

The Problems of Nonessential Helicopter Flights Over Brooklyn:

By: [Stop the Chop NY/NJ](#) – June 3, 2023

Issues:

Tourist helicopter flights have long plagued the residents of Manhattan, Brooklyn Heights, and the other waterfront areas of Brooklyn, and in recent years there has been a growing market for commercial helicopter flights ferrying the wealthy from a heliport in Manhattan's Hudson River Park at W. 30th St. directly to JFK Airport and the Hamptons seven days per week. Other commuter helicopter flights depart from a NYC-owned heliport on the East River at E. 34th Street during weekdays. The paths of these nonessential flights take commuter helicopters over Brooklyn, flying directly down Flatbush Avenue or east and west across the borough mostly over Eastern Parkway to and from JFK and Long Island.

The combination of tourist and commuter helicopters ("nonessential") over NYC has created harmful noise and air pollution conditions, safety risks, and environmental concerns. The geographic range of the problem is vast, as tourist helicopters from Manhattan's Downtown Heliport and New Jersey heliports loop around the New York Harbor, Governor's Island, Battery Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge Park, 9/11 Memorial, and many uptown locations as well, such as Central Park, Riverside Park, and Washington Heights. The dramatic increase of helicopter flights to JFK and the Hamptons has a substantial harmful impact on the health and quality of life of all those below their paths, including the residents of Fort Greene, Bushwick, Williamsburg, Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, Brownsville, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Flatbush, Flatlands, and East New York.

Negative Impacts:

Commuter helicopter flights over Brooklyn have created a myriad of negative impacts. The environmental costs of commuter flights from Manhattan to JFK and the Hamptons are paid for by the working families of Brooklyn. Residents of Brooklyn are now subjected to increased emissions from these fossil-fuel based helicopters and the extreme noise pollution generated by their motors and rotor blades. Both noise pollution and toxic emissions from aviation fuel have been shown to have harmful effects on the health and wellbeing of children and the entire community.

Environmental Justice Concerns:

NYC has defined an environmental justice ("EJ") area as a "low-income community located in the city or a minority community located in the city" and environmental burden being an "environmental factor that has the potential to negatively impact New Yorkers' health, well-being, quality of life or enjoyment. Examples include point sources of air pollution ..." See New York City's Environmental Justice for All [Report](#) Scope of Work by the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group (Dec. 2021). In that same NYC EJ Report, fair treatment means that "no group of people, including a racial, ethnic or socioeconomic group, should (i) bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal and commercial operations..."

If we look at this EJ [map](#) and compare it with the commuter helicopter orange-lined heat maps shown below in this document, we see that the daily helicopter flight paths roar over many EJ communities in Brooklyn at extremely low altitudes (some as low as 300 feet above ground). These flight paths represent either commuters traveling to JFK or the Hamptons. Each orange-lined heat map is a record of just one

day's number of flights over the same community.

These maps tell the tale of “two cities” - the wealthy, privileged few utilizing one of the most polluting forms of transportation over communities already disproportionately experiencing high rates of diseases (such as asthma and Covid). The communities that can least afford the services of the exclusive helicopter commuter services are unfairly the ones bearing the costs of increased air and noise pollution from those gas-guzzling, fossil fuel-spewing modes of transport.

While tourist helicopter flights originating in NYC are subject to at least some barely minimal regulation which bars them from, among other things, flying directly over land, commuter flights are currently subject to NO meaningful regulation; operators are free to fly pretty much wherever they wish, and as shown above, virtually their entire flight paths are over EJ communities. The good news is that a significant number of elected officials support legislation that will bring a measure of environmental justice to NYC's communities.

Political Support For Our Cause:

The effort to stop nonessential helicopter flights over New York City has garnered support from a large group of elected officials including Congress Member Yvette Clark, Congressmember Jerrold Nadler, Congressmember Nydia Velázquez, Congressmember Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Congressmember Dan Goldman, NY State Senators Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Kristen Gonzalez, NY State Assembly Members Bobby Carroll, Jo Ann Simon and Tony Simone, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, NYC Council Members Majority Leader Amanda Farias, Gale Brewer, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Shahana Hanif, Jennifer Gutiérrez, Rita Joseph, Sandy Nurse, Ari Kagan, Chi Ossé, and Mercedes Narcisse, among others. These elected officials have introduced or cosponsored important legislation to rectify the problem caused by this nonessential helicopter traffic, and this is discussed below.

