



Breathing Lights

Evaluation Report



SUBMITTED BY:

Center for Women in Government & Civil Society
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy
University at Albany, State University of New York



Introduction

Breathing Lights was a temporary art project in the cities of Albany, Schenectady, and Troy, NY from September 30 to November 30, 2016.

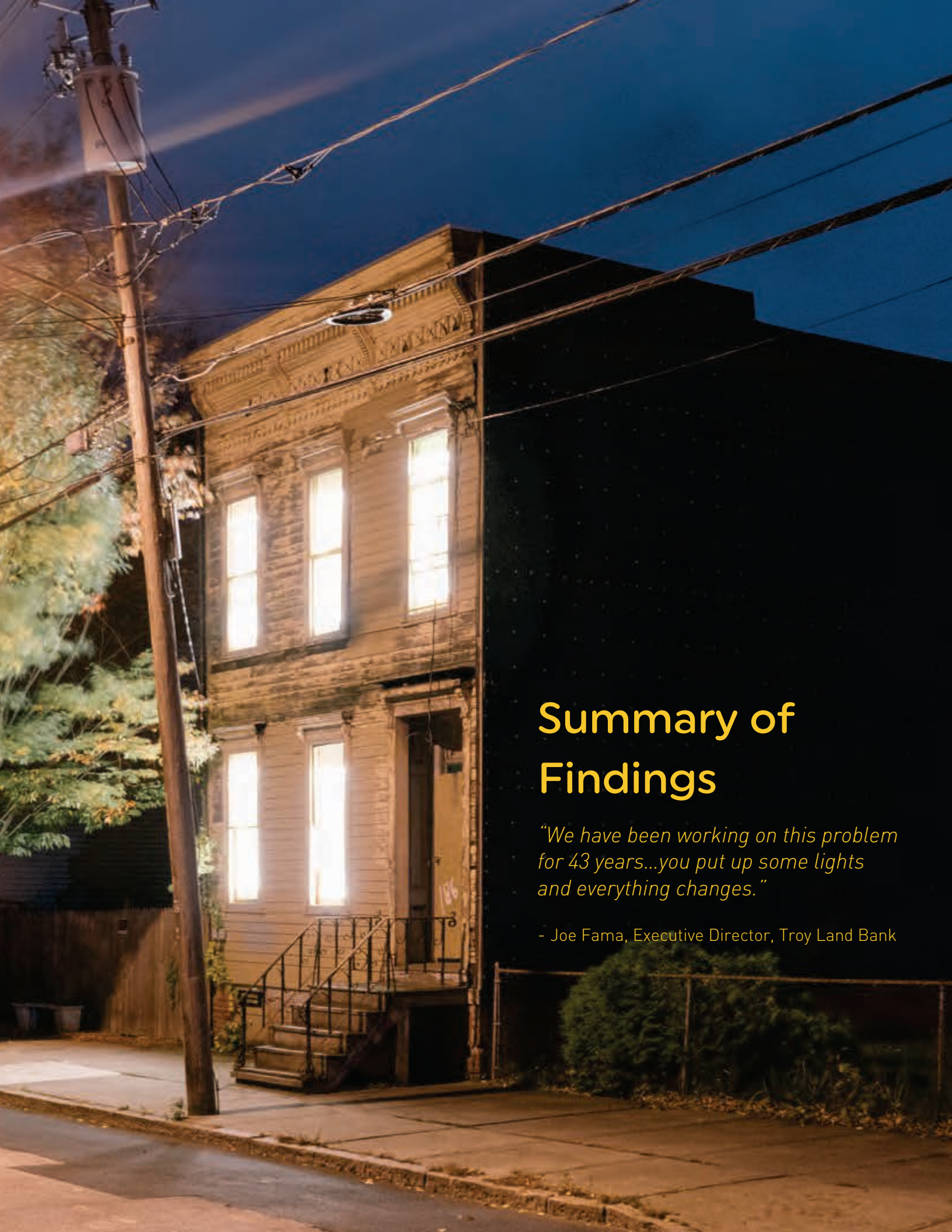
The creative vision of artist Adam Frelin, a University at Albany Associate Professor and architect Barbara Nelson *Breathing Lights* was designed to stimulate dialogue, engage communities, and spark action on issues of urban blight in Capital Region cities. The project animated hundreds of abandoned buildings by illuminating windows with pulsating lights that mimicked the rhythm of human breathing. *Breathing Lights* sent a powerful message that the buildings are integral to the Capital Region's urban fabric and can no longer be ignored or neglected.

