Lauderdale-by-the-Sea: The Village by the Ocean

NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE - BY REED KELLOUGH, DOUGLAS ELLIMAN | EKLUND|GOMES TEAM - 954-242-0441 | @REEDTHEREALTOR

THE VIBE

Lauderdale-by-the-Sea is what South Florida beach towns used to be - and, by deliberate choice, still is. A barrier-island village of just over a square mile between Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach, where the tallest things on the beach are the palm trees. In 1973 the town wrote strict building-height limits into its charter - buildings top out around 44 feet - and that single decision froze the scale in the best possible way: low-rise, walkable, and human. It feels like the Florida Keys wandered up to Broward County: flip-flops, dive shops, beach cafés, and neighbors who know your name.

HOUSING STOCK

Two products dominate. The beach blocks along El Mar Drive and the streets behind them hold the signature stock: low-rise oceanfront condos and co-ops, mostly 1960s-80s buildings of two to four stories sitting right on or steps from the sand, alongside a small supply of beach cottages and single-family homes that rarely trade. The exception to the village pattern is Terra Mar Island, the canal neighborhood at the town's north end, where single-family homes sit on deep-water canals with dockage and direct Intracoastal access. New construction is rare - there's almost no vacant land - so condition and building health matter more here than almost anywhere: in the condo stock, association reserves, insurance, and any pending assessments deserve a hard look before you buy.

PRICE RANGES

This is the value play of the barrier island. Older oceanfront condos here are one of the most accessible ways to own on the sand in Broward County; the middle of the market is updated oceanfront units and cottages; and the ceiling - large oceanfront residences and Terra Mar canal estates - reaches properly into luxury territory while staying well below comparable Fort Lauderdale waterfront. The ladder is the appeal: approachable at the entry end, genuinely luxurious at the top, and a clear step below the neighboring waterfront markets in between.

WATERFRONT & BOATING

Understand this town correctly: it's an ocean town, not a dockage town - with the Terra Mar exception above. There's no marina inside the village; boaters keep their vessels in Pompano Beach or Fort Lauderdale, ten to fifteen minutes away. What LBTS has instead is underwater: a living coral reef system starting roughly 100 yards off the beach, snorkelable and diveable straight from the sand. Broward County named it the Shore Dive Capital of South Florida, and the signature dive is the SS Copenhagen, a British steamship wrecked on the reef in 1900 and now a protected Florida Underwater Archaeological Preserve; a marked Shipwreck Snorkel Trail sits just off the Datura Avenue beach portal. If your dream is a boat in the backyard, look at Terra Mar, Pompano, or Lighthouse Point - if it's coffee at sunrise and a reef before lunch, this is your town.

LIFESTYLE

Everything centers on Anglin's Square, where Commercial Boulevard meets the ocean: the beach pavilion and plaza, Aruba Beach Cafe, 101 Ocean, and a compact run of cafés and dive shops. One honest note every buyer should hear from me rather than discover later: **Anglin's Fishing Pier - the town's landmark since 1941 - has been closed since Hurricane Nicole damaged it in November 2022.** It's privately owned, a full rebuild is working through design and permitting, and no reopening date is set; the square at its base remains the village's gathering place in the meantime. El Prado Park, up El Mar Drive, is the quieter green front yard. The beach itself - about two and a half miles of it, reached through small public portals - is the main event: clean, calm, and uncrowded by Fort Lauderdale standards.

SCHOOLS

Broward County Public Schools serve the town, with zoning varying by address (McNab Elementary and Pompano Beach schools serve much of it - verify for a specific property). Candidly, this isn't primarily a school-driven market: the buyer pool is retirees, second-home owners, divers, and remote workers, with families who prize the beach-village life mixed in.

WHO IT'S FOR

The buyer who wants to actually live at the beach - on the sand, in a swimsuit-cover-up kind of town - without the Fort Lauderdale scene or price tag. Honest tradeoffs: the pier is closed for now; single-family inventory is thin and Terra Mar trades at a premium for the town; in-season weeks bring more visitors to Commercial Boulevard; and the older condo stock demands real diligence on reserves and assessments. For retirees, snowbirds, divers, and anyone whose ideal morning is a sunrise swim over a living reef, there's nothing else like it in Broward.

COMMUTE

Fort Lauderdale: ~15-20 minutes. Boca Raton: ~25 minutes. Miami: ~45-55 minutes via I-95 or A1A. FLL airport: ~20-25 minutes. You're close to everything while feeling far from all of it.

Thinking about a move to Lauderdale-by-the-Sea? Small town, subtle differences street by street - let's talk about what fits your life. I'm Florida-licensed, and I maintain a national network of vetted relocation specialists, so wherever you're moving from, I can connect you with the right agent on that end too.

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