NYC Council Legislation:

- Passed [legislation \(Int 0026-2024\)](#)- Passed by NYC Council, introduced by Majority Leader Amanda Farias April 24, 2025 – A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to regulating helicopter operations at city owned heliports to reduce noise.
- Proposed [legislation \(Int 0551-2022\)](#) by NYC Council Member Lincoln Restler, introduced June 16, 2022 – A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to prohibiting nonessential helicopters from operating at heliports owned or operated by the City (East 34th Street and DMH heliports). See [press release](#).
- Proposed [resolution \(Res 0291-2022\)](#) by NYC Council Member Gale Brewer, introduced August 11, 2022 – “Resolution calling upon the United States Federal Aviation Administration to ban all non-essential helicopter travel, including tourist and chartered helicopter flights over New York City.”
- Proposed [resolution \(Res 0389-2022\)](#) by NYC Council Member Gale Brewer, introduced November 22, 2022- “Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to amend the Hudson River Park Trust Act by banning non-essential use of its heliport.”

Federal Legislation:

- [H.R. 3196](#) – *The Improving Helicopter Safety Act of 2025* is a federal bill introduced by NY Congressman Jerry Nadler and co-sponsored by Congressmembers Rob Menendez, Nicole Malliotakis, Grace Meng, Nydia Velazquez, and LaMonica McIver.
 - A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to prohibit helicopter flights near Statue of Liberty National Monument, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.
- [H.R. 1643](#) – *The Improving Helicopter Safety Act of 2021 (Formerly HR)* is a federal bill introduced by NY Congressmember Carolyn B. Maloney and co-sponsored by Congressmembers Jerry Nadler, Nydia Velázquez, Yvette Clarke, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas Suozzi, and Jamaal Bowman
 - Prohibits nonessential helicopters from flying in covered airspace of any city with a population of over 8 million people and with a population density of over 25,000 people per square mile—including waterways within the city’s jurisdiction
 - Defines “nonessential” helicopters as any helicopter whose purpose is not “essential”
 - Defines “essential” helicopter flights as: law enforcement, emergency response, disaster response, medical services, or for the public interest; does not affect military aircraft
- [H.R. 7769](#) – *The Helicopter Safety and Noise Management Act* would create a commission composed of the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), members of the local and state government, and helicopter noise and safety advocates who are negatively impacted by helicopter noise. This commission would then develop a helicopter usage management plan to substantially reduce the number of non-essential civil rotorcraft that can operate at any time.

NY State Legislation:

- [S1140/A5891](#) – A bill to establish a tax on noise from nonessential helicopter and seaplane flights in cities with a population of one million or more. This bill would levy a tax of \$50/seat or \$200/flight, whichever is greater. (2025)
- [A2583](#) – A bill to establish a tax on noise from nonessential helicopter and seaplane flights in cities with a population of one million or more. This bill would levy a tax of \$100/seat or \$400/flight, whichever is greater. (2025)
- [S6962/A7277](#) – A bill to remove the heliport from the Hudson River Park at West 30th Street. (2023)
- [S6109/A6985](#) – A bill to ban municipalities from allowing NYC helicopter sightseeing tours from city owned heliports. (2023)
- [A03333/S0587](#) – A bill to impose carbon and noise tax fees on nonessential helicopter flights in NYC. (2023)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM STOP THE CHOP NY/NJ’s [website](#)

What is deemed a “nonessential” helicopter? Nonessential helicopters fly tourist, commuter, charter/corporate, and non-professional photographer flights.

What is NOT a nonessential helicopter? Military, emergency services, police, medical, government, news & media, are considered “essential” flights.

Why can’t helicopters fly higher to reduce noise? The FAA bans them from flying above 2,000 feet in the NYC area to prevent crashes with jets flying to and from major airports. It requires much lower altitudes on routes across Brooklyn to avoid flights to and from LaGuardia and JFK.

