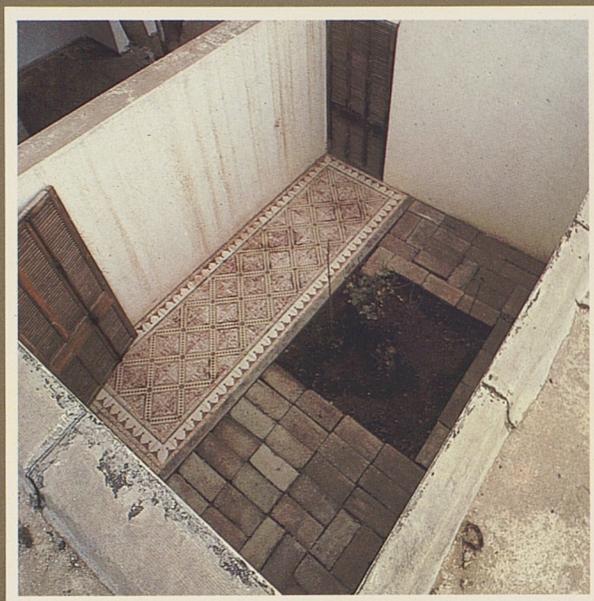


COURTYARD HOUSES
AGADIR, MOROCCO
COMPLETED DECEMBER, 1964







During the reconstruction of Agadir, the architect Jean-François Zevaco designed economical housing suitable for middle-income families.



An entrance court. The threshold to the house proper lies deep within the building plot.



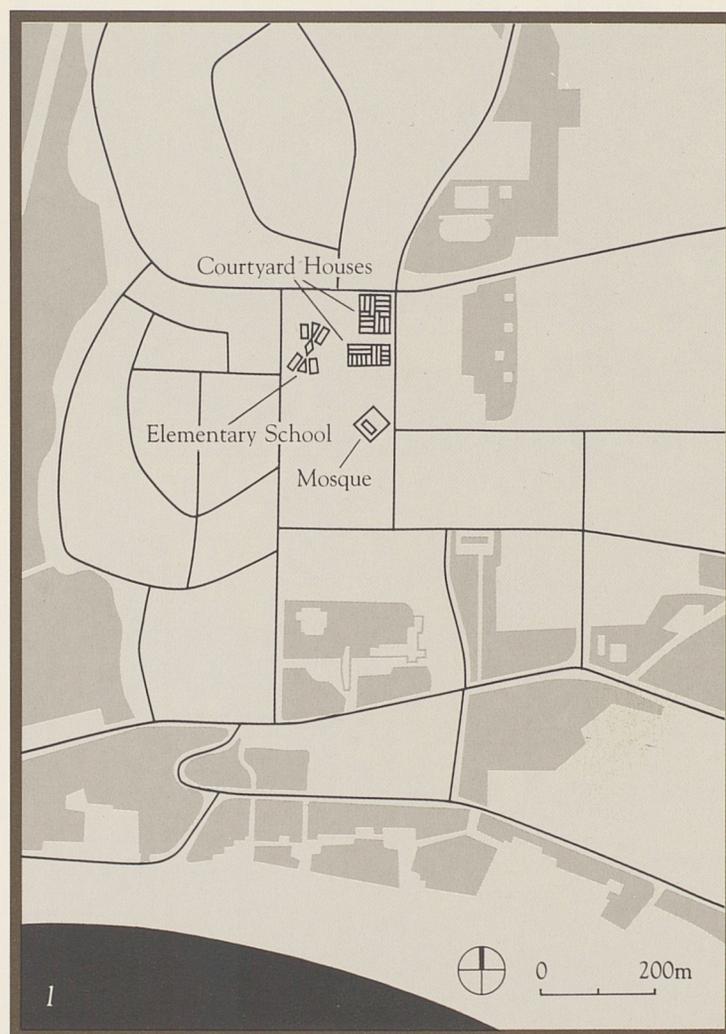
COURTYARD HOUSES. Client: Ministry of the Interior, Morocco; Architect: Jean-François Zevaco.¹

Agadir today spreads out along the shore of an Atlantic bay, renowned for its sandy beaches and mild year-round climate. It is a completely new city; the old Agadir disappeared on February 20, 1960, when a fifteen-second earthquake shock demolished the town. Agadir was totally unprepared, as common knowledge had insisted that earthquakes never happened there.² Eighty percent of its buildings were destroyed and tens of thousands of lives lost. As disaster-relief efforts were completed, Agadir began reconstruction under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior. A master plan was conceived by the Service de l'Urbanisme and the High Commission for the Reconstruction of Agadir, and within five years, seventy-five percent of the new Agadir had been built.

