

# Caliza Courts

## With roots in Bermudan architecture

and inspired by the courtyards of Antiqua, Alys Beach is a new, 160-acre Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) planned by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company on the Florida Panhandle. The architects are Erik Vogt and Marieanne Khoury-Vogt; here we visit the area called Caliza Courts.

**By Katherine Gustafson**



High ceilings and simple finishes lend a grand scale to the rowhouse interiors.



**Above** The relative narrowness of the rowhouse type is offset by the generous proportions and scale of the great room. Tall French doors with transoms open to a courtyard beyond. **Below** The courtyard connects to the main living space as well as to an elevated, furnished loggia, above the garage and adjoining the guest suite.



**Above** The typical 18-foot wide rowhouse has an asymmetrical façade. **Left** Seven rowhouses are bookended by larger 29-foot-wide units that offer four bedrooms.

ALYS BEACH is a new resort town on the Gulf of Mexico in the Florida Panhandle, a white pearl of a place on a vast blue sea. The architecture is all of a piece—subdued, sharp-cornered, and bright white—thanks to town architects Erik Vogt and Marianne Khoury-Vogt, who have been working with the site’s developer, EBSCO Industries, since 2003.

Khoury Vogt Architects laid a foundation for the town’s style with the impressive Caliza Pool, a center of community life where residents can come to swim, relax, dine, and mingle. Most of the development is zoned as lots for single-family homes, which prospective residents may design following strict architectural and decorative standards. But the developer has also built some purchase-ready housing options, such as a set of rowhouses near the pool—called the Caliza Courts—that



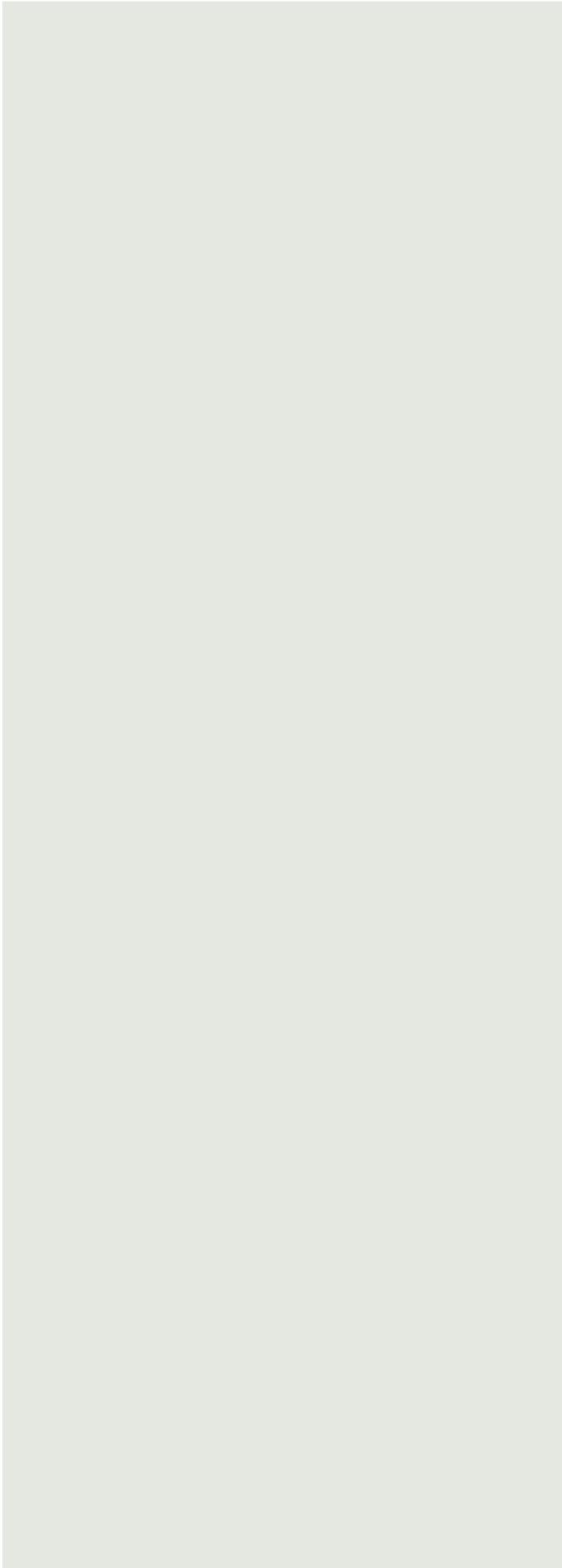
**Throughout  
Alys Beach,  
architecture**