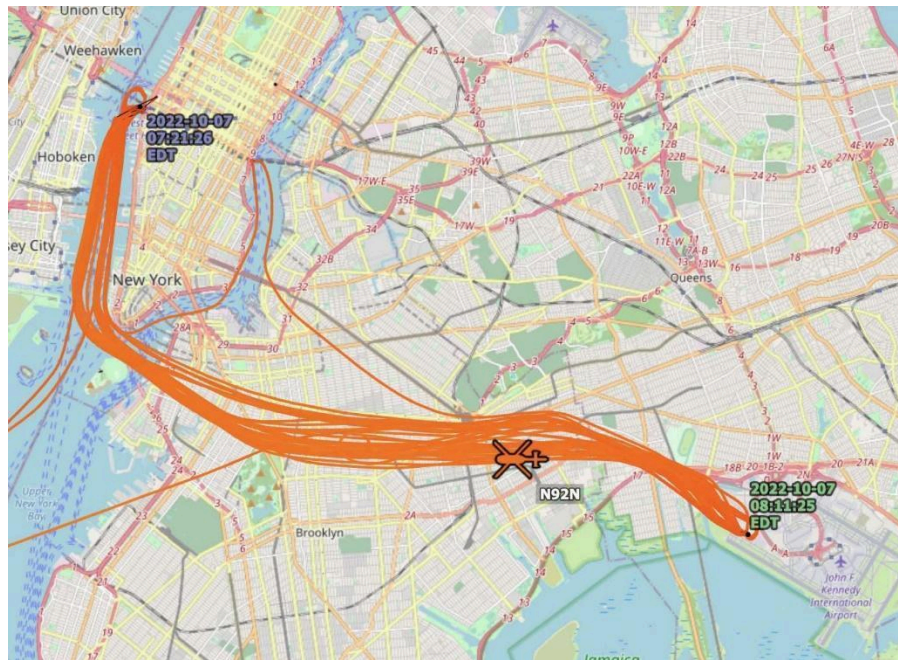
What are the nonessential helicopter companies currently flying over the NY metro area, and from where do they take off? There are basically two categories of nonessential helicopters: tourist & commuters. NYC-based tourist helicopters are restricted to the Downtown Manhattan Heliport (near Wall St. on the East River). Corporate/charter flights operate out of all 3 heliports, but mainly use the East 34th and West 30th Street Heliports. Both tourists and commuters fly to and from Newark Airport, Kearny, and Linden NJ, Westchester County Airport, various airports in the Hamptons, and the Port Authority owned airports (LaGuardia, JFK, & Newark).

Where are the tourist helicopter companies based & where are they currently allowed to fly/tour/take aerial photos? In NYC, tourist helicopters are only allowed to fly from the Downtown Heliport (M-Sat 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. only; Sundays no tourist flights are allowed) and those tourist flights are only allowed to fly over waterways (e.g., Hudson River, East River and NY Harbor). This is the result of the 2016 Agreement between NYC and the helicopter industry; not an FAA rule. Also, as mentioned above, tourist flights that circle around and over Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn operate 7 days a week from the three NJ locations.

