



# Beyond the Boardwalk: NYC Beaches as Economic Engines

New York City's beaches stretch across all five boroughs and play a vital role in the lives of residents and visitors alike. They attract millions of people every year, offering affordable recreation while supporting the economies of neighborhoods like Coney Island and Rockaway Beach. In these two areas alone, more than 1,300 businesses—1,200 of which are small businesses—employ nearly 17,000 people, with beach-related activity generating more than 1,200 seasonal jobs.

As New York City plans for a more resilient and vibrant future, coastal spaces are taking center stage as public amenities, tourist destinations, and drivers of transit usage, job growth, and economic impact. This report

explores patterns of beach visitation and examines the economic contributions tied to these important public spaces.

## NYC Beaches are popular destinations for residents and visitors.

In 2024, 12 public beaches across the city saw a total of 11.6 million visits<sup>1</sup>, with more than 230,000 additional visits compared to 2023. About 58% of these visits occurred during the peak summer months from June through August, though beaches remain popular throughout the year. In fact, use outside the summer season has grown notably, with nearly 440,000 more visits in the shoulder and off-seasons compared to the same period in 2019.

Coney Island remains the top destination, accounting for approximately 5 million visits, or about 43% of the city total. Rockaway Beach is the second most popular destination, with 1.7 million visitors last year, followed by Fort Tilden with 1.3 million visitors.

In 2024, four beaches saw their highest visitation since at least 2019, Cedar Grove, Rockaway, Seagate,

and Manhattan beaches, while the newly opened Gansevoort beach in Manhattan saw 105,000 visits in its first full season since opening.

Based on cell phone mobility data collected from Placer.ai, these totals represent visitors only and do not include individuals that may live or work in the area. Overall, about 76% of beach visitors in summer 2024 were NYC residents. Though this distribution varies by beach, we see that beaches overwhelmingly benefit New Yorkers. About 11% of beachgoers in 2024 came from outside the metro area, 5% came from Long Island, another 5% from New Jersey counties in the New York metro area, while 3% came from lower Connecticut and the lower Hudson Valley.

Coney Island saw the highest number of tourists overall, with 17% of visitors coming from beyond the New York metro area and an additional 13% coming from the metro area outside the five boroughs. Gansevoort Beach had the highest proportion of tourists, with about 31% of its visitors coming from outside NYC. In contrast, beaches like Manhattan Beach, Wolfes Pond, and Great Kills were overwhelmingly local, with more than 90% of visitors residing in the city.

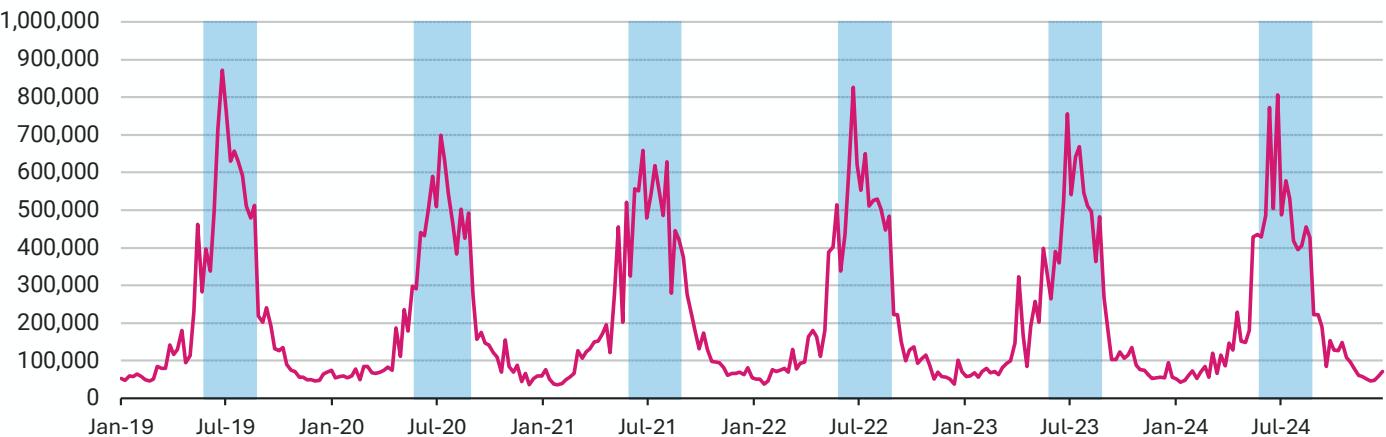
Finally, we can see that different beaches appeal to different regional audiences. Orchard Beach, for