incorporates courtyards, inspired by the residential typology of Antigua, Guatemala.

Courtyards are unusual in typical Anglo-American rowhouses, but Khoury-Vogt found that including them in the Caliza Courts homes presented rich possibilities.



A contemporary artwork series adds a jolt of color in the otherwise quiet dining room.



Khoury Vogt designed to combine carefully guarded privacy with a sense of connection to the larger community.

Caliza Courts is not only adjacent to the pool but also fronts a park, making the project a kind of finale to the near-finished surrounding environment. The single Caliza Courts building comprises nine rowhouses: seven three-bedroom homes 18 feet wide, and two four-bedroom homes 29 feet wide. The entire exterior is white stucco, and the style—like the rest of Alys Beach—is understated and elegant.

“It was important [to EBSCO] to find an architecture that would be harmonious and subdued and not too busy,” says Khoury-Vogt.

That unifying calm, white aesthetic throughout the town is inspired by the architecture of Bermuda, which is largely masonry. Even the town’s rooftops are white stucco, lending a uniformity that creates an impression of simplicity.

Stucco “can be sculptural but it lends itself very well to being part of an overall streetscape,” says Khoury-Vogt. “It works to have all the buildings white. It stands out against the landscape and the blue sky.”

Another exterior feature borrowed from the Bermudan way of life is a focus on designing the houses’ street fronting in ways that enrich community life. The idea is of “giving a gift” to the street, says Khoury-Vogt, such as a well-placed bench, greenery, a porch, or a fountain. In the case of Caliza Courts, the homes each are fronted by a planter filled with rosemary and a trellis covered with trailing vines. The homes’ proximity to the Caliza Pool and the community park made this aspect of design all the more important to the architects.

Throughout Alys Beach, layouts incorporate courtyards,



**Above + Right** The interior design has Art Deco elements, including this bar console in the dining room.

**Opposite** The bedroom is dressed in soft tones. Walls are kept white for minimalist serenity. The poster depicts the beach just beyond the windows.



inspired by the residential typology of Antigua in Guatemala. Courtyards are unusual in typical Anglo-American rowhouses, but Khoury-Vogt found that including them in the Caliza Courts homes presented rich possibilities.

Each rowhouse has an exterior covered room adjoined by a semi-raised courtyard situated between the high-ceilinged, light-filled great room (which is the main living space) and the garage in back, which is topped by a mother-in-law suite fronted by a loggia. The courtyard provides an outdoor space with complete privacy, while also brightening the interior space.

“The introduction of the courtyard was huge because then light could flow throughout the whole width of the house,” says Khoury-Vogt.

The 16-foot ceilings in the first-floor living space and tall bedroom windows also contribute to the airy feeling of these homes despite their relatively small size. In a community where the majority of the homes are single-family detached houses, creating a sense of space and stateliness in smaller-sized homes is important to maintaining the town’s unique appeal. “Tall ceilings a grandeur and scale,” says Khoury-Vogt. “Especially in the smaller units, the quarters don’t feel pinched. It feels generous and gracious.”

Caliza Courts adds a cosmopolitan touch to this seaside community, yet embodies the feeling of relaxed luxury that defines Alys Beach. A simplicity in color and material, a focus on light and privacy, allowed Khoury Vogt Architects to create homes perfectly suited to their environment, manmade and natural. ◉

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