



For Immediate Release
DATE-September 29, 2016
Media Contact: Charles Wiff – (518) 326-6400 or (607) 743-8314
charles@gramercycommunications.com

***Breathing Lights* Public Art Installation Opens Across New York’s Capital Region**

***Hundreds of Buildings are Illuminated to Highlight Issues of Vacancy and Abandonment
across Albany, Schenectady and Troy***

ALBANY, NY—*Breathing Lights*, the Capital Region’s large-scale public art project funded through the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, will launch September 30, 2016 across the cities of Albany, Schenectady and Troy. The massive undertaking marks an unparalleled collaborative effort between the region’s mayoral offices, arts community, business leaders and residents, all of whom hope to use this unique and innovative installation to provide an example of how art can be both a beautiful and socially conscious form of expression.

Principal Artist Adam Frelin and Lead Architect Barbara Nelson developed this innovative program over the course of nearly two years to pay homage to local history, create dialogue and bring together communities. Local students, engineers, artists and product developers designed, built and installed the custom lighting fixtures over the past 90 days.

Breathing Lights will illuminate nightly from the hours of 6 pm – 10 pm throughout October and November 2016. Details on how to view the projects, as well as city-specific receptions, openings and events, are available on the project website (www.breathinglights.com) and social media. Events will include walking and trolley tours, seminars and workshops. Additionally, films, installations and performances by Community Art Awards winners selected as part of the *Breathing Lights* project will portray the experiences and stories of those who live in the *Breathing Lights* neighborhoods, continuing the dialogue. Maps, information, bios and more can be found on the website and in the *Breathing Lights* Program Guide, available at city hubs and in outdoor specially-designed newspaper boxes located throughout the Capital Region. City hubs are at The Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy, the Albany Barn and the Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady.

"Public art projects bring citizens together, as well as attract visitors and economic activity to a city – and encourage government agencies to work together in new ways," said Michael R. Bloomberg, three-term Mayor of New York City and founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies. "The collaboration between these mayors, artists, agencies and creative groups across Albany, Troy and Schenectady is a perfect example of just how unifying temporary public art projects can be."

“The launch of *Breathing Lights* demonstrates anything is possible with collaboration, hard work and dedication of community partners, staff and volunteers. The project has generated support of the arts, as well as thoughtful conversation about the issues facing New York’s Capital Region,” said Barbara Nelson, *Breathing Lights* Lead Architect and Community Engagement Director. “We urge any and all interested community members and visitors to come to an event, take a tour and join in what promises to be a fruitful dialogue around the important issues of vacancy and abandonment that affect some of our cities’ most vibrant communities.”

The first events will take place during Troy City Weekend from September 30 – October 1, 2016. Various activities will include ‘Inside Breathing Lights’, a behind the scenes exhibit at The Arts Center of the Capital Region, readings and activities at The Sanctuary for Independent Media and walking tours of the neighborhoods.

Crucial to the success of *Breathing Lights* has been the steadfast teamwork and support of Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy and Troy Mayor Patrick Madden. The three mayors have created a prototype to tackle social and civic issues on a regional basis. The mayors championed the project, and served as public figureheads for the collaborative spirit of *Breathing Lights* in the interest of seeing some of the regions most disadvantaged neighborhoods reach their full potential.

“*Breathing Lights* is a perfect example of our region coming together to address issues that affect us all, and demonstrates how we can be effective in working towards a common goal,” said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan. “The widespread issues of vacancy and abandonment are not unique to the Capital Region. I hope *Breathing Lights* demonstrates the Capital Region’s commitment to meeting these issues head-on, and illustrates the potential of our cities’ vibrant urban centers.”

“I for one urge residents throughout the Capital Region and beyond to come observe and participate in this once in a lifetime public art initiative,” said Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy. “Addressing the issue of vacant buildings has been a priority of my administration, so I welcome *Breathing Lights*’ efforts to promote a dialogue about these issues and will serve as a platform for an extremely important conversation.”

“*Breathing Lights* offers the unique opportunity to both highlight the important issues associated with vacancy, while also celebrating the potential for life that exists within some of our neighborhoods,” said Troy Mayor Patrick Madden. “We are grateful to Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Public Art Challenge for creating the opportunity to introduce this beautiful, socially conscious display.”

Breathing Lights is one of four winners of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, selected from 237 city applicants nationwide. Projects in Gary, IN, Los Angeles, CA and Spartanburg, SC were also selected. This temporary art project will illuminate the windows of hundreds of vacant buildings throughout Albany, Schenectady and Troy, creating a community conversation piece and vibrant art in neighborhoods with high vacancy rates. The unprecedented installation will be supported by a full calendar of programming and events across the three cities throughout the life of the project, and beyond.



“I hope *Breathing Lights* calls awareness to the crisis of vacant buildings by shedding light on the community’s struggles while there is still hope,” said Troy Neighborhood Ambassador Jerry Ford. “For someone coming to the installation, imagine these lights as families breathing and thriving. I hope this sheds light on the bigger picture — not just that buildings are abandoned, but families have been abandoned.”

Last year, Bloomberg Philanthropies invited mayors of U.S. cities with 30,000 residents or more to submit proposals for innovative temporary public art projects that address a civic issue and promote collaboration between artists and city governments. *Breathing Lights*, chosen from a diverse pool of over 230 applicants, signifies a unique partnership between the mayoral offices of Albany, Schenectady and Troy, and hopes to, quite literally, shed light upon the issues of high vacancy rates in the Capital Region’s urban areas, while also engaging local residents, prospective buyers, policy makers and members of the artistic community alike.

###

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 35 community and private sector partners.

After the fall installation the project will culminate in spring 2017 with a regional summit on vacancy 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 [Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Public Arts Challenge homepage](#).

Lead local support provided by GE, KeyBank, MVP Health Care, the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region as fiscal agent, and WMHT as media partner. Additional support provided by Albany Medical Center, architecture+, BBL Construction Services, Bender Family Foundation, Chet and Karen Olpalka, McCarthy Charities, Michaelson Family Fund, Nigro Companies, Paul and Alane Hohenberg Fund, Robert and Naomi Ingalls Fund, Schenectady Foundation, Standish Family Fund, Tri City Rentals, The Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation, and the University at Albany Foundation.

For more information, please visit [BreathingLights.com \(https://breathinglights.com\)](https://breathinglights.com) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and on [Twitter @BreathingLtsNY](#).

ABOUT THE UPSTATE ALLIANCE FOR THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

The region's Upstate Alliance for the 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. 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, 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 UpstateCreative.org.

ABOUT BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in more than 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and his personal giving. In 2015, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed over half a billion dollars. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and Twitter [@BloombergDotOrg](#).