### Key Highlights

- New York City beaches welcomed 11.6 million visitors in 2024, a year-over-year increase of more than 230,000 people. Over 76% of these visitors were city residents.
- Coney Island was the most visited beach, drawing nearly 5 million people and accounting for almost half of all beach visits in the city.
- Public transportation is essential to beach access. Between June and August 2024, 2 million subway trips ended in Coney Island, and nearly 467,000 ended in Rockaway Beach.
- NYC Ferry usage at Rockaway Beach reached a new post-pandemic high in 2024, with 167,000 boardings to Rockaway pier over the summer season.
- Coney Island and Rockaway Beach supported roughly 1,200 seasonal jobs in 2024, and visitors from outside New York City spent an estimated \$79 million in these neighborhoods.

### Beach Visits Peak in the Summer Months, Accounting for 58% of Annual Visits

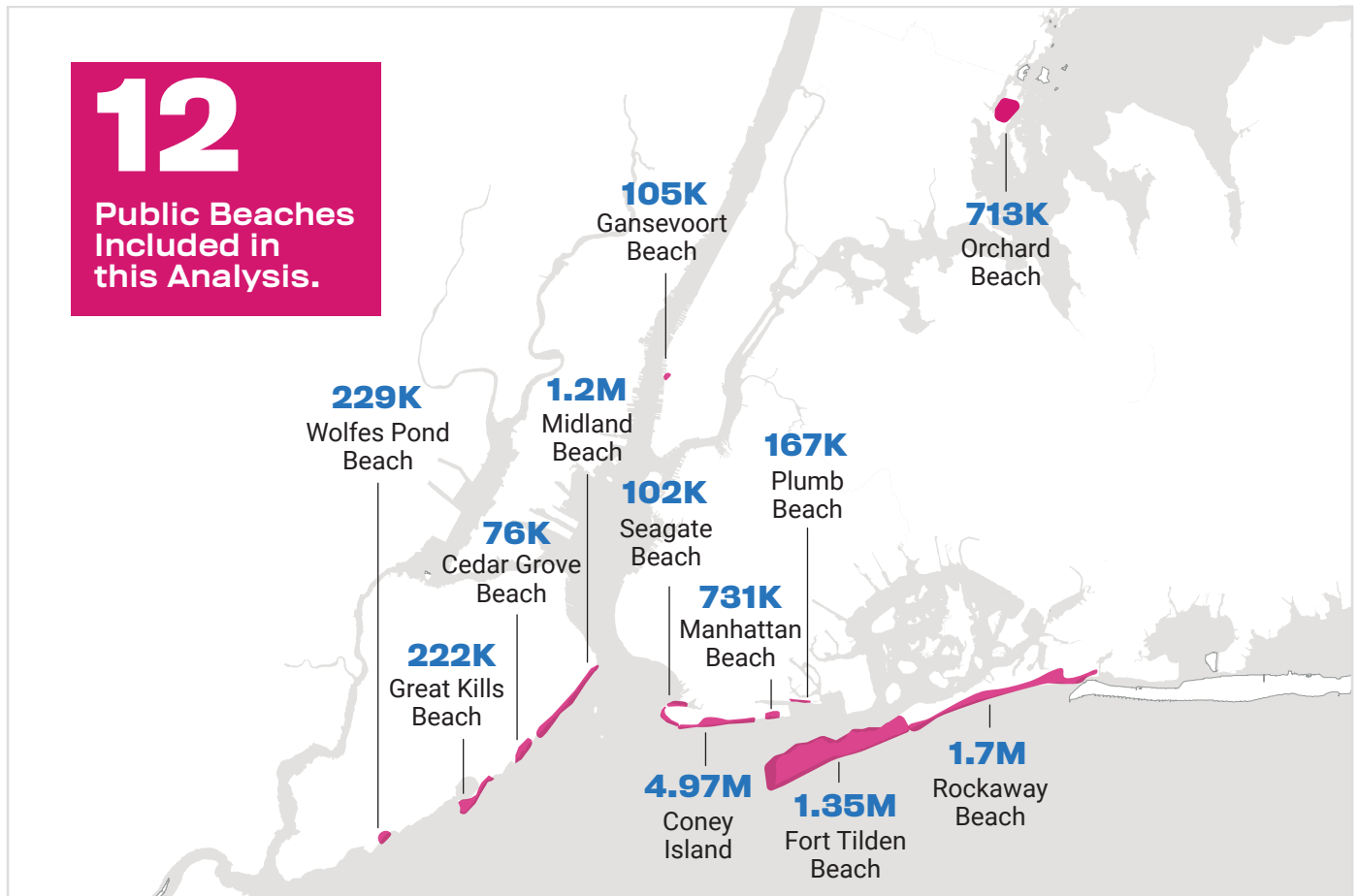
Figure 1: Daily Visitation Across 12 NYC Public Beaches



