

**THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER  
SCOTT M. STRINGER**

TESTIMONY OF NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER  
SCOTT M. STRINGER  
IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION 0985-2016

BEFORE MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON LAND USE  
OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

MAY 4, 2016

Thank you, Chairperson Greenfield for holding this hearing today, and to Councilmembers Treyger and Deutsch for introducing Resolution 985 calling on the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to designate the historic Coney Island Boardwalk as a scenic landmark.

Three and a half years ago, Coney Island was devastated by Superstorm Sandy. Homes were lost. Communities were uprooted. And a neighborhood struggled to figure out what came next.

Today, thanks to the leadership of this Council, the hard work of neighborhood organizations, and the resilience of the people of Coney Island, America's Playground has been rebuilt and the community is growing stronger every day.

Coney Island's economic and cultural heart can be found in its many iconic landmarks:

- The Coney Island Shore Theater
- The Cyclone
- The Wonder Wheel
- The Parachute Jump

But when New Yorkers think about Coney Island, they probably think about one thing above all else: the historic boardwalk that for generations has been the place where diverse beachgoers and residents alike have reveled in the beauty and possibility of Coney Island.

That's why I stand with this Council to call upon the LPC to designate the boardwalk as a scenic landmark.

Landmarking the boardwalk will further the best interests of the community and the City by allowing the city to pursue its sustainability goals, while granting official recognition to this nearly century-old icon.

Accordingly, I urge the Council to pass Resolution 985 and for the Landmarks Preservation Commission to add the Coney Island Boardwalk to Brooklyn's list of scenic landmarks.

Thank you.

Good morning. I would like to thank Mark Treyger and the members of the council for an opportunity to speak. My name is Paul King. I grew up in Coney Island where my mother still lives and I currently reside with my family in Bay Ridge.

This morning I would like to speak to you as both someone who's family moved to Coney Island in 1955 and whose mother still lives 1 block from the boardwalk and as a college professor from New York City College of Technology who teaches Architecture and Urban Design.

To state my position clearly from the start – the Boardwalk in Coney Island must be landmarked.

Growing up in Coney Island in the 60's and 70's – a time when the neighborhood transitioned from a place where doors were left unlocked to a place where as a teenager it made my parents nervous that I was out after dark, I have always been and continue to be connected to the Boardwalk.

It has always served as the lifeline of the community – a communal space shared equally by everyone who lived there – a link between the communities of Brighton Beach, Coney Island and Seagate whose residents went out for walks from one end to the other. Perhaps my strongest memory as a child is the weekly summer stroll along the boardwalk with my family on Fireworks night – the night that the entire community came out to share in the experience.

In the 70's while the crime rate rose – the community activity on the boardwalk made it a safe haven for children to walk with their families, for runners to enjoy and for families to ride their bikes. As an Urban Planner I can tell you that such spaces are rare – not only here in New York but anywhere in the world and they are to be treasured and protected.

It is also critical that the boardwalk – the operative word being board remain made of wood. From an experiential perspective it is the soft give of the wood that you feel as you walk that promotes strolling slowly – that makes one take the time to look around and live in the moment.

From an Urban Design perspective cities suffer from the Urban Heat Island Affect. The increased use of materials such as stone and concrete, with a high specific heat and the continued loss of open unbuilt and unpaved areas collects and holds the heat of the sun, raising urban temperatures by several degrees. Along the boardwalk as sections of wood have been replaced by concrete, the local temperature in those areas is now higher than the adjacent areas of wood. Additionally the brighter surface of the concrete as compared to the darker color of the wood has increased the glare one experiences while walking. To counter this recognized issue the City of New York initiated its Green Streets program funded by the DEP that converts paved areas of New York City and fills them with trees and shrubs, reducing local temperatures and creating areas capable of collecting stormwater and reducing flooding. It seems counter intuitive that at the same time the boardwalk continues to be converted to concrete.

Coney Island is a microclimate – that is the local temperature along the shore in the summer is cooler than the rest of New York. This is why for the last two centuries people have flocked to Coney Island on hot summer days – to enjoy a cool breeze – to walk along the boards. If the boardwalk continues to be replaced, this rare asset will be lost not just to the local residents but to our children and the generations that follow and to all of New York and to all of those who travel here on vacation and always make a trip out on the subway to visit.