A wide range of public and social services was provided for the new town. Its new urban centre expands upon the old, and contains the city hall, a main mosque, a commercial shopping area, offices, major public institutional buildings, and residential blocks. Hotels, the principal commercial attraction of the city, are sited along the shoreline some distance from the city's centre.

Jean-François Zevaco, an architect from Casablanca, was one of several architects awarded building commissions during

1. Agadir as rebuilt after the earthquake of 1960.



the reconstruction. In addition to a number of public buildings, he was asked to design and construct economical, easily maintained housing suitable to the life style of middle-income urbanites and to the climate of Agadir.

The project's brief and design were formulated between December 1962 and April 1963. Construction began in December 1963, on a site of 5200 square metres of flat terrain in the urban centre, just behind a mosque, next to an elementary school, and within walking distance of major public buildings and the commercial shopping district. Construction was completed in December 1964, and the housing occupied in 1965.

Zevaco used his design experience with the Mediterranean patio house in planning the dwellings. For reasons of economy and density he created an ingenious row-house design which, despite the closeness of the units, served the need of families for privacy and comfort.

The seventeen single-storey dwellings are of two types arranged in two blocks, one consisting of four Type A dwellings and six Type B, and the other consisting of three Type A and four Type B. The Type A dwelling has three rooms, a

kitchen, and a bathroom. Type B, which is very similar to Type A, was created by the extension of a Type A bedroom into the adjacent patio and the partitioning of this extended room into two bedrooms in the place of one. Hence the Type B dwelling consists of four rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

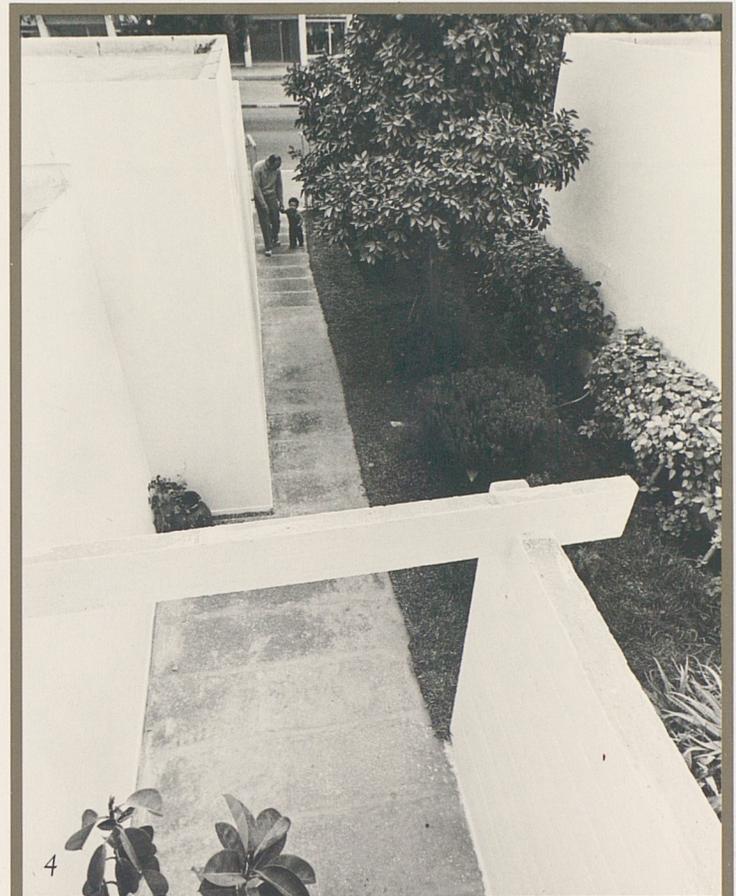
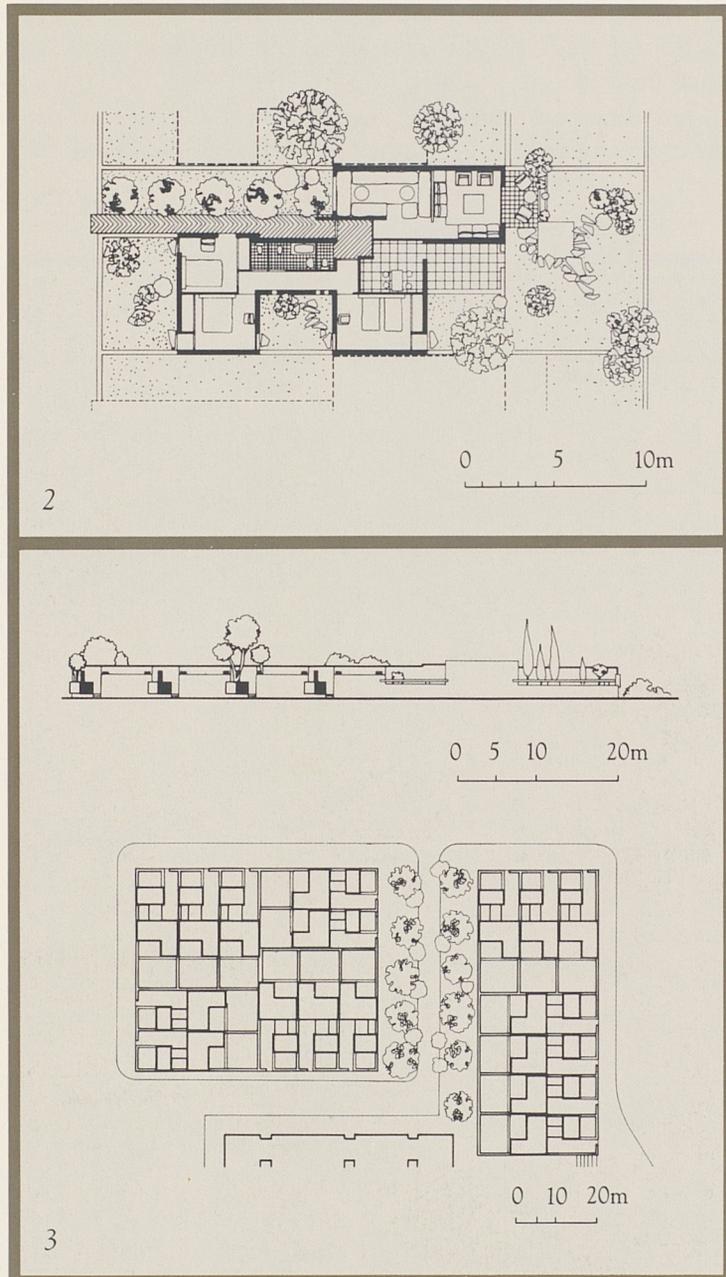
Standing at the end of a long access garden, each house was designed with five patios and a service court. Each rectan-