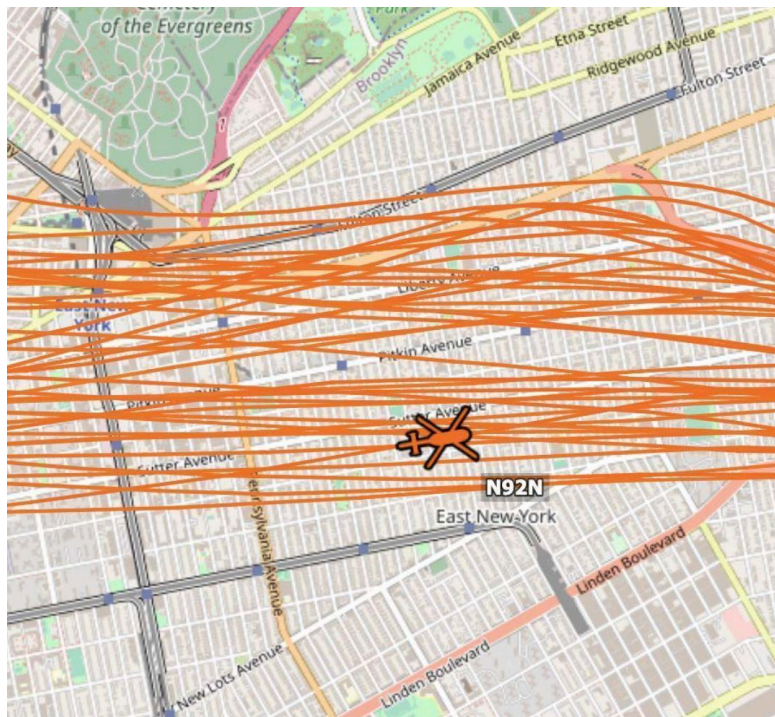
Where are the NYC commuter/charter helicopter companies based & where are they currently allowed to fly on their commutes? Commuter/charter companies based in NYC fly out of all 3 heliports: Blade & others fly out of the W. 30th Street (all 7 days, hours appear unrestricted), and the E. 34th Street (M-F 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.) heliports. Fly Lindy & others are based at the Downtown Heliport (M-F 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Sat 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Sun 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.). Commuters/charters can and do fly over land and parks, such as Central Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Prospect Park, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Marine Park, Floyd Bennett Field, and major residential neighborhoods.

Where do the commuter/charter helicopter companies fly to? Companies such as Blade fly to the three major NY/NJ airports, Westchester County Airport, Teterboro Airport, Hamptons & other L.I. destinations. Fly Lindy, started in June 2021, flies to Baltimore & DC.

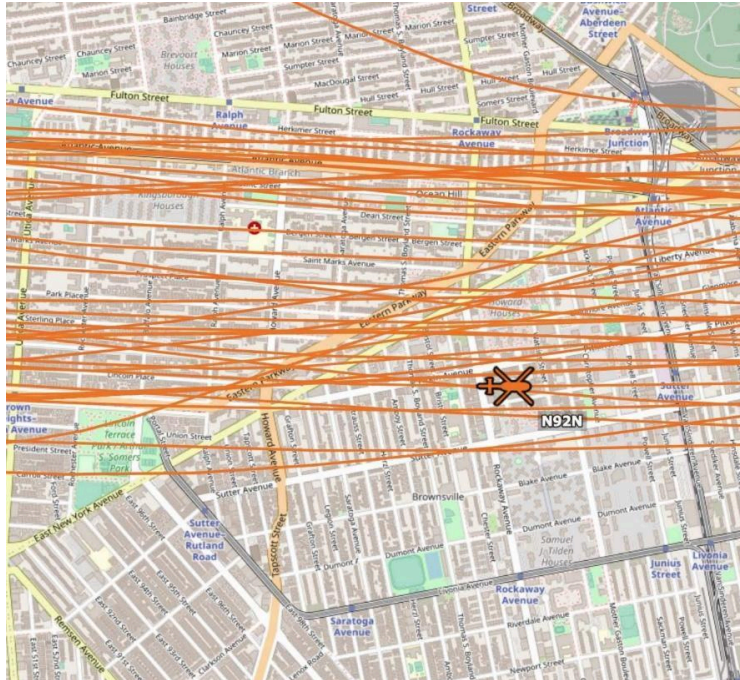
VARIOUS HEAT MAPS SHOWING HELICOPTER ROUTES OVER BROOKLYN



