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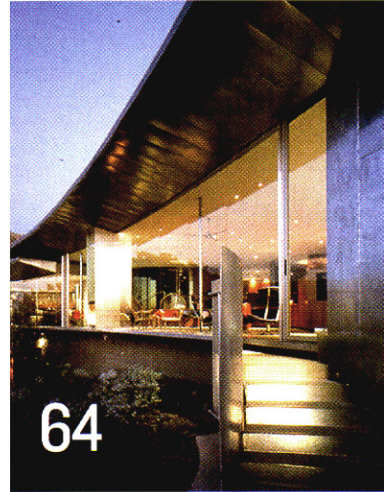
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Desert Living

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Windows are strategically placed throughout the metal-clad structures to capture essential views of the surroundings. At right, the rain harvesting gutter can be seen leading to the adjacent storage tank – a faucet is located at the bottom for access to the harvested water.





WELCOME TO THE BARRIO

Reuse. Regenerate. Revitalize. Architect Rob Paulus is breaking new ground in Tucson, Arizona by simply **not breaking** new ground.

BY DAVID TYDA PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BRADLEY WHEELER & ROB PAULUS



THREE YEARS AGO, ARCHITECT ROB PAULUS RECEIVED a call from a former client who wanted to take a look at an 80-year-old ice factory that was up for sale in a decrepit industrial part of Tucson, AZ. It was over 100 degrees outside but the interior temperature was a cool 40, and the compressors had been turned off for over two months. The monstrous 413-foot-long structure had bones that not only played into the hands of current loft-living style trends, but was functionally above par. A quick sketch by Paulus outlined how the building could be divided up into 51 condominium units of varying size and layout. The project began to roll but everyone involved (client/developers Warren Michaels and Phil Lipman and Paulus' wife Randi Dorman) knew it would take at least three years before residents would move in.

So Paulus looked across the street to old adobe housing that was originally built for employees of the industrial

area—known as Millville. Just off a successful loft-style design that gained him notoriety in the design community, and with the Ice House Loft project underway, Paulus pitched zoning for nine metal houses with extremely open floor plans and sensitivity to both the desert climate and the industrial area that surrounds the site.

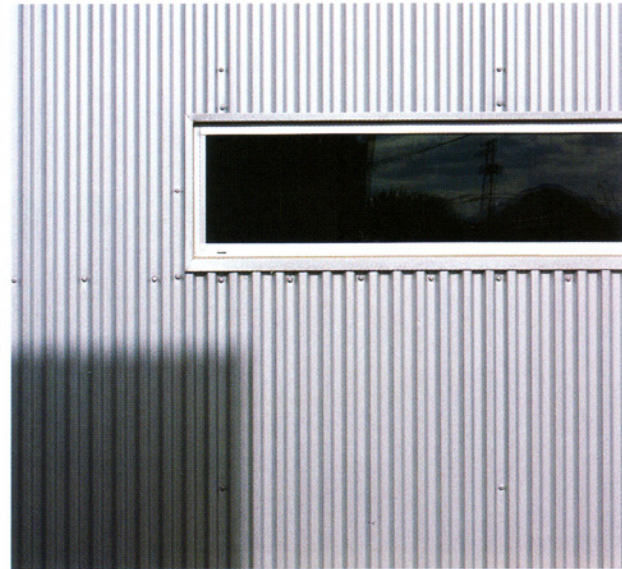
“This is a distinctive alternative to the single-story wood frame stucco housing that has overrun the western United States,” says Paulus of his project, called Barrio Metalico. Each 1,557-square-foot unit is clad in corrugated metal hence the latter part of the name. But the former part, “Barrio,” comes from the original inhabitants of the area. Paulus has creatively incorporated many of the on-site, existing materials into the new project. Perimeter fencing is provided by a combination of partially reused adobe structures and distressed wood and corrugated metal gathered from neighboring sites.

Opposite: Each Barrio Metalico home has an identical aesthetic: a flood of natural light and an industrial feel vocalized through exposed ducts, concrete, and steel. This page, in an ultimate homage to the site's original housing, architect Rob Paulus used the exterior adobe as a perimeter wall, creating a patio space for homeowners.





This page: Furnishings in this particular unit come from Modern Home in Tucson, AZ. Opposite: In an interesting juxtaposition, the power lines of the industrial neighborhood proliferate in the streets, while the Santa Catalina mountains provide a scenic backdrop. Paulus was able to incorporate the existing mesquite trees into the site plan. At right, a detail of old and new, blending harmoniously.



“THIS IS A DISTINCT ALTERNATIVE TO THE SINGLE-STORY WOOD FRAME STUCCO HOUSING THAT HAS OVERRUN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES.”

Barrio Metalico takes its larger natural surroundings into consideration as well. Twelve-by-four-foot diameter rainwater harvesting tanks capture all roof drainage to irrigate the indigenous landscape. Residents share a vehicular gate that’s solar powered, and all Metalico units are pre-plumbed for solar water heating.

Concrete floors and strategically placed window slits also keep the units cool. Inside, the feeling is intimate and contemporary, but metal staircases and exposed ducts reinforce the industrial theme.

This project “has triggered local interest in urban infill

projects and alternative housing,” Paulus says. “In some ways, we are bringing the neighborhood back to its original roots when it was primarily residential and housed Southern Pacific rail workers and Ice House employees.” Improper truck access led to the dwindling of both business and residential components in the neighborhood, leaving it to deteriorate throughout the years. “We are fortunate to have seen the potential of a forgotten corner of Tucson’s history ... [now] on its way to becoming a new community.”

And if you’re wondering about the Ice House project, folks are moving into their “cool” new homes as you read this. ■