the beautiful grain is fully exposed.



Floor plan: The architect plotted this space to accommodate Leslie's freestanding storage units and desk around the perimeter, leaving the center open for her pool-table-size work surface. Along the front wall, the space between the dormers was cleverly put to use for a long pass-through closet that houses bolts of fabric and other bulky supplies.



Movable worktable: Leslie needed a work surface to lay out fabric and design samples, and to look at plans. She worked with Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse and her contractor to build a 4×8-foot table using stock lumber and materials. Oversize casters allow her to move the island, then lock it in place. For a hardworking top—and to add a tin-bucket country touch—she topped it with galvanized-metal sheeting. Cedar 3×3s form the legs, and a shelf for books and supplies spans the length down below. Total cost: about \$500.

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HOME OFFICE

Windows: All of the office windows were positioned to take advantage of upper-story views; this double-hung bank overlooks the river that runs behind the house and garage. Made with wood frames and single-glazed panes, they're a stock home-center brand. Installed, they cost \$3,000, plus \$1,500 for storms and screens.

Desktop: Old file cabinets were painted and used as "legs" for a desk, creating workstations for Leslie and the kids. Fabricated by the home center, the water-resistant desktop is a kitchen countertop wrapped in laminate that resembles corrugated kraft paper. Cost: \$430.