Work on the project began in June 2015, when *Breathing Lights* was selected as one of four winners of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, a national competition launched in 2014 to provide cities with a grant of up to \$1 million to support innovative public art projects that enrich communities. Over the next year, many project team members, local stakeholders, and over 90 partners worked to make this project possible.

The *Breathing Lights* evaluation effort measured the project's impact in three main areas:

- appreciation of public art in inducing positive social and economic change
- awareness of and actions to address urban blight
- community activation in response to economic development challenges.

The evaluation team, led by Dina Refki of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy at the University at Albany, conducted surveys, focus groups and interviews before, during, and after the exhibition to assess community perception and the project's impact on the aforementioned focus areas.



Summary of Findings

"We have been working on this problem for 43 years...you put up some lights and everything changes."

- Joe Fama, Executive Director, Troy Land Bank

Key Statistics

- **1.9 million views** of *Breathing Lights* buildings across Albany, Schenectady and Troy, NY over 61 days¹
- **\$5.4 million** catalyzed for the local economy, including:²
 - \$1 million Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge grant
 - \$226,500 local project funding
 - \$240,000 in-kind contributions
 - \$4 million investments for new initiatives created as a result of the projects, including:
 - \$100,000 for arts initiatives
 - \$3.9 million for future work related to vacancy and blight
- **93 partners across three cities** helped implement *Breathing Lights*, contributing to a new sense of regional collaboration, encompassing:
 - 20 city agencies
 - 11 public-private collaborations activated on behalf of the projects
- **74 people employed** to help create and support *Breathing Lights*
- **101 programs and activities** were held in connection to the project, including:
 - 12 Building Reclamation Clinics offering advice and renovation training for prospective homebuyers
- **120 articles** appeared in local and national print and online press, including *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*
- **52,000 people accessed information** about *Breathing Lights* through the project website and social media
- **14 local artists** received grants to produce new works
- **14 community projects** in the Capital Region benefited from recycled project materials
- **442,500 light bulbs** used to create 200 installations
- **1,500 windows lit** across 12 neighborhoods in three cities
- **15,000 free newspapers** distributed providing information about the project
- **18% of buildings** consistently lit during the *Breathing Lights* exhibit sold to date
- **8 cities across the nation** and world have contacted the *Breathing Lights* team about replicating the project in their own communities

¹ Viewership analysis was provided by ABT Associates, an evaluation partner contracted by Bloomberg Philanthropies to conduct a cross-site impact study.

² Using a methodology traditionally reserved for public health and social service fields, a Social Return on Investment analysis was conducted at the conclusion of the project to determine the net value created by *Breathing Lights* by the investments made in the project by Bloomberg Philanthropies. See the addendum for additional details on this analysis.

Highlighted Project Outcomes

Local Arts Community

Breathing Lights supported the local arts community and created opportunities for future art projects.

- ***Breathing Lights* strengthened relationships between local arts leaders, promoting regional collaboration on arts initiatives.**
 - 11 arts leaders across the three cities consistently worked together during the development and implementation of *Breathing Lights*, assembling an informal group of arts advocates committed to advancing the role of the arts throughout the Capital Region.
- **Local artists and creative youth were supported through new grant opportunities developed as a result of *Breathing Lights*.**
 - 11 local artists received funding through the *Breathing Lights* Arts Awards Competition, an initiative that commissioned a series of projects thematically related to *Breathing Lights*.
 - 3 media artists helped young residents create short films through the *Breathing Lights* -supported Youth Media program developed in partnership with Youth FX in Albany, Told By Us Productions in Schenectady and Youth Media Sanctuary in Troy.
 - Quotes:
 - “Being a part of a project of this scale was awesome and encouraging to me... *Breathing Lights* allowed me to become an artist again.” – Art Awardee
 - “This was a big step for me to connect with something bigger and broader. And because the work I did was successful, I said, ‘Okay, what else can I do at this scale or larger?’” – Art Awardee
- **The project promoted interest in hosting more public art projects in the future.**
 - The City of Troy applied for and was awarded a grant from the New York Council on the Arts to create a citywide public art plan as a result of *Breathing Lights*.

