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HOUSING, FUENTE LA TEJA, MADRID, SPAIN

The small village of Fuente La Teja is located 10km North of the capital Madrid. The community is within a landscape that has a varied topography with housing mainly made up of private residential homes. The client requested that this particular site would nurture a community 'spirit' to the design. This differs from the very contained housing that surrounds the site. Boundaries and privacy are imposing and tend not to encourage and provide spaces that have a public realm.

The local housing density ratios allowed to develop 4 dwellings on the site that would be a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom houses. The site boundary would be marked through trees and the introduction of water features that geometrically interconnect the 4 house designs. Allowing water to filter through the buildings at ground level provided an opportunity to not only irrigate the site but create a cooling design feature that could penetrate the internal spaces of the communal areas of each house.

The plans therefore developed in an open and free manner. The structural planar walls that configure and orientate each dwelling set out the peripheral envelope. Internal floor slabs and partition walls sit within this composition in relation to the programme requirements of each house (i.e. 2 or 3 bed). The living arrangement was to switch the living area with the sleeping area by putting the bedrooms on the ground floor to benefit from the cool water and shade of the living and roof plane at higher level. Terraces are arrayed from the bedroom areas to provide space for relaxing.

Staircases are eliminated from the design and ramps replace them to take you up a smooth vertical journey through the house spaces so you can enjoy the landscaping and pools that sit directly below at ground level. Living and eating areas now benefit from higher level views down onto the landscape of trees and water. The very generous external balcony areas can accommodate dining furniture so each family can enjoy the sunshine in the day or the cooler breeze in the evenings.

The budget was an issue so the housing systems have been standardised to incorporate a 1.5m unit system. This allows the construction to be from proprietary systems which will in turn reflect in a much lower overall construction cost. It also means less in-situ preparation when building.