



The Connollys began to dream bigger still—of a finished basement.

## A FUNCTIONAL BASEMENT

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Not long ago, doing laundry for Mike and Michelle Connolly involved navigating a set of aging stairs and entering a dark, slightly foreboding, unfinished basement where their washer and dryer were housed.

“It was like coming down to a dungeon,” recalls Mike.

As visions of a cozy, well-lit laundry room downstairs took shape, the Connollys began to dream bigger still—of a finished basement that included a bathroom, an entertainment area with a sleeper sofa for overnight guests, and a designated desk for Mike to work from home. When they decided to bring their ideas to life, they called WILLCO, a design-build contractor they had worked with before and trusted fully.

Cleaning up the 500-square-foot basement space in the 1926 Tudor home in Northeast Portland’s Laurelhurst area was one of the major tasks of the project, recalls Aluna Schroeder, WILLCO’s senior designer-construction manager. “We identified what needed to stay and go in terms of old plumbing, air ducts and electrical, and housed what we needed to in the ceiling joists to get a clean, finished look.”

Another challenge was addressing the old staircase, which the team thoughtfully reoriented and rebuilt in its former space to allow an ideal flow to the upstairs kitchen on one side the hallway, on the other.

Both a finished laundry and bathroom now make the prospect

of walking downstairs thoroughly enjoyable for the Connollys. An egress window, recessed lights in the seating area, and warm, inviting wall colors make the basement as comforting as the couple had first imagined it could be.

“It’s always rewarding to take a large, unfinished space and make it functional,” says Schroeder.

It is not likely to be the last time that the Connollys call on WILLCO. “The team was really easy to work with,” says Mike. “They communicated well with us, and we felt comfortable with them being there, even when we were on vacation. They’re also good craftsmen—I felt it was as important to them that the work be done well and be made to last as it was to me.”