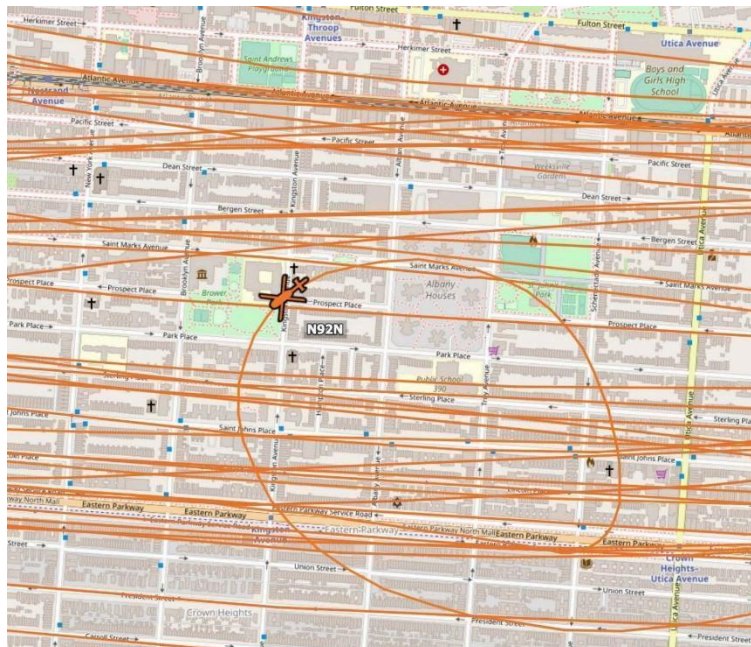
Commuter helicopter taking passengers from JFK to the West 30th Street Heliport
 Neighborhoods Affected: Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens, Boerum Hill, Prospect Heights, Bed-Stuy, Crown Heights, Weeksville, Brownsville, East New York, Ozone Park, Lindenwood



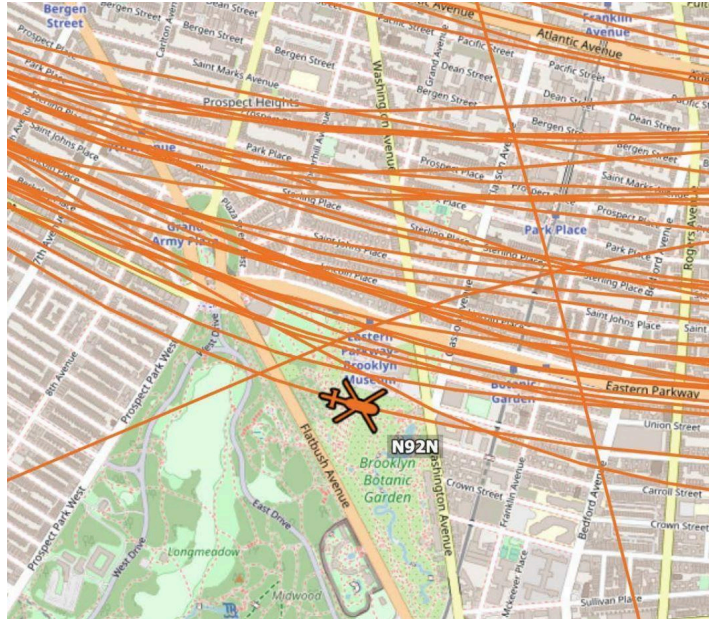
Commuter helicopter taking passengers from the West 30th Street Heliport to JFK over East New York
 Neighborhoods Affected: Broadway Junction, Cypress Hills, East New York



