

Wind Drift Condominiums

Gulf-Front vs. River-Side — A Buyer's Comparison Guide

Orange Beach, Alabama

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Why Wind Drift?

Wind Drift Condominiums — Where the Gulf meets Old River in Orange Beach

If you've been searching the Alabama Gulf Coast for a place that truly gives you the best of both worlds, let me introduce you to Wind Drift. Tucked into a stretch of Perdido Beach Boulevard in Orange Beach, Wind Drift is one of the only condo communities on this coastline that offers both direct Gulf-front beach living *and* private boating access on Old River. That's not a small thing — it means you can walk barefoot to the beach in the morning and launch your boat for a sunset cruise the same evening, all without leaving your neighborhood.

Wind Drift is a low-density community of just 84 units spread across two buildings, originally built in 1984 and beautifully maintained over the decades. But here's the exciting part: the complex just completed a spectacular top-to-bottom renovation in 2025. We're talking all-new hurricane-impact windows and sliding glass doors in every unit, new unit front doors, extensive concrete repairs, a fresh crisp white exterior, wiring and fiber optic upgrades throughout, a brand-new roof, a new elevator, new louvers replacing the old lattice work, and freshly improved tennis and pickleball courts. This isn't a cosmetic touch-up — this is a community that invested in its future.

What does that mean for you as a buyer? It means you step into a secure, updated property with modern systems already in place. No looming special assessments for

a roof or windows. No outdated infrastructure. Just peace of mind, an uncrowded beach that neighbors a nature preserve, and a lifestyle most people only dream about.

Find Your Building on the Map

Wind Drift has two buildings on opposite sides of Perdido Beach Boulevard. Here’s where each one sits:

Gulf-Front (South Building)

28760 Perdido Beach Blvd, Orange Beach, AL 36561

The South Building sits directly on the white-sand beach with unobstructed Gulf of Mexico views. The shoreline here borders a nature preserve, which means fewer crowds and a wider, more pristine stretch of sand than you’ll find at most Orange Beach condos.

River-Side (North Building)

28783 Perdido Beach Blvd, Orange Beach, AL 36561

The North Building overlooks Old River and the lush tree-lined shores of Ono Island, situated near the Ono Island bridge. This is where you’ll find the boat launch, fishing pier, and some of the most jaw-dropping sunsets on the Gulf Coast.

At a Glance

Here’s how the two buildings compare, side by side. Same wonderful community — two very different vibes.

Feature	Gulf-Front (South Building)	River-Side (North Building)
Address	28760 Perdido Beach Blvd	28783 Perdido Beach Blvd
Building	8 stories, part of 84-unit	8 stories, part of 84-unit

Feature	Gulf-Front (South Building)	River-Side (North Building)
	community	community
Year Built	1984 (fully renovated 2025)	1984 (fully renovated 2025)
Your View	Panoramic Gulf of Mexico; unobstructed white-sand beach next to nature preserve	Old River waterway; Ono Island; passing boats and stunning sunsets
2-Bedroom Units	~1,000–1,250 sq ft; 2 bath	~1,060 sq ft; 2 bath
3-Bedroom Units	~1,242–1,450 sq ft; 2–3 bath	~1,242 sq ft; 2 bath
Current 2BR Price Range	\$649,000–\$685,000	\$456,000–\$540,000
Current 3BR Price Range	\$749,000–\$860,000	\$679,000–\$724,000
Monthly HOA	~\$600–\$700	~\$600–\$700
HOA Covers	Management, cable TV, insurance, grounds, pest control, reserves, security, trash, water/sewer, internet, pool	Same comprehensive coverage
Beach Access	Direct, private beachfront	Deeded beach access across the street at Gulf-front building
Pool	Gulf-front outdoor pool	River-side outdoor pool (plus access to Gulf-front pool)
Balcony	Oversized; Gulf views	Oversized; river and Ono Island views
Parking	Covered under-building parking	Covered under-building parking
Gated	Yes	Yes

The Views — What You'll Wake Up To

Gulf-Front: Sand, Surf, and Sunrise

Imagine this: you wake up, pad to the kitchen to start the coffee, and slide open your brand-new impact-rated glass doors to step onto an oversized balcony. The Gulf of Mexico stretches out in every direction — turquoise water, white sand, and not a high-rise in sight next door because you're bordered by a nature preserve. The beach below is uncrowded and wide. You can hear the waves before you even see them. Morning coffee here isn't just a routine — it's a ritual. Sunrise paints the water in gold and pink, and by the time your cup is empty, you're already wondering why you'd ever live anywhere else.

River-Side: Boats, Sunsets, and That Golden Hour

Now picture this instead: your balcony overlooks the calm, glassy surface of Old River. Boats drift by quietly on their way to and from the Gulf. Across the water, Ono Island's lush tree line frames the horizon. The pace here is different — a little quieter, a little more reflective. But it's the evenings that truly steal the show. Pour a glass of wine, settle into your chair, and watch as the sun drops behind the river, painting the sky in layers of amber, coral, and deep violet. The water catches every color. It's the kind of view that makes you put your phone down and just be present.

