



# ON THE EDGE

a westport home where **CITY** lines  
meet **COASTAL** curves

INTERVIEW WITH TANNER WHITE | BY DIANE SEMBROT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NEIL LANDING OF LANDINOPHOTO



**above:** The pairing of dark wood and metal creates a dramatic staircase. **right:** High-shine surfaces, clean lines and open space add to the brightness of the interior, already flooded with natural light.



**above:** The sitting room is designed for sharing great stories, with finds from world travels on display, a handsome fireplace to address end-of-season chills and an oversized window for a full view of the area.

Although "location, location, location" is the usual hallmark of real estate agents, another group of professionals understands it just as well: architects. When these design pros dream up a project, it is a creative exercise that must work with environmental considerations, such as complementing the current landscaping (like that ancient Oak tree), the development of surrounding properties, the movement of the sunlight and shadows—and, of course, optimal views of the Long Island Sound. Any homeowner putting a stake in the ground of a beachfront community has to factor in the water: wetlands, wildlife restrictions, drainage, flooding. These are the facts of life along the coastline.

Perched at Bridge Square, overlooking the tidal river, Tanner White—AIA, LEED-AP and principal at Tanner White Architects

([tannerwhitearchitects.com](http://tannerwhitearchitects.com))—has a daily reminder of the benefits of expansive water views and the concerns of coastal construction.

*Westport* magazine talked to him recently about one of his projects that faced these rewards and issues head on and turned out beautifully for it. The fresh industrial-chic home feels perfectly of our town as its style draws on elements that befit a beach community with a sophisticated taste for city life and luxe destinations around the world. It is what some call a well-traveled home, with equal attention given to colors, textures and furnishings mixed and matched in an informed yet personal way. The bones of the house lean on minimalistic lines to maximize what is wanted (soothing light and space) and restrict what is not (distracting "noise" and embellishments). The overall effect is a tension-free balance of super-functional and effortless. And while the project ended up

providing enviable views to foster daily daydreaming and de-stressing, it's quite an eye-catcher in its own right.

"Tanner White Architects and Bluewater Home Builders conspired to create a house that provided maximum privacy yet took full advantage of the incredible waterfront views overlooking Compo Beach and the Sound," says the owner. "I was particularly pleased to fill the walls and sunlit rooms of the interior with artwork and artifacts from our previous homes and travels. The house is filled with memories of our lives and adventures of the past while promising to create new memories of its own."

The busy architect shares his thoughts about the project. And if his own work view of the Saugatuck River doesn't inspire him one day, read on to learn what will: his heart-pumping and edgy favorite song.

**What were the guiding principles or considerations for the design?**

"The concept of this house was to use a shingle style exterior and provide a modern interior, which used expansive glass and an open floor plan to capture the beauty of the Sound. Additionally, we gave the footprint of the house exceptional care so as to avoid the restrictive Flood V zone, which was on the property. The homeowner favored an industrial rustic/chic look on the interior, which we brought to life through the use of natural materials and metallic textures."

**What challenges did you face during design or installation?**

"Designing in a flood zone is always a challenge, especially when trying to keep the house looking low to the ground from the front, rather than up on stilts."



## FLASH ROUND!

Getting to know architect **Tanner White** in 10:

### 1. FAVORITE SEASON...

"Winter! So I don't feel guilty not being outside."

### 2. FAVORITE INTERIOR COLOR...

"Hague Blue."

### 3. MY WORK ALWAYS...

"is designed for the individual."

### 4. MOST UNDERRATED FEATURE IN A HOUSE...

"the powder room!"

### 5. I'M INSPIRED BY...

"my team."

### 6. DREAM DESTINATION...

"Norway."

### 7. PERSON I'D MOST LIKE TO MEET...

"Howard Stern."

### 8. SUPERPOWER I'D LIKE TO HAVE IS...

"whatever the Wolverine has."

### 9. PRETTIEST THING I HAVE EVER SEEN IS...

"my daughter."

### 10. ALL-TIME FAVORITE SONG IS...

"Time" by Wintersun."



**top:** A sunny spot to read or simply rest. **above:** The pure white deep tub, positioned next to an oversized window, was a dreamy notion. The serenity of the scene is further enhanced by the seaglass-green wall color.

### Does this project reflect a trend or local appeal?

"I think it reflects the modern lifestyle. The formal dining and living room in houses of these sizes are out, and everyone lives in the kitchen/family room, so creating one large open floor plan that makes best use of the kitchen, family, breakfast room is a response to this modern lifestyle."

### What set this project apart from others you've done?

"The 'flavor' of the interior finishes was new to us. The abundance of natural woods, cold rolled steel, and engineered stone created this industrial chic look, which warmed up the house."

### Unique or favorite materials used?

"The steel fireplace was by far my favorite—the subtle color changes in the material made the steel feel very warm, rather than harsh and unappealing."

### Who else worked on the project?

"Bluewater Home Builders built this beauty and Karen Berkemeyer Home was instrumental in the tile/countertop selections, and, of course, the homeowner—who was very involved and whose great taste helped shape the inside of this home."

### Do you have a favorite room or feature?

"The family room's cold-rolled-steel linear gas fireplace with flanking wooden shelves is my favorite by far. The homeowner did this space justice by displaying her gorgeous art pieces."