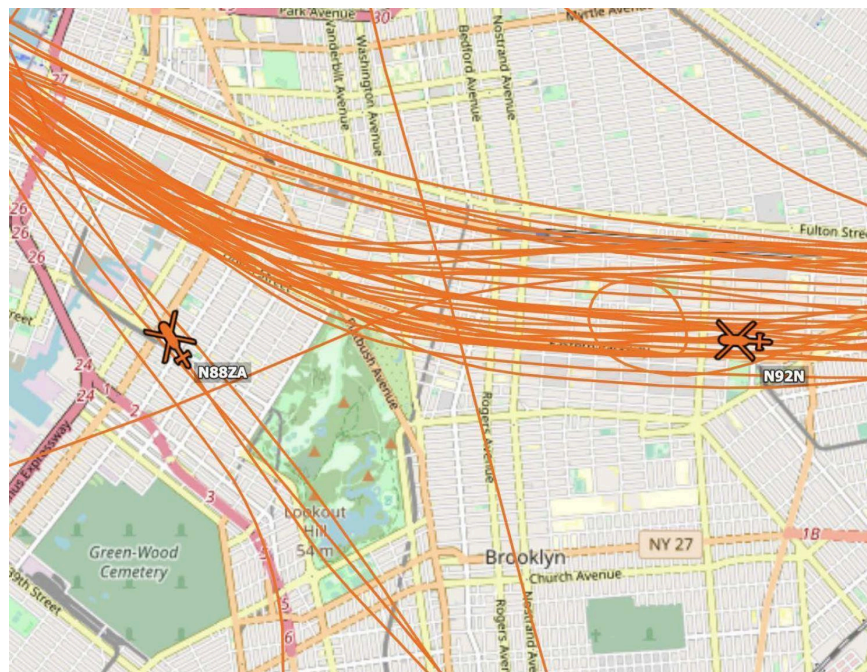
Commuter helicopter taking passengers from the West 30th Street Heliport to JFK over Brownsville
 Neighborhoods Affected: Weeksville, Brownsville



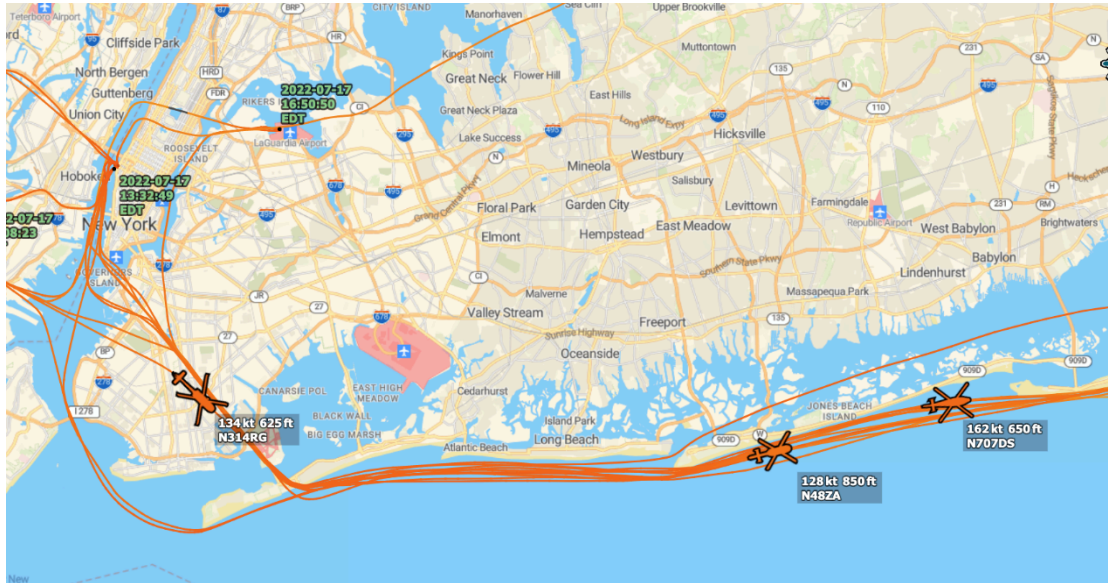
Commuter helicopter taking passengers from the West 30th Street Heliport to JFK taking a detour in
 Crown Heights
 Neighborhood Affected: Crown Heights



Commuter helicopter taking passengers from the West 30th Street Heliport to JFK
 Neighborhoods Affected: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Prospect Heights, and Crown Heights



Commuter helicopters taking passengers from JFK and Long Island to Manhattan Heliports
 Neighborhoods Affected: Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, South Slope, Windsor Terrace, Kensington



Commuter helicopters taking passengers from the West 30th Street Heliport to the Hamptons flying over Brooklyn

Neighborhoods Affected: Chelsea, West Village, Lower Manhattan, Financial District, Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Flatbush, Little Haiti, Flatlands, Marine Park, Roxbury, Belle Harbor, Rockaway Park, Rockaway Beach, Arverne, Edgemere, Atlantic Beach, Long Beach, Lido Beach, Jones Beach Island, Long Island