Critical Civic Issues

Breathing Lights advanced progress on critical civic issues.

- ***Breathing Lights* helped leverage or secure new grants and resources to combat blight and vacancy.**
 - \$3.9 million in contributions and in-kind support was raised for blight prevention and mitigation efforts, including a grant from the City of Albany to hire a new vacant building coordinator and a \$3.4 million grant from the New York State Attorney General for Land Bank efforts in Albany, Troy and Schenectady.

- Quotes:
 - “We reference *Breathing Lights* in grants, and it helps people make that connection of what the Land Banks does to people who do not know and the problem we are trying to solve.” – Land Bank Official
 - “There are so many things that have happened because of *Breathing Lights*. Every time you put pen to paper to write a grant you highlight how art projects [and] community revitalization are already networked together, and it is easier and faster to mobilize and be successful.” – Nonprofit Leader
- **The project bolstered the efforts of Land Banks across Albany, Schenectady and Troy, NY.**
 - 18% of the 166 *Breathing Lights* buildings that were consistently lit during the installation have been sold since the start of the project on September 30, 2016.
 - All three Land Banks saw an increase in interest in buying or renovating buildings because of *Breathing Lights*, and officials believe that the project helped set a positive image for the properties.
 - All three Land Banks said that *Breathing Lights* increased awareness of homeownership resources and elevated the critical role of the Land Bank.
 - Quotes:
 - “There are a lot of people who knew about the Land Bank in the context of *Breathing Lights*... I was surprised to see the number of people who came to our office looking for information about those buildings that were lit.” – Land Bank Official
 - “It increased awareness of the issue but I think it also increased awareness of the scale and geographic concentration of the issue... There is real potential and *Breathing Lights* has opened the door to [that] potential.” – Land Bank Official
- ***Breathing Lights* brought policy makers together to identify and advance effective solutions.**
 - 60 regional decision makers attended a policy roundtable conversation, which presented an assessment of existing policies related to blight and identified potential solutions.
 - 68% of roundtable attendees surveyed agreed that *Breathing Lights* elevated the issue of urban blight throughout the Capital Region.
 - 50% of survey respondents said that *Breathing Lights* advanced their work to address blight.
 - Quotes:
 - “We can point to it and say look how they succeeded. When we are jumping over hurdles and obstacles, we can point to *Breathing Lights* as our poster child.” – Nonprofit Leader
 - “We will use *Breathing Lights* as a platform to deepen our community engagement in all our communities, including outside the city of Albany.” – Policy Maker
 - “Discussions happened everywhere... those lights were very provocative.... They created an enormous platform to discuss...” – Nonprofit Leader

Community, Civic Leadership & Pride

Breathing Lights promoted a sense of community, civic leadership and pride.

- ***Breathing Lights* stimulated feelings of hope, pride and empowerment in the Capital Region.**
 - 67% of survey respondents said that they feel a greater sense of pride because of the attention their neighborhood received.

- 78% said that it felt good to showcase community assets in such a positive way.
- Quotes:
 - *"I really think the project lit up people's neighborhoods in a positive way, not just with the lights but with the attention brought to the area."* – Community Member
 - *"These were the ugliest structures during the day and then clearly the most beautiful structures at night, and that [flipped] as soon as that light went on. The pride was about what these houses can be."* – Community Member
 - *"There's some major improvements already happening... it's made an impact and not just to the houses that had the lights on, but the houses next door to them [that] are now occupied, rented, lived in. So, it really drew some good attention..."* – Community Member
 - *"For me what this project did was not showing that the problem was there, but that we can do something about it... Suddenly to hear mayors talking about it... it is not that we grew awareness, we grew awareness of hope."* – Nonprofit Leader
 - *"This felt like an opportunity to just be heard and hear others and that's really the only way to break down those barriers... It was a great vehicle to get people from outside our neighborhood in [and] getting people from different neighborhoods to discover each other..."* – Community Leader
- ***Breathing Lights* contributed to the emergence of new community leaders.**
 - 12 neighborhood ambassadors were deeply involved in the planning and development of the project, emerging as leaders within their communities.
 - 3 nonprofit organizations in Albany, Schenectady and Troy became focal points of activity through the project, strengthening their influence in the community.
- **The project promoted a sense of engagement and agency among residents.**
 - 64% of residents surveyed said that *Breathing Lights* stimulated greater community engagement.
 - Quotes:
 - *"I do see an increased level [of] the general population that cares about the problem. That is critical. Breathing Lights helped a lot more people come to the table and say we need to be doing something about this."* – Nonprofit Leader
 - *"For years and years, we were the only voices for those buildings. This brought so many voices, and it is great."* – Nonprofit Advocate

Collaboration

Breathing Lights encouraged collaboration and the development of new relationships.

