

# Coney Island (Riegelmann) Boardwalk

West 37th Street to Brighton 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Coney Island-Brighton Beach, Brooklyn

**Built:** 1921-23, 1925-26, 1940-41

**Designer/Engineer:** Philip P. Farley

**Proposed Action:** Propose for Calendaring as a Scenic Landmark  
March 20, 2018



Coney Island Boardwalk, LPC

The Coney Island Boardwalk is one of the best-known waterfront promenades in the world. Named for Brooklyn Borough President Edward J. Riegelmann, who played a major role in its creation during his two terms in office, the 2.7 mile boardwalk was part of an ambitious plan to rejuvenate the neighborhood and beach. Inspired by the success of earlier boardwalks in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and other locations, public officials hoped a boardwalk would turn Coney Island into a year-round resort. The Coney Island Boardwalk gave people of all economic and social backgrounds free access to the beach and has become a significant destination unto itself.

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of Brooklyn's waterfront was privately owned. Though a public boardwalk was proposed for Coney Island as early as 1897, it wasn't until 1913 that New York State took legal action to clear the beach of obstructions. Kings County Supreme Court ruled that at low tide the beach was owned by the state and belonged to the public, thus requiring the removal of fences and barriers. In 1921, the New York State Legislature voted to transfer the land to New York City, which undertook various improvements to the beach and street grid.

Planned and designed by engineer Philip P. Farley, the boardwalk is an elevated deck supported by reinforced concrete piles and girders. Eighty-foot wide and 9,500 feet long, the first section, between Ocean Parkway and West 37th Street, opened in May 1923. In attendance was Mayor John F. Hyland, who called it the "happiest day of his life." Two years later, the boardwalk was extended 4,000-feet east, to Coney Island Avenue, and under Park Commissioner Robert Moses, an additional 1,500-feet to Brighton 15<sup>th</sup> Street in 1941.

In 1940 the boardwalk's most-heavily used section, between Ocean Parkway and Stillwell Avenue, was straightened and moved inland. At this time, the expanded beach was replenished, new recreational facilities were built, and Surf Avenue was rerouted. The boardwalk has been continuously repaired and modified over the years, largely in response to its coastal environment at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. The level of the beach has been raised; portions of the boardwalk have been reconstructed and necessary maintenance has resulted in the frequent replacement of the boardwalk's walkway, lamps, benches, railings and comfort stations. These changes have not diminished the boardwalk's appeal and cultural significance; this waterfront public space remains a memorable destination for New Yorkers and visitors from around the world.

# (Proposed) Coney Island (Riegelmann) Boardwalk