With my mother still living in Coney Island I still view myself as a lifelong resident. Additionally I now return home several times a week as a member of the new Coney Island YMCA on 29<sup>th</sup> street and Surf Avenue across the street from Coney Island Houses where I grew up - and I still venture up to the boardwalk to run. As a runner you experience the boardwalk in a different way as over a short period of time you see the entire length and you have the chance to observe the people walking and talking. Since the section of boardwalk at the end toward Seagate has been replaced with concrete I have noticed a marked change in both my own behavior as well as those walking along the boards – that people turn around when they reach the concrete and head back the other way. While damage has already been done it is not too late to reverse the tide (couldn't resist the pun) and return the Boardwalk to its former glory.

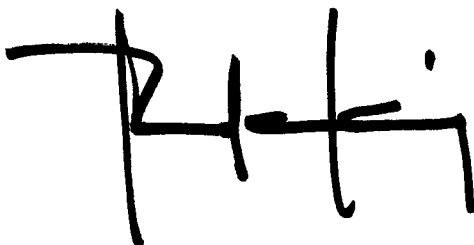
As an Urban Planner I look at New York and I have seen in recent years the development of two additional vital linear public elements which serve similar purposes as the Boardwalk in Coney Island, Brooklyn Bridge Park and the Highline in Manhattan. For these spaces what is most pertinent to this conversation is that both of these new spaces make use of wood boardwalks in their design. Anyone who has made a trip to Janes Carousel in Brooklyn Bridge Park has enjoyed walking along the surrounding boardwalk and anyone who has visited the highline has experienced the sections that have been built using boards, most notably the amphitheater space located at 16<sup>th</sup> street. The wood here is not from the Rain Forest but is from Black Locust trees – a species native to North America, a fast growth environmentally friendly choice – a choice supported by the American Society of Landscape Architects. In Brooklyn Bridge Park Black Locust wood was used for their Boardwalk, for railing posts and benches.

What I do not understand is why we are continually told that wood is simply not available for the Coney Island Boardwalk when it is being used elsewhere? Is an economic choice being made as both the Highline and Brooklyn Bridge Park are adjacent to neighborhoods who can independently help to fund their upkeep? If this is true than it really comes down to money – money which the Landmarking of the Boardwalk will help to provide.

I would also like to remind everyone that the redevelopment of the Highline as an Urban Linear Park has completely revitalized the adjacent neighborhoods transforming a formerly derelict elevated railway and manufacturing area into a vibrant residential neighborhood and that Brooklyn Bridge Park has transformed the Brooklyn Waterfront in a similar manner- both attractions enjoyed by tourists and New Yorkers alike.

For years we have looked to revitalize Coney Island, Brighton Beach and the neighborhoods along the boardwalk. We have built a new ball park and begun to redevelop the amusement area – but we have neglected Coney Island's most critical asset in this plan – the Boardwalk. If Coney Island is to not only survive but to flourish it must start with the Boardwalk – as the Highline example has shown – this critical linear park is the lifeline of our community – and is an asset to all of New York – one that must not be lost or neglected.

In closing I would just like to add that there is no question in my mind that the Coney Island Boardwalk should be landmarked, that it should remain wood along its entire length and that it simply is the right thing to do for the community and for the City of New York.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. H. K.', is located at the bottom of the page.

To the New York City Council and the Landmarks Preservation Commission:

For far too long both the people and the treasures of the southern Brooklyn communities of Brighton Beach and Coney Island have been undervalued and unprotected.

One casualty of this dismissive treatment accorded our communities throughout multiple mayoral administrations, is the Coney Island Boardwalk. For years it has been left to languish with substantial sections in dangerous disrepair. This not only evidences a lack of concern for safety, but it is indicative of a severe misunderstanding or underestimation of the Boardwalk's vital importance in the lives of both local residents, and indeed all New Yorkers!

More recently, this devaluing of a cherished treasure that is an integral part of our communities as well one of the crown jewels of New York City, has been exacerbated as the result of the reflexive dismissal of the application to have the boardwalk be landmarked. The fact that it has been minimally altered since its inception should not bar it from landmark status, as it has not barred other far more altered entities from being granted this appellation.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission defines a landmark as a building, property or object that has ***a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city***, state, or nation.

By any reasonable measure, the Coney Island Boardwalk eminently satisfies each and every aspect of that definition!