Source: NYCEDC analysis of data from Placer.ai. Shaded areas represent in-season months June through August.

## NYC Beaches Stretch Across the Five Boroughs, with Coney Island Accounting for 43% of All Visits in 2024

Figure 2: NYC Beaches and 2024 Visitation Levels



Source: NYCEDC analysis of data from Placer.ai.

example, tends to attract people from the lower Hudson Valley and Connecticut. Rockaway Beach is especially popular among Long Island residents, while New Jersey visitors are more likely than any other group to go to Staten Island's Midland Beach.

### NYC Beaches help drive local economies in Coney Island and Rockaway Beach.

Beaches contribute significantly to the economic vitality of surrounding neighborhoods. In Coney Island and Rockaway Beach, more than 1,300 businesses employ nearly 17,000 people.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 95% of these businesses are classified as small, with fewer than 50 employees, which aligns closely with citywide trends.

Since 2019, these areas have added over 140 businesses and more than 550 jobs. Much of this growth has occurred in sectors like healthcare, education, real estate, and administrative services. Seasonal hiring in sectors like retail, hotels, entertainment, and restaurants is another important factor in these neighborhood economies. Between January and July 2024, Coney Island added nearly 900 seasonal jobs in leisure-related sectors, and Rockaway Beach added 300.

These jobs are directly supported by visitor spending. With more than 640,000 visitors coming from outside New York City, we estimate tourists spent roughly \$79 million in Coney Island and Rockaway Beach in 2024. This outside spending adds to the New York City economy, contributing to the city's overall output and supporting seasonal employment opportunities and local small businesses.



Transit access is key, and NYC Ferry is an increasingly popular method of getting to Rockaway Beach.

For beaches that have transit access, public transportation is a significant source of visitors. During the 2024 summer season, 2 million subway trips ended at stations in Coney Island and an additional 467,000 ended at stations in Rockaway Beach. Although we can't know for certain the motive for these trips, we observe large seasonal fluctuations in ridership data, with average daily ridership peaking in July for both areas, and at its lowest in February.

These fluctuations are especially pronounced when we focus on leisure travel time, which we define as trips occurring on weekends between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm. Average daily subway ridership to Coney Island during this window increases by 104% during in-season months, compared to just 34% for average ridership in non-season months. The same phenomenon is even more pronounced for the Rockaways. These findings suggest that the Coney Island and Rockaway beaches have strong catalytic effects for subway ridership.

In addition to the subway, the NYC Ferry has become an increasingly popular means of getting to Rockaway Beach, especially on weekends during the summer months. During the 2024 season, a record 167,000 riders boarded a ferry to the Rockaway pier, 4% higher than the previous post-pandemic record of 2022. We also see patterns in ferry ridership data that suggest summer visitation to beaches has a positive impact on ridership. In 2024, nearly 1,300 people boarded Rockaway pier ferries each summer weekend day in the afternoon or evening, compared to just 260 during the rest of the year.

NYCEDC is investing in coastal resilience and recreational amenities, driving economic development.

