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Sokolow Architects Leads Coastal Design for DC-Area Homeowners

By [Sokolow Architects](#)
May 27, 2026



For many DC-area homeowners, a beach house isn't just a getaway — it's a long-term investment in a specific lifestyle. However, building along the coast introduces a level of complexity that often catches even experienced homeowners off guard. That's where Sokolow Architects stands apart.

Founded by [Aga Sokolow, AIA](#), the firm focuses on coastal residential projects, bringing nearly 20 years of experience and a portfolio of more than 50 homes built primarily in southern Delaware.

The acclaimed firm's work sits at the intersection of strong aesthetics and strict regulation, requiring both creativity and deep technical knowledge.



Private Residence in Fenwick Island

Designing Within the Lines

"Coastal architecture really starts with the rules," Sokolow says. "You're working within FEMA requirements, local zoning, and environmental restrictions that shape the project from the very beginning."

Rather than limiting ideas, those constraints often lead to more thoughtful outcomes. Each property comes with its own set of conditions, and the goal is to understand what's possible within them.

Sokolow often describes it as a kind of Venn diagram, where multiple constraints overlap to define the buildable space. “That’s where the creativity comes in,” she says. “You’re working within those lines, but still creating something that feels completely personal to the client.”

For homeowners, getting an architect involved early can make a big difference. Bringing one in at the start — sometimes even before purchasing a property — helps turn early ideas into a clear, realistic plan while avoiding costly surprises later.

“Talk to an architect first,” she advises. “We can help you understand what’s possible, and help bring to life something that truly reflects how you want to live at the beach.”

Beauty Meets Resilience

Despite the constraints, today’s coastal homes don’t have to sacrifice style. Sokolow Architects works across a range of aesthetics, from classic coastal looks like Nantucket and Cape Cod to more modern, streamlined designs that often blend elements to suit both the client and the location.

Materials play a key role in that balance. Coastal homes need to withstand salt air, moisture, and storms, but homeowners also want spaces that feel warm and inviting. Advances in materials have made that easier, with options that mimic natural wood while offering far greater durability and lower maintenance.

Details like elevated structures and flood vents are thoughtfully integrated into the design, so homes are not only protected but visually cohesive.



Private Residence in Rehoboth Beach



Photo Credit: Maria DeForrest

A Client-Focused Design Process

Just as important as the end result is how clients get there. [Sokolow Architects](#) takes a highly collaborative approach, using 3D modeling and virtual tools to help homeowners clearly visualize their space throughout the design process.

“We’re big listeners,” Sokolow says. “Every client lives differently, and our job is to design around that, not the other way around.”

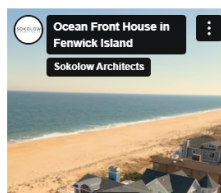
That philosophy carries through the firm’s intentionally small structure. With a close-knit team, the focus stays on responsiveness, communication, and creating a process that feels as seamless as possible — especially when projects involve multiple stakeholders and layers of regulation.

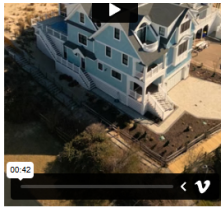
The First Step Toward Your Coastal Home

For DC-area homeowners considering a coastal build, the biggest takeaway is simple: this isn’t a typical residential project.

Between evolving regulations, site constraints, and environmental considerations, coastal design requires a level of expertise that goes beyond standard architecture. Working with a team that understands that landscape and can guide you through it can make all the difference.

Or, as Sokolow puts it: “Trust your architect. We’re here to help you navigate what can feel like a complicated process and turn it into something truly rewarding.”





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