In contrast with Central Park, which was developed with an elite class in mind that excluded the common man, Coney Island was consciously developed as a place for all classes to come and mingle as they wished. The boardwalk was constructed as an integral aesthetic aspect of this notion of equity, through its natural encouragement of the pleasant interactions of all citizens irrespective of social class or economic station. This continues even today, where the boardwalk is the spine of our community, bringing together and promoting interactions between residents from a wide variety of cultures. Thus, the boardwalk has indeed played an important part in the development, as well as in the heritage of our city, and it is time to value it as such. This is only one aspect of its claim to a special historical interest. Many others could be cited were time to allow it.

Certainly, the boardwalk qualifies as an entity having a special character and aesthetic interest. It is a unique aesthetic both visually and kinesthetically, as well as in the ambience it projects and promotes. Indeed, it is a living landmark, one that numerous people interact with and enjoy on a daily basis, and one that adds immeasurably to the life and vitality of our city. Architects have commented on the graceful simplicity and beauty of its lines, and how they engage both the person's eye and spirit to move forward and interact with it. That it is de facto a scenic landmark, is evidenced by the fact that it is known worldwide- indeed, it is iconic -and visitors from all countries that come to visit New York City seek it out for the special enjoyment it provides. As a 21-year-old youngster from France testified at a Design Commission hearing, " I've been coming here with my father since I was 16 and the first thing we like to visit is the Coney Island boardwalk. It is beautiful and gives you a special feeling when you are on it. It is so special and I hope you protect it." The Landmarks Preservation Commission ought to grant the Boardwalk the scenic landmark status that others inherently understand it to have.

I respectfully implore the Landmarks Preservation Commission to grant the Coney Island Boardwalk its rightful place in the history and life of our city by declaring it a New York City landmark!

Rob Burstein  
President  
Coney-Brighton Boardwalk Alliance

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: G. Gasbrom

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RALPH PERFETTO

Address: 719 SHORE ROAD #26

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: BROOKLYN, NY 11209

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MA SANOFF

Address: 40 BRIGHTON 1 RD

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: **(PLEASE PRINT)**  
ARLENE KRENDER

Address: 3101 OCEAN Parkway

I represent: Boardwalk ALLIANCE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: **(PLEASE PRINT)**  
William Zucker

Address: 4 Cass Place, #6A Brooklyn, N.Y. 11235

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

(handwritten)

Date: May 3 2016

Name: **(PLEASE PRINT)**  
Daniel Ioannou

Address: 2789 W 15<sup>th</sup> ST

I represent: Coney Island History Project

Address: West 12<sup>th</sup> Street Brooklyn, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/16

Boardwalk

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Quinn

Address: 200 E 27th St Apt 4E NYC 10016

I represent: Coney Island Tours

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: R. Schell  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: PO BOX 195

I represent: SUPER PROJECT

Address: I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Rob Burgstein  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 30 Brighton 1st Road

I represent: Boardwalk Alliance

Address: 30 Brighton 1st Road

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Boardwalk Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SIMEON BANKA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Historic Districts Council

Address: 232 E 11 St

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 4, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christianna Nelson

Address: 11 Sterling Pl. #1B Brooklyn 11217

I represent: Boardwalk Alliance

Address: 50 Brighton 1st Rd. Brooklyn

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5-4-16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL GUNDERSEN

Address: 201 BRIGHTON 1ST ROAD

I represent: SELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/2016

Name: PAUL C. KING (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 8701 SHORE ROAD APT 627  
BROOKLYN NY 11209

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/16

Name: SUZANNE FRIEDMAN (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 40 OCEANA DRIVE W BROOKLYN NY

I represent: CONY ISLAND BOARDWALK

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: TRICIA VITA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 42 PERRY ST NYC

I represent: ~~NYC~~ Amusing the Zillman Blog

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/13/16

Name: JUDITH (JR) CANOPIA  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 716 EAST 11TH ST. #2R NC

I represent: FRIENDS OF CONEY ISLAND / BR. BOARDWALK  
10009

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 05/03/2016

Name: Bella Akhmet  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 3115 BRIGHTON 6<sup>TH</sup> ST. #35

I represent: CM TREYGER

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: DAVID GERSHENDORIN  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1701 WEST 3 ST. APT 417

I represent: CM TREYGER

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 985  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/16

Name: Kenya Handy (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Michael Schwartz (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2814 W. 8th St #4C Bklyn, NY 11224

I represent: myself and the residents of Corey Isd

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/4/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon

Address: 2605 Bath Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11214

I represent: Self, + Southern Brooklyn Democrats

Address: Same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Queenie Hwang

Address: 3104 Mermack Avenue

I represent: NAAAC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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