NYCEDC has played a significant role in investing in and revitalizing the city's coastal communities, with a focus on climate resilience, economic development, and community engagement. As stewards of New York City's economic future, NYCEDC recognizes the unique challenges faced by coastal neighborhoods, particularly in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and amid the growing threat of climate change. NYCEDC's investments reflect

Beaches are Back: Beach Visits Increased by More than 230,000 from 2023 to 2024

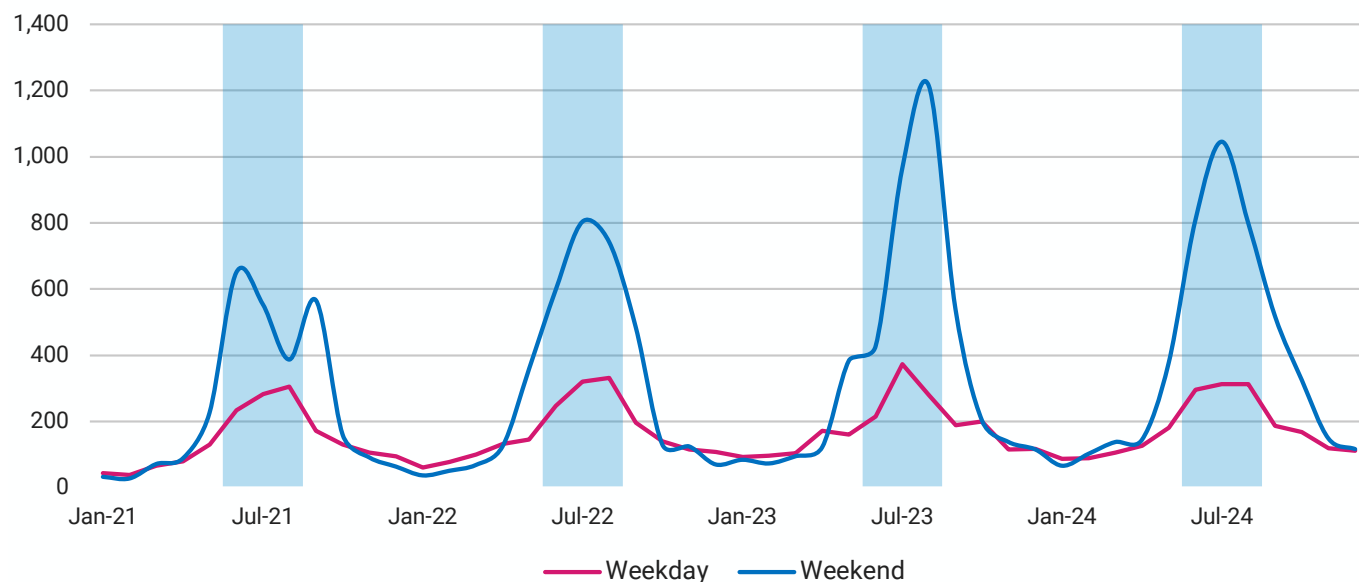
Table 1: Annual Visitation at NYC Beaches, 2023 and 2024

Beach	Borough	2023	2024	2023 to 2024 Change
Coney Island	Brooklyn	5,072,000	4,970,200	-2%
Rockaway	Queens	1,582,600	1,705,700	8%
Fort Tilden	Queens	1,341,300	1,346,400	0%
Midland	Staten Island	1,159,800	1,207,900	4%
Manhattan	Brooklyn	687,100	730,600	6%
Orchard	Bronx	735,800	712,900	-3%
Wolfes Pond	Staten Island	222,400	228,800	3%
Great Kills	Staten Island	212,200	222,400	5%
Plumb	Brooklyn	168,700	167,100	-1%
Gansevoort*	Manhattan	-	104,900	-
Seagate	Brooklyn	81,700	102,100	25%
Cedar Grove	Staten Island	65,000	76,000	17%
Total:		11,344,100	11,575,000	+ 2%

Source: NYCEDC analysis of Placer data. \*Gansevoort's first full season was in 2024.

## Rockaway Beach has a Catalytic Effect on Ferry Ridership, Spurring Over 800 Additional Boardings on Weekends and Holidays on Average in the Summer

Figure 3: Average Boardings from Rockaway Pier



Source: NYCEDC analysis of ferry ridership data. Weekends include public holidays during which the ferry runs on a weekend schedule.

a long-term vision to transform vulnerable waterfront areas into resilient, inclusive, and economically vibrant communities.

