

Courtyard House (Marrakech, Morocco)

ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION BRIEF

Deadline: September 2026

Submission: 1 x A1 Board (PDF)

Entry Fee: From \$29 to \$69

Exclusive Registration Offer: Save an additional 10% on entry fees by using the coupon code

NF7FJ8N9 at checkout.

Premise

The courtyard house is one of the most enduring residential typologies in architectural history. For centuries, homes throughout Morocco have utilized internal courtyards to create comfortable living environments that respond naturally to climate, culture, and privacy requirements. Within Marrakech, the traditional *riad* represents a sophisticated architectural response to dense urban living, offering a peaceful sanctuary organized around a central open-air space.

As contemporary lifestyles continue to evolve, there is an opportunity to reinterpret this timeless architectural model for modern residential needs. This competition invites participants to explore how the traditional courtyard house can be transformed into a contemporary dwelling while preserving the essential qualities that have made it successful for generations.

Located within the rich cultural landscape of Marrakech, participants are challenged to design a residence where the courtyard becomes more than a decorative feature. It should function as the environmental, social, and spatial heart of the home, enhancing everyday living through natural light, passive cooling, visual connectivity, and a strong relationship with nature.

Objective

The core objective of this competition is to design a single-family residence organized around a central courtyard that serves as the primary organizing element of the entire project.

Participants should investigate how a carefully designed courtyard can improve environmental performance while enriching the quality of domestic life. The courtyard should facilitate natural ventilation, provide access to daylight, create opportunities for outdoor living, and establish a sense of privacy within a compact urban setting.

Key Design Deliverables & Focus Areas:

- Seamless integration of indoor and outdoor living spaces.
- Effective passive cooling and daylighting strategies tailored to arid climates.

- Strong spatial organization centered explicitly on the courtyard.
- Comfortable, adaptable, and flexible living environments.
- Deep respect for local architectural traditions combined with modern aesthetics.
- Sustainable, energy-efficient, and climate-responsive design solutions.

Site & Context

The site is a hypothetical urban lot located within the historic Medina of Marrakech or an adjacent urban residential neighborhood. Participants may determine the exact dimensions and immediate physical context of the site based on their design concept, provided that the proposal remains realistic, buildable, and appropriate for the local urban fabric.

Climatic & Environmental Factors to Address:

- Hot and dry summer conditions contrasted by cool winter evenings.
- Solar orientation, self-shading mechanisms, and thermal mass strategies.
- High urban density requiring careful management of acoustic and visual privacy.
- Natural cross-ventilation opportunities via atmospheric pressure differences.

Design Constraints & Requirements

Proposals must align strictly with the parameters detailed below to remain eligible for evaluation:

- **Central Courtyard:** Must function as the definitive organizational and architectural core.
- **Program:** Formulated strictly as a single-family residential layout.
- **Zoning:** Clear spatial distinction between public hosting zones and private family areas.
- **Materials:** Highly encouraged to prioritize locally-sourced, low-carbon, or regionally appropriate materials.

Project Budget

Participants must design within a strict construction budget of **\$120,000 USD**, accounting for all materials, construction labor, and fundamental building systems.

Cost Factor	Required Design Consideration
Materials	Durable, climate-appropriate, locally sourced to minimize shipping costs and carbon foot-print.
Construction	Efficient, standard, and highly practical regional building methods.
Environmental Systems	Low-tech passive cooling and energy-efficient architectural solutions.
Maintenance	Long-term durability leading to reduced operational and repair cycles.
Landscaping	Courtyard xeriscaping, planting, and shade-providing flora.

Competition Schedule & Fees

Phase	Deadline	Standard Fees	Student Fees (With Code: STUDENT)
Early Bird Registration	31 July 2026	\$29 USD	\$19 USD
Standard Registration	20 August 2026	\$49 USD	\$33 USD
Late Registration	10 September 2026	\$69 USD	\$46 USD
Final Submission	25 September 2026	Submissions Close at 11:59 PM GMT	

Submission Requirements

All entrants must submit exactly **1 x A1 Presentation Board** conforming to the following metrics:

- **Format:** Digital PDF file format.
- **Resolution:** Minimum 150 dpi (300 dpi recommended).
- **File Size:** Maximum strict limit of 20 MB.

The board must comprehensively communicate: the core design concept, regional site strategy, detailed floor plans, cross-sections, elevations, explicit courtyard design diagrams, passive environmental performance strategies, and digital architectural visualizations.

Evaluation Criteria

- Strength, innovation, and design originalities of the modern courtyard concept.
- Architectural composition quality and the presence of a clear structural vision.
- Climatic performance, passive cooling logic, and visual daylighting strategy.
- Functional efficiency, ergonomic zoning, and total daily liveability.
- Clarity of visual graphics, presentation curation, and standard of communication.

Competition Outcomes & Awards

- **Overall Winner (×1):** Global publication, media press features, and an official Certificate of Achievement.
- **Runners-Up (×4):** Strategic international design exposure and printable Certificates of Excellence.
- **Participation Certificates:** Awarded to every verified individual or team who submits a qualifying entry.