

PRESS & MEDIA

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PUBLIC ART CHALLENGE

THE ARTS

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3 Mayors Unveil Breathing Lights Events and Announce Competition for Local Artists



Public Art Project will Transform Public Streets, Highlighting City Revitalization Efforts

Mayors Kathy Sheehan (Albany), Gary McCarthy (Schenectady), and Patrick Madden (Troy) gathered today at the rehabilitated former St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church on Eastern Avenue in Schenectady to announce a full list of events and surrounding programming for the **Breathing Lights** temporary public art project. Breathing Lights, winner of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, will illuminate hundreds of vacant buildings in Albany, Schenectady and Troy nightly in October and November 2016.

Breathing Lights will transform public streets into an evocative experience with the goal of sparking community conversation around the issues of vacancy and community revitalization. This unprecedented installation will be supported by eight months of programming and events

across three cities.

The mayors also announced the project's first **Rehab Heroes**, Bonnie Novella and Sandra Vardine, who have each recently rehabilitated buildings on Eastern Avenue in Schenectady, among other buildings throughout the Capital Region. Over the next eight months, *Breathing Lights* project partners will nominate additional heroes—a regional group of individuals who have successfully rehabbed vacant or abandoned buildings in Albany, Schenectady and Troy and have expertise in navigating the complicated issues and tasks required to successfully bring a previously vacant structure back to life. Rehab Heroes will be a resource to prospective home buyers and rehabbers.

The Mayors announced a roster of events in conjunction with the art installations, including:

- **City Weekends and Opening Parties:** Each city will host a weekend during the installation featuring events that invite the public to experience *Breathing Lights* and meet community partners. Save the dates for:
 - **Troy** – September 30- October 1; hosted by the *Breathing Lights* Troy hub, The Sanctuary for Independent Media and project partner the Arts Center for the Capital Region.
 - **Schenectady** – October 28-29; hosted by the *Breathing Lights* Schenectady hub, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Schenectady and project partner Proctors.
 - **Albany** – November 4-5; hosted by the *Breathing Lights* Albany hub, the Albany Barn and project partner the Historic Albany Foundatio

- **Youth Media Workshops:** In each partner city, programs have been developed to educate youth in the media arts of video, radio, interview, scripting, storytelling and print. Youth Media Workshops will be produced by Youth FX in Albany, Proctors in Schenectady, and Youth Media Sanctuary in Troy. Finished products will give voice to residents directly illuminated by *Breathing Lights* and will be featured at City Weekend events and at the *Breathing Lights* culminating summit.

- **Building Reclamation Clinics:** Hosted by partners including the Troy Rehabilitation Improvement Program (TRIP), the Troy Architecture Program (TAP), the Affordable Housing Partnership, the Historic Albany Foundation, various departments in each city and local Land Banks, these free seminars will educate potential property owners of resources currently available, such as Homeownership Counseling, Lead Paint Hazards, Basic Home Repairs, Tax Credits, available grant programs and more. The goal of these clinics is to enhance opportunities

for potential buyers, empowering them with the skills and tools to make smart purchases, renovate homes for safety and livability, and establish strong roots in local neighborhoods. Dates and registration information for clinics will be distributed when available.

- **Affinity Projects at Local Galleries:** Gallery exhibits, performances, lectures and special projects in all media and for all audiences that reflect *Breathing Lights* themes will be scheduled for the summer and fall of 2016. Confirmed affinity project partners include the Spring Street Gallery in Saratoga Springs and Workforce Development Institute's Arts & Culture Program of New York State. To propose an affinity project, organizations/individuals are encouraged to contact Judie Gilmore, Breathing Lights Project Director at judie@BreathingLights.com.

- **Arts Awards Opportunity:** The Breathing Lights Arts Awards competition, announced today, will support small awards for a series of projects related thematically to *Breathing Lights* that will take place during the installation in fall 2016. Curated by the project's neighborhood hubs and core team, these awards are an opportunity for local artists to develop and display arts projects that expand *Breathing Light's* objective to be an evocative and inclusive public art experience. Artworks can in be proposed in any medium or genre, including, but not limited to: public art installations, visual arts, theater, music, film, electronic media, etc. Submission materials can be accessed at <https://artscenterofthecapitalregion.submittable.com/submit/53924> (<https://artscenterofthecapitalregion.submittable.com/submit/53924>).

At the press conference, the Mayors also welcomed several local individuals as **Neighborhood Ambassadors** for *Breathing Lights*. Nominated by project hubs, ambassadors will serve as neighborhood spokespersons, offer guided walks of the installation, build community connections, and collect public thoughts and opinions before, during and after the installation. Confirmed neighborhood ambassadors include: for Albany, Michael Ortega; for Schenectady: Michael Baez, Jeffrey Nelson, and Councilwoman Marion Porterfield; and for Troy: Jerry L. Ford, Jr., Mac and Joycelyn Henderson, Shawn McLean; and Jeannette Nicholson.

To stay updated on events and the conversation follow #breathinglights on social media or visit our website at www.breathinglights.com.

For high-res Breathing Lights images: <http://tinyurl.com/BLImages> (<http://tinyurl.com/BLImages>) (Photo credit Hyers + Mebane).

ABOUT BREATHING LIGHTS

Conceived by lead artist and University of Albany art professor Adam Frelin and lead architect Barbara Nelson, AIA, of TAP, Inc., Breathing Lights has brought together more than 25 community and private sector partners. The project will culminate in spring 2017 with a regional summit on vacant homes and neighborhood revitalization that will engage local residents, prospective buyers and investors, and policy makers. Breathing Lights was selected in June 2015 as one of four temporary public art projects from across the United States to receive a grant award from the first-ever Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge. Other winning cities are Gary, IN, Spartanburg, SC, and Los Angeles, CA. Full information on all projects can be found at publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org (<http://publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org>).

Lead local support provided by MVP Health Care, the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region as fiscal agent, and WMHT as media partner. Additional support provided by architecture+, BBL Construction Services, GE, KeyBank, McCarthy Charities, Michaelson Family Fund, Nigro Companies, the Schenectady Foundation, Tri City Rentals, The Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation, and the University at Albany Foundation.

The Capital Region's work on the Public Art Challenge is in alignment with the work of the Regional Alliance for a Creative Economy. Breathing Lights illuminates and exemplifies the growing trend toward collaboration between local municipalities, businesses and nonprofit organizations to develop projects and initiatives that benefit the entire region.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR A CREATIVE ECONOMY

The region's Alliance for a Creative Economy (ACE) is a community-selected assembly of Capital Region leaders working on behalf of the region's creative economy. This project operates under the leadership of the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region.

Created in 2013, ACE is engaged in assessing our region's creative assets and developing ways to leverage related economic development opportunities (e.g. travel and tourism, local economic and infrastructure development, workforce development, etc.). This community-based, cross-sector collaborative initiative provides networking and training opportunities for individuals and organizations involved in the greater Capital Region's creative sector (including the arts [performing, literary, visual], design [graphics, fashion], textiles, crafts, architecture, communications and marketing, cinema and film, broadcasting, software development, publishing and printing, cultural and educational institutions, craft beer brewing and distilleries, culinary arts, and more), as well as broader initiatives bringing together municipalities, for-profit


and nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders. The project activities span Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren and Washington counties. For more information, visit www.UpstateCreative.org (<http://www.UpstateCreative.org>).

ABOUT BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES

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