Amenities You'll Actually Use

Wind Drift isn't about flashy amenity lists that look great on paper but sit empty. These are things you'll use every single week.

Beach Life

- **Private beach access** — direct for Gulf-front residents; deeded access for River-side residents
- **Gulf-front pool with sun deck** — saltwater breezes and Gulf views while you swim
- **Uncrowded shoreline** — next to a nature preserve, so it stays peaceful even in peak season

Boating & Water Sports

- **Private boat launch on Old River** — your gateway to the Intracoastal Waterway and open Gulf
- **First-come, first-serve boat slips** — keep your boat steps from your door
- **Boat and trailer storage/parking** — no need for off-site marina fees
- **Fishing pier with cleaning station** — cast a line from your own dock on Old River

Stay Active

- **Newly resurfaced tennis courts** — in great shape after the 2025 renovation
- **Pickleball courts** — newly improved in 2025 (the fastest-growing sport on the coast!)
- **Two swimming pools** — one Gulf-front, one River-side; use both regardless of your building

Everyday Convenience

- **Gated entry** — added security and peace of mind
- **Elevator access** — brand-new elevator installed in 2025
- **In-unit washer/dryer** — no shared laundry rooms
- **Free high-speed WiFi and fiber optic** — 2025 upgrade, included in HOA

- **Charcoal BBQ grills** — for those Gulf-side cookouts
 - **Minutes from Flora-Bama** — plus all the dining, shopping, and entertainment of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach
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Pricing Trends — What 119 MLS Sales Tell Us

I pulled every MLS-recorded Wind Drift sale going back to 2011 — all 119 closed transactions — and analyzed Gulf-front versus River-side performance side by side. Here's what the data shows, and what it means for you.

The Big Picture (All-Time MLS Summary)

Metric	Gulf-Front (28760)	River-Side (28783)
Total Closed Sales	73	46
All-Time Sale Price Range	\$137,500 – \$860,000	\$194,000 – \$725,000
Average Sale Price	\$499,826	\$392,381
Median Sale Price	\$495,000	\$370,000
Average Price per Sq Ft	\$409.59/sf	\$350.40/sf
Typical 2BR Size	~1,158 sq ft	~1,060 sq ft
Typical 3BR Size	1,376-1,450 sq ft	~1,242 sq ft

2-Bedroom Comparison (Apples to Apples)

This is where most buyers focus, so let's compare like to like. The Gulf-front 2-bedrooms are slightly larger (~1,158 sf vs. ~1,060 sf), but the real difference is the view premium.

Metric	Gulf-Front 2BR	River-Side 2BR
Number of Sales	54	30
Price Range	\$137,500 - \$700,000	\$194,000 - \$550,000
Average Sale Price	\$476,940	\$384,152
Average \$/Sq Ft	\$410.56	\$361.65

3-Bedroom Comparison

Metric	Gulf-Front 3BR	River-Side 3BR
Number of Sales	19	16
Price Range	\$365,000 - \$860,000	\$255,000 - \$725,000
Average Sale Price	\$564,872	\$407,809
Average \$/Sq Ft	\$406.84	\$329.30

How Prices Have Grown Over Time

Both buildings have appreciated steadily, but look at the trajectory — especially from 2020 forward when coastal demand surged. Here's the 2-bedroom average sale price by period:

Period	Gulf 2BR Avg	Gulf \$/SF	River 2BR Avg	River \$/SF
2011-2013	\$280,250	\$239/sf	\$203,167	\$192/sf
2014-2016	\$320,800	\$274/sf	\$269,375	\$254/sf
2017-2019	\$348,686	\$300/sf	\$316,836	\$296/sf
2020-2021	\$494,656	\$427/sf	\$462,388	\$436/sf
2022-2023	\$652,967	\$563/sf	—	—
2024-2026	\$663,625	\$573/sf	\$517,766	\$488/sf

That's roughly 137% appreciation on Gulf-front 2BRs and 155% on River-side 2BRs over the full period tracked. River-side units have actually appreciated at a slightly faster percentage rate — which makes sense when you're starting from a lower base.

The Gulf Premium — What You're Paying for the View

Across every era, Gulf-front commands a premium over River-side. But the size of that premium has shifted with the market:

Period	Gulf 2BR Avg	River 2BR Avg	Gulf Premium
2011–2013	\$280,250	\$203,167	+\$77,083 (38%)
2014–2016	\$320,800	\$269,375	+\$51,425 (19%)
2017–2019	\$348,686	\$316,836	+\$31,851 (10%)
2020–2021	\$494,656	\$462,388	+\$32,269 (7%)
2024–2026	\$663,625	\$517,766	+\$145,859 (28%)

The takeaway? In today's market, the Gulf premium is running about \$125K–\$150K for a 2-bedroom. That's the price of waking up to the sound of waves every morning versus watching boats cruise by on Old River. Both are pretty great problems to have.

