



# COASTAL ALCHEMY: The Art of Tanner White Architects

*Blending Tradition and  
Modernity to Shape a Masterpiece  
on Saugatuck Island*

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Builder: Bluewater home builders

Interiors: Laura Gorman interiors

**N**estled in the idyllic charm of Saugatuck Island in Westport, Connecticut, 14 Cockenoe Drive is a residence that redefines coastal living. Its design, a harmonious blend of timeless coastal aesthetics and modern sophistication, comes courtesy of the visionary minds at Tanner White Architects. With every line, detail, and choice of material, this home encapsulates the intersection of art, architecture, and lifestyle.

For Tanner White, the unique character of Saugatuck Island was both a canvas and a guide. The island's eclectic mix of classic beach cottages and contemporary structures inspired an approach that combined the best of both worlds. Large expanses of glass and flat roofs were used to capture the breathtaking water views, while the inclusion of a traditional gambrel roof provided not only a nod to classic coastal architecture but also maximized interior volume. The result is a home that feels as much a part of its natural surroundings as it does a forward-thinking statement.

Yet, creating a home of this caliber on the coastline isn't without its challenges. Building in a FEMA-regulated flood zone requires strict adherence to minimum floor elevations, while Westport's height restrictions add another layer of complexity. These constraints could have led to a design that felt awkward or disproportionate, but Tanner White Architects navigated them with precision, crafting a structure that is both compliant and beautifully balanced. The home rises gracefully, a testament to the firm's ingenuity and respect for its environment.



Durability and sustainability are at the forefront of every decision Tanner White Architects makes, especially in projects set against the often unforgiving coastal climate. At 14 Cockenoe, synthetic and waterproof materials were used on the lower levels to ensure resilience against floodwaters. This practical approach, paired with the home's seamless indoor-outdoor flow achieved through retractable glass doors and steel supports, creates a living space that is as functional as it is elegant.

Tanner White's journey as an architect is as dynamic as his designs. Having worked with prominent architects across the country, including Frank Lloyd Wright's protégé Paolo Soleri, Tanner developed a deep understanding of sustainable architecture early in his career. Before founding Tanner White Architects in 2012, he was a crucial member of several renowned architectural firms, honing his craft and establishing his reputation for innovation. Today, his firm, headquartered in

Westport, Connecticut, with a satellite office in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos, has brought a fresh perspective to Fairfield County and beyond. The team's projects span locations as varied as New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Texas, Colorado, and the Caribbean, showcasing a versatile approach to residential design.

For Tanner White, architecture is deeply personal. The firm's philosophy hinges on the belief that design is the embodiment of a client's dreams, and it is the architect's mission to bring that vision to life with both function and beauty. This commitment is reflected in every project, from the expansive use of glass to delicate modern detailing. Yet, versatility remains a hallmark of their work. "I love designing in every style," says Tanner White. "Architecture has endless possibilities. Whether it's a colonial, a modern flat-roofed house, or a Tudor-style home, each design carries a spirit that comes from within me."



Walking through a completed home like 14 Cockenoe, one can feel the impact of this ethos. For the team at Tanner White, a house isn't just a structure; it's an opportunity to improve lives. "I hope the homeowners' lives are measurably upgraded," White reflects. "Whether it's the amazing views, the efficiency of the floor plan, or the pride they feel pulling into their driveway, I want their lives to be better because of what we created."

Every Tanner White home is infused with soul—a reflection of the architect's own experiences, emotions, and creativity. White likens the process of designing a home to leaving a piece of oneself behind. "I can drive around town and see houses I've designed, and I'm reminded of where I was emotionally, creatively, even spiritually when I worked on them," he shares. "If there's a soul to my houses, it's a piece of my own."



As coastal architecture evolves, Tanner White sees a shift toward cleaner, updated traditional designs that incorporate modern elements to enhance lifestyle. This home anticipates and embodies that trend, merging timeless charm with contemporary living. The corner cube wrapping the master bedroom, a feature White calls his favorite, perfectly captures this balance. "There's so much tension in that one moment," he says. "And then you see it next to the open water—it's just so cool."

With each project, Tanner White Architects continues to push boundaries, crafting homes that are as thoughtful as they are beautiful. At 14 Cockenoe Drive, the firm has not only created a residence but also contributed a piece of art that enhances both the landscape and the lives of those lucky enough to call it home. This is coastal living, reimagined and elevated by the vision of Tanner White Architects.

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