

## Distilled Traditional

Bethesda, MD

### Anne Decker Architects

**Interior Designer:** Linda S. Mann Interiors

**Specialty Finishes:** Lenore Winters Studio

**Landscape Architects:** Lila Fendrick Landscape Architects

**Structural Engineers:** Linton Engineering, LLC

**Civil Engineers:** CAS Engineering

**General Contractors:** Potomac Valley Builders, LLC

As architects work to reengineer established suburban areas, they may encounter an existing architectural context that includes a variety of architectural styles. In navigating such situations, architects might need to address questions such as: What is the place of traditional design in a 21st-century suburb? And what does it mean today, in a suburban setting, to be modern?

In the Edgemoor part of Bethesda is one architect's nuanced response to such questions. The project, dubbed "Distilled Traditional," is a new house by **Anne Decker Architects** that infuses modern design features into a traditionally styled residence, producing a home that slips elegantly into its surrounding context.

"Edgemoor was established in the early 1920s, and contains a diversity of architectural styles, from original Colonial homes to sprawling contemporary mansions," said **Anne Decker, AIA**, principal at the firm. "The siting of this particular house was established to blend in to the existing fabric of the neighborhood without calling attention to itself."



Entry hall of the "Distilled Traditional" house, with Great Room visible through the arch at left.

Photo © Tom Arban Photography





"Distilled Traditional" house.

Photo © Tom Arban Photography



Kitchen of the "Distilled Traditional" house. Photo © Tom Arban Photography

With simple gables and plain white stucco exterior walls, the house presents a rather modest face to the neighborhood, bringing to mind a residence that one might encounter in a village in Normandy. Behind the restrained façade, however, is a generously sized house that subtly incorporates modern design touches into its traditional design motif.

"While acknowledging the strong architectural history of Edgemoor, this house takes traditional forms and interjects modern twists, creating a home that feels warm and familiar but clean and crisp at the same time," Decker said.

Visitors encounter an entry hall with a graceful stairway leading to the second floor—a feature that, as in classical houses of the past, serves as an initial object of admiration. Passing under the stair through a paneled arch opening, guests arrive at a centrally located great room with partly exposed ceiling beams suggestive of a historic country mansion.

The great room leads in one direction to the dining room and kitchen, and in another to a library. Additional first-floor spaces include a home office off the entry hall and a mudroom linking the garage to the kitchen. The house transitions to the outdoors with a fireplace terrace off the kitchen and a separate dining terrace and fountain garden off the great room. The second floor includes a capacious master suite and a second bedroom and bath.

The exterior's mostly white color scheme is carried through to the interior. On both the outside and inside, white surfaces are punctuated with an edited combination of other materials. "Stucco, limestone, and copper speak to traditional ways of building, while large steel and glass windows and doors bring a fresh angle," Decker said. "The oak floors and the hardware give warmth to the interior, while blackened window and door openings dissolve in the white walls, blurring the boundary between interior and exterior."

Each part of the house "was designed and distilled down to its fundamental essence creating a purity of space and form," Decker said. "By removing what is unnecessary, the house becomes all about proportion, texture, and light."