The palatine city of the Alhambra had many of the elements of a small city. In terms of residences, in addition to the palaces built by the Nasrid dynasty, the most numerous buildings were houses, as was the case in other medieval urban hubs. Six houses have reached our days in a good state of conservation, at their original height, and another seventeen have survived as consolidated archaeological remains. Incomplete remains from several other houses have also appeared.

Based on the location of these houses two sectors with clearly different functions can be distinguished: the Alcazaba and the Medina. In the former, there are archaeological remains of at least ten houses, in which some of the individuals responsible for the defence of the Alhambra would have lived. They make up a small neighbourhood which occupies the northern part of the walled section of the Alcazaba. The houses are entered from two streets and two cul-de-sacs. They all have a courtyard that opens onto the rooms, generally two to four in number. The entrance to a house is never located opposite the entrance to the neighbouring house. This arrangement and the existence, in most of them, of a zaguán, which could be either straight or L shaped, guarantee the privacy of the courtyard. It appears that they all had a latrine and many also had an upper storey. They are built on plots of land measuring between 152 m² (the largest) and just 17 m² (the smallest). The flooring of the rooms and courtyards was always unglazed ceramic tiles.

On Calle Real, the main street of the medina, adjacent to the baths built by Muhammad III, is the most important house of all the ones preserved with their original height. It is perhaps also the oldest, because it dates to the early part of the 14th century. It had rooms on all four sides of the courtyard, a large rectangular pool and a portico on the western side, sheltering the interesting plasterwork decorating the entrance to the main room.
The other group of fully preserved houses is in the Partal. Here there are five houses built over the Alhambra's northern wall. This location meant that they could be built without a courtyard, since windows could be placed on the outside with no loss of privacy. The four terraced houses to the west of the Palace of the Partal have two storeys, plaster adornment and decorated ceilings. The most surprising is the one that shares a wall with the palace. Although it occupies a tiny lot of just 13 m², it has, in its one room on the upper floor, a lacería ceiling and some interesting mural paintings in tempera. They depict hunting scenes, the return of a military expedition on horseback and some scenes with musicians. To the east of the palace there is another three-storey house, adjacent to a military tower in the city walls, to which an oratory was attached sometime later. In the 16th century Astasio de Bracamonte, the squire of the Count of Tendilla, lived here and it was in use as a home until the end of the 20th century.

Among the houses conserved at the archaeological level, especially interesting is the one opposite the southern façade of the Palace of Charles V. Its entrance was on Calle Real. Its floor plan is perfectly symmetrical and it has rooms on three sides of its large square courtyard. The main room is on the eastern side and is preceded by a portico with three openings and a small pool next to the portico, with a round fountain at one side and with edging decorated in tiles of three colours. Also worth mentioning are the two houses next to the Captain's Tower, in the southeastern sector of the Alhambra, situated on opposite sides of a street. They appeared during the digs carried out in 1932-33 by the conservationist/architect Leopoldo Torres Balbás, who immediately began to study them and consolidate them for archaeological purposes. Both of them have rooms opening onto a courtyard, as well as an L-shaped zaguán, a main room, a kitchen, a stable and a latrine. Its floors are ceramic tiles in the courtyard and rooms, except in the zaguanes which have cobblestones. The house to the west is larger and its courtyard is similar to the one in the house near the Palace of Charles V, described above, with portico, fountain and small pool in front of the main room. The other house compensated its smaller plot with an upper storey. It does not have a pool but it has a large hole in the centre of the courtyard, where a fruit tree may have stood.

The excavation and consolidation of the archaeological remains of these houses began in the 1916-1918 period, using the proposal drawn up by the architect/inspector Ricardo Velázquez Bosco. The execution of the project was in the hands of the Alhambra conservationist/architect, Modesto
Cendoya. The walls were rebuilt up to a standard height in order to create more pleasant aesthetics and to allow the spatial arrangement to be understood. The same criterion was followed in the houses excavated in subsequent decades by the monument’s successive heads of conservation.