Most Recent Closed Sales (2024–2026)

Building	Unit	Beds	Sq Ft	Sale Price	Closed
Gulf-Front	#212S	3BR	1,450	\$860,000	Jul 2024
Gulf-Front	#207S	3BR	1,376	\$765,000	May 2025
Gulf-Front	#307S	3BR	1,376	\$690,000	Mar 2025
Gulf-Front	#303S	2BR	1,158	\$683,000	Oct 2025
Gulf-Front	#410S	2BR	1,158	\$672,500	Feb 2024

Building	Unit	Beds	Sq Ft	Sale Price	Closed
Gulf-Front	#605S	2BR	1,158	\$650,000	Jun 2025
Gulf-Front	#106S	3BR	1,376	\$650,000	Feb 2025
Gulf-Front	#211S	2BR	1,158	\$649,000	Dec 2025
River-Side	#614N	2BR	1,060	\$550,000	May 2024
River-Side	#612N	2BR	1,060	\$540,000	Apr 2025
River-Side	#512N	2BR	1,060	\$525,000	Dec 2025
River-Side	#212N	2BR	1,060	\$456,065	Jan 2026

What's Available Right Now (April 2026)

Building	Unit	Beds	Sq Ft	List Price	Days on Market
Gulf-Front	#511S	2BR	1,158	\$710,000	5
Gulf-Front	#311S	2BR	1,154	\$675,000	194
Gulf-Front	#404S	2BR	1,158	\$674,800	860
River-Side	#111N	3BR	1,242	\$724,000	228
River-Side	#316N	3BR	1,242	\$679,000	229
River-Side (Pending)	#115N	2BR	1,060	\$515,000	75

The Takeaway for Buyers

River-side units offer a significantly lower entry point — typically **\$125K-\$150K less** than comparable Gulf-front units today — while providing full access to every community amenity, including the beach. Gulf-front 2BRs are trading in the \$649K-\$683K range; River-side 2BRs are closing in the \$456K-\$540K range. Both sides of the property have seen strong, steady appreciation over the past 15 years.

Market Timing Note

The overall SP/LP ratio across all 119 Wind Drift sales is **96.4%**, with a median of **41 days on market**. That said, today's market is seeing longer DOM on several listings — which means motivated buyers have more room to negotiate, especially on units that have been sitting. This is a window worth watching.

Rental Income Potential

If you're considering Wind Drift as an investment or a home that earns while you're away, 2-bedroom units have historically grossed between **\$41,000 and \$56,000+** annually, depending on updates, furnishings, and market conditions. The 2025 renovations — especially the new windows, fiber optic internet, and fresh exteriors — position these units to command strong rental rates going forward.

Could This Be Home? Primary-Residence Considerations

Wind Drift was built as a vacation destination, but more and more buyers are discovering it works beautifully as a full-time home. Here's what makes it livable year-round:

Year-Round Livability

These aren't cramped hotel rooms. With in-unit washers and dryers, full kitchens, spacious layouts ranging from 1,060 to 1,450 square feet, covered parking, and elevator access, Wind Drift units are built for daily life — not just long weekends.

Community Feel

With only 84 units across the entire complex, Wind Drift has the kind of low-density, neighborly atmosphere that's increasingly rare on the Gulf Coast. You'll recognize faces at the pool. The gated entry and on-site management add a welcome layer of security and peace of mind.

2025 Renovations = Low Maintenance Worries

This is a big one. A brand-new roof, hurricane-impact windows throughout, a new elevator, updated wiring, and fiber optic infrastructure mean you're moving into a property with modern systems from day one. Fewer surprise special assessments. Less deferred maintenance. More confidence in your investment.

Location Perks

You're minutes from grocery stores, restaurants, urgent care, and all the retail you need in Orange Beach and Gulf Shores. Flora-Bama is right down the road for live music and good times. Pensacola is about 30 minutes east; Mobile is about an hour west — easy access to airports, hospitals, and big-city amenities whenever you need them.

Insurance & Costs

The HOA runs \$600-\$700/month and covers a comprehensive package: cable TV, high-speed internet, water/sewer, building insurance, grounds maintenance, security, and more. Buyers should also budget for individual unit insurance (HO-6 policy) and be aware that annual insurance assessments are typical for coastal condo communities. The good news? Those brand-new impact windows can help with insurance rates.

Flexibility

This is where Wind Drift really shines. It works beautifully as a primary residence that generates rental income when you travel. Or as a second home and vacation rental. Or as a pure investment property. The dual beach-plus-boating lifestyle means you'll never run out of things to do, and the rental demand in Orange Beach remains strong year after year.

Let's Find Your Perfect Fit

Whether you're drawn to the sound of the waves or the glow of a river sunset, I'd love to walk you through Wind Drift in person. Let's schedule a private showing and find the unit that fits your life.

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