

HOMIE

SAVE TIME AND MONEY ON CONSTRUCTION • HISTORIC BEAUTY IN DARIEN • PRICED TO SELL



Dream Digs

Everyone builds castles in the air, but it isn't until the fantasy begins to take shape on the ground that the challenges of constructing a home become all too real.

"There's this 'Kumbaya' moment before the project starts when everybody's in love," says Marc Laibe, a Rowayton resident and project manager at Soundview Construction Advisors in Greenwich. "But once the ink is on the paper, it's different. It can be less than wonderful."

Founded in 1996 by Ann Pisetzner, Soundview assists homeowners in managing new building or renovation processes by serving as liaison between the homeowner and the architect, contractor, subcontractors, interior designer and landscaper. The service saves time and money, and reduces stress.

Several years ago, Ian Warburg and his wife, the novelist Jane Green, bought a lot in Westport and began planning a Nantucket-style house (shown above) for themselves and their six children. Warburg, a real estate investor and developer, knew the principals at Soundview and immediately hired them. "There were so many moving parts that it dawned on me it would be foolish not to use Soundview," he says. "I wouldn't dream of doing a project like this—again, or ever—without them. There's a steep learning

curve to building a house."

A key step for Warburg and Green was involving Soundview early on in contract negotiations. Seven builders bid on the house, with wildly varying estimates. "Soundview dissected each proposal in a granular way, so we were able to see the differences," Warburg says. "They refined the process so we could make the best-informed decisions."

While the firm charges clients by the hour, its services generally add up to between 1 and 3 percent of the total cost of a construction project. For the Westport couple, the end results were substantial. "Our investment in Soundview paid off handsomely with savings that significantly exceeded their fees," says Warburg. "In the end, we came in below budget and ahead of schedule." —Tom Connor