Since the rezoning of Coney Island in 2009, the area has undergone a remarkable revitalization through redevelopment. NYCEDC, in partnership with other City agencies and the MTA, has driven these efforts with over \$750 million in public investment over the past 15 years—revitalizing the amusement district, building over 3,400 new homes, and delivering neighborhood infrastructure like new sewers and streets.

Once on the brink of disappearing, Coney Island's amusement district now thrives as a one-of-a-kind fun and affordable playground for New Yorkers and visitors alike.

Today, NYCEDC continues our work to revitalize Coney Island through the development of Coney Island West, which will see a roughly \$40 million renovation of the Abe Stark Sports Center and the creation of 1,500 additional homes. Combined, these current investments will support 5,000 construction jobs and generate \$400 million in economic impact.

In Rockaway Beach, NYC Parks and NYCEDC together have worked to reconstruct over five miles of the Rockaway Boardwalk, adding accessibility improvements, state of the art amenities, and better preparing the neighborhood for the future climate.

### Orchard Beach Pavilion will Once Again be a Star Attraction in the Bronx, Providing Recreational Opportunities for Residents and Attracting Visitors

Figure 4: Future Renovation of the Orchard Beach Pavilion



Source: Orchard Beach Pavillion by Marvel

And in the Bronx, NYC Parks and NYCEDC have partnered once again to invest \$109 million to renovate the 140,000-square-foot pavilion at Orchard Beach. This

**Coney Island will be Home to New Residential Development and Provide Even More Recreational Opportunities for Visitors, with the Renovation of the Abe Stark Sports Center**

**Figure 5: Future Development at Coney Island West**



Source: Rendering of Coney Island by ONE Architecture & Urbanism

**The Rockaway Boardwalk Stands Stronger than Ever, Welcoming Locals and Tourists Alike to Enjoy the Coastline and Amenities**

**Figure 6: Reconstructed Section of the Rockaway Boardwalk**



Source: Julianne Schaer/ NYC & Company

investment will once again make the make the landmark pavilion the crown jewel of the “Bronx Riviera.”

**NYC beaches have long been woven into the fabric of urban life, as places of recreation, refuge, and resilience.**

Beachfront amusement parks, boardwalks, and public pavilions were among the first democratic leisure spaces in New York, offering affordable recreation to generations of New Yorkers.

Today, that legacy continues. Major events like the *Mermaid Parade*, *Rockaway Beach Surf Festival*, and community-run summer programs uphold the tradition of beaches as civic gathering places, while generating real economic returns. The rebound in visitation, the strength of seasonal hiring, and the increase in transit usage and local spending all underscore how vital these spaces remain. New York City’s beaches are not just scenic amenities; they are enduring engines of economic activity, cultural memory, and public life. As the city plans for a more resilient and inclusive future, its beaches will continue to be central to the social and economic vitality of the five boroughs.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Visitation and mobility estimates are based on NYCEDC’s analysis of data from Placer.ai, based on anonymized cell phone activity.

<sup>2</sup> Business and employment estimates are based on NYCEDC’s analysis of QCEW microdata from NYSDOL, which was available through Q3 2024 when this analysis took place.

<sup>3</sup> Visitor spending estimates are based on NYCEDC’s analysis of data provided by NYC Tourism and Conventions.

<sup>4</sup> Coney Island stations are defined as: Coney Island-Stillwell Av, W 8 St-NY Aquarium, Ocean Pkwy, and Brighton Beach. Rockaway stations are defined as all on the Rockaway Park Shuttle from Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St through Beach 36 St.





## About NYCEDC

New York City Economic Development Corporation is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization that works for a vibrant, inclusive, and globally competitive economy for all New Yorkers. We take a comprehensive approach, through four main strategies: strengthen confidence in NYC as a great place to do business; grow innovative sectors, with a focus on equity; build neighborhoods as places to live, learn, work, and play; and deliver sustainable infrastructure for communities and the city's future economy. Learn more at [edc.nyc](https://www.edc.nyc).

For more economic data, insights, and analysis from NYCEDC's Economic Research & Policy group, and to receive economic reports via email, visit [edc.nyc/research-insights](https://www.edc.nyc/research-insights).

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