2. *Unit house plan (Type B).* Because of the central location of the houses and because of their private, single-family character, the courtyard houses are highly prized.

3. *Plan and street elevation of one housing block.*

4. *An entrance court.* The entrance garden complex with the side and back courts provides each unit with excellent cross ventilation.

5. *The seating alcove, the heart of the Moroccan home, has been placed in the main room.*



gular lot contains two L-shaped structures comprising the enclosed volume of the house. This allows the double orientation of each living room and bedroom towards gardens or patios. Each unit is surrounded by walls the height of the house itself, so that families can use outdoor areas as private extensions of indoor living space.

The private character of the dwellings is enhanced not only by the high wall surrounding the units, but also by their layout and interior design. One enters the house through the long courtyard leading to a vestibule that leads into the salon or European-style living room, which can be partitioned to create a Moroccan salon with low benches and cushions as well. While one side of this partitioned room is opened to guests, the other may be kept closed. To the right of the vestibule is the kitchen, and on the other side of the kitchen is the traditional Moroccan family room, the focus of family activity. Here meals are served, children play and sleep, and television is usually installed. The other bedroom is for parents or, in Type B, for older children. The design of the house is such that as one moves away from the street and the salon, one moves into the areas of the home devoted to the more intimate aspects of family life.

The physical comfort of each room is assured by the double orientation towards the patios. This orientation provides

6. *A back garden, showing a view of the kitchen door and sitting room window. Each unit is surrounded by walls the height of the house itself so that families can use outdoor areas as private extensions of indoor living space.*

good cross ventilation in warm weather.³ The amount of sunlight penetrating into the houses' interiors at different times of the year can be controlled by a system of adjustable shutters.

The basic dwelling block is a reinforced concrete frame (poured on site) that meets the rigorous antiseismic codes legislated after the 1960 earthquake. The frame supports a reinforced concrete slab roof. Infill is composed of cement block partitions, wood and metal joinery, and glass. Floors are terrazzo. Walls and ceilings are covered with vinyl paint. With the exception of steel for concrete reinforcement and glass, which were imported, all materials were locally produced.⁴ In addition to the use of local materials, the project involved construction by a domestic labour force. The entire project was constructed in a year's time; such a timetable was, of course, related at least in part to the extraordinary circumstances of the destruction of the major portion of the city.

The land on which these houses were built was and is the property of the government, which retains the title to them.⁵ Intended for middle-class civil servants, rents are calculated according to income. Because of the central location of the houses and because of their private, single-family character, they are highly prized. It is for this reason, it appears, that the dwellings have been maintained in good condition. The plan has also provided some opportunities for modifying individual dwelling spaces to changing needs. For example, interim living spaces have been made by covering patios, which, though limiting open space and altering patterns of lighting and cross ventilation, has been done in keeping with the character of the houses.

