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This Old House

TIPS FOR A
HEALTHIER,
SAFER HOME

WINTER
2021

BASEMENT REMODELS / BUILD A WINE RACK / FIREWOOD STORAGE BENCH / CORK FLOORING

Details Make the Difference



An artful renovation
highlights handsome
original features in
a 1925 house



PLUS:

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Cottage
Community
**IDEA
HOUSE**

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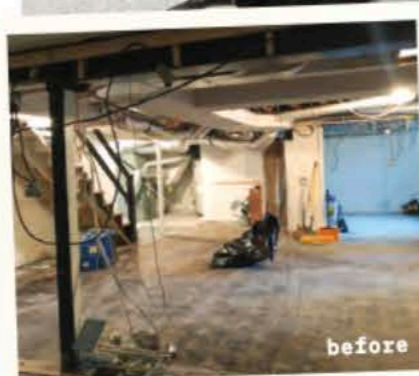
FUN MEETS FUNCTIONAL

When architectural designer Anthony Wilder first set foot in this 948-square-foot basement in a 1950s Colonial Revival in Washington, D.C., “it looked like it had been through World War II,” he says jokingly. “It was a catchall, with a worn vinyl floor and low-hanging ductwork you had to duck under.” Exposed fluorescent tubes cast an eerie glow; a few shelves under the stairs and an old built-in with a TV provided a mishmash of storage.

THE WISH LIST Homeowner Jamie Edwards and her husband, Daniel, tasked Wilder and architect Gary Lofdahl with creating a multiuse space with areas for TV viewing and foosball playing; wine storage behind lock and key; a guest room that could do double duty as a home gym; and a drop zone by the door to the garage. The impetus? “Our kids were getting to be teenagers, and I thought I would love it if they brought their friends here rather than going to other people’s homes,” Jamie says.

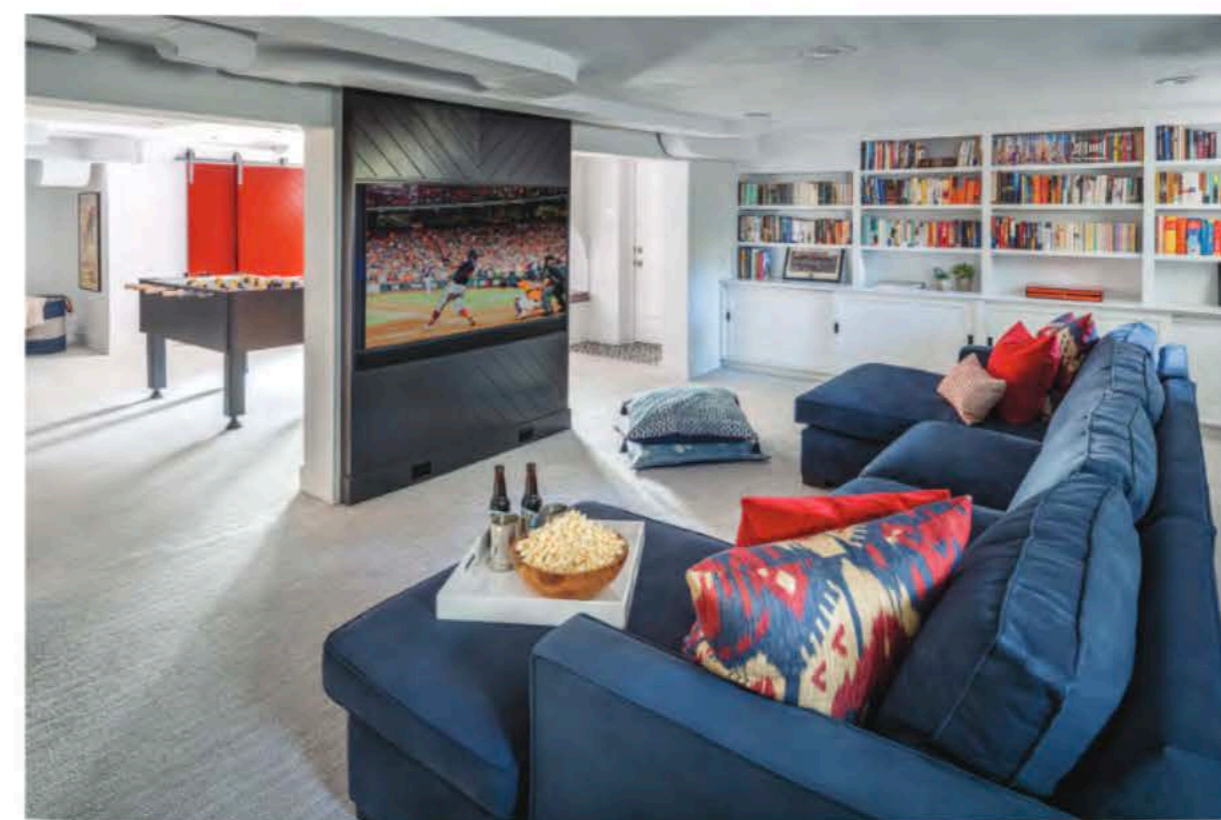
THE PLAN First up: replacing the bulky, exposed ducts with slimmer versions that could be tucked up near the ceiling and painted white to blend in. “That gained a foot in height in some areas and made an enormous difference,” Wilder says. His team also added discreet, puck-size recessed lights between the ceiling joists, and turned a load-bearing partition wall into a focal point, with a large-screen TV framed in paneling. New walls and doors hide the mechanicals and the remodeled laundry room, but elsewhere the goal was to keep the space as open as possible. To that end, they laid out the 22-by-16-foot main area with the foosball table, an under-the-stairs wine room, and open mudroom cubbies. On the other side of the had-to-stay support wall, the 22-by-15-foot TV room got upgraded built-ins and a sofa to sink into. A big barn door that mostly remains open can slide shut to partition off the 11-by-11-foot convertible gym/guest room. But arguably, the most vital tweak here is something you can’t see, but feel. “You have to have a top-of-the-line dehumidifier in a finished basement, because you want it to be super dry,” Wilder says.

THE RESULT “It used to be quite arctic down there, but now the big circular space is very inviting,” Jamie says. “My husband, who said early on that the project would be like putting lipstick on a pig, has been humbled and shamed!”



BEFORE The 1950s cellar had just 6½ feet of headroom in some areas, with lots of low-hanging ductwork and exposed wiring.

MOVABLE PARTITION To expand the usable space, a custom red barn door sections off a workout area that converts to a guest room with a blow-up mattress that hides away. “An open door takes up a lot of room,” Wilder says. “This is like a sliding wall.”



CLEAN AND TIDY Mudroom cubbies are designed to keep the family organized and the new wool carpet clean and barefoot-friendly (its herringbone pattern was chosen to sync up with the owner’s tie art). A central foosball table has lots of elbowroom.

WINE TIME An upgrade from a few storage shelves built under the stairs, the new “wine room,” about 3½ feet deep and 8½ feet wide, can hold up to 364 bottles. Flanked by fixed panels, French doors put the collection on display—and lock up tight.

LAID BACK The team kept the space as open as possible, to give it an airier feel. To make a load-bearing partition wall that had to stay look purposeful, they hung the TV there, framing it with shiplap in a chevron pattern and painted a warm gray.



EXPERT ADVICE

“The idea is to keep it from looking like a basement. Add mirrors to bounce light around the room; we often use mirrored French doors. If there’s headroom, put in a ceiling fan to keep the air moving.”

ANTHONY WILDER,
owner, Anthony Wilder
Design/Build