- *Breathing Lights* was the first art project that brought together officials from all three cities to work collaboratively. Representatives from all three mayor's offices were in consistent communication and discussed ways to share and streamline resources to combat issues of abandonment across the region.
- *Breathing Lights* deepened relationships between the public and private sectors, as evidenced by the 11 public-private collaboration activated on behalf of the project.
- Nonprofit leaders across the three cities developed new partnerships and strengthened existing relationships with the City and other organizations in the area.
- Quotes:
 - *"From an organizational stand point, one of the biggest benefits [of being] in this program [is] just giving our group a chance to engage with our partners in the area... A big part of the program will focus on strengthening existing partnerships and identifying new ones that would be beneficial to tackle what we are doing. This is a huge step toward that."* – Nonprofit Leader
 - *"We formalized new partnerships in the City, [and] we have a much easier time doing work. It is changing, and the Land Banks are changing, too. So, we have a lot more people sitting around the table doing problem solving."* – Land Bank Official
 - *"The cities Albany, Schenectady and Troy uniting – that's always something that people have discussed. But now, through art, they have been able to bring politicians and community members together for a larger conversation. That's one of the great things about it."* – Artist





Evaluation Methodology & Design

The *Breathing Lights* evaluation, led by Dina Refki of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy at the University at Albany, kicked off in December 2015 and data collections efforts continued until June 2017. It involved both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and the effort relied on four main sources of information: surveys administered in person and online, semi-structured in-person and phone interviews, focus groups, and reporting from the project management team and partners.

In order to capture changes in perceptions and gain a better understand of the true impact of *Breathing Lights*, data was collected during three distinct time periods – before the project was installed, while the installation was on view, and after the exhibit closed.

Surveys were collected at every *Breathing Lights* event, including meetings, openings, programmatic activities, and tours. In addition, the evaluation team developed specific survey instruments for door-to-door outreach in neighborhoods that hosted *Breathing Lights* exhibits in an effort to gauge resident perspectives. Team members also went to neighborhood corner grocery stores, public libraries and similar community gathering centers to interview people.

For the purpose of this evaluation, “community member” is defined as a resident from the immediate installation areas that was interviewed during our door-to-door and neighborhood outreach efforts, including our pre- *Breathing Lights* think tanks. Visitors are defined as individuals who attended walking tours or related *Breathing Lights* events, although it is important to note that many visitors were also residents. While we understand that the public and affected residents are also critical stakeholders, within the confines of this report stakeholders are defined as project team members, programmatic partners, policy makers, and community leaders including government and Land Bank officials, corporate and nonprofit partners, artists, and businesses.

Breathing Lights Data Collection Methods and Sources						
Pre-Breathing Lights Installation Data Collection						
Methods	Sources	Timeline	Total # of people	Total by City		
				Albany	Troy	Schenectady
Focus Group/Think Tanks	Community Members	Dec 2015	58	8	35	15
Community In-Person Interviews	Neighborhood Residents	July – Sept 2016	93	14	35	44
Stakeholders' Phone Interviews ³	Government, Land Banks Officials, Artists, Business, Nonprofit Organizations	Aug -Sept 2016	26 (6 Statewide)	9	4	7
During-Breathing Lights Installation Data Collection						
Methods	Sources	Timeline	Total #	Total by City		
				Albany	Troy	Schenectady
Visitors' Surveys	Visitors	Oct - Nov 2016	117	31	36	50
Visitors' Interviews	Visitors	Oct - Nov 2016	139	59	60	20
Affinity Events Surveys	Participants at Breathing Lights affiliated events ⁴	Oct- Nov 2016	258	100	123	35
Online Visitors' Survey	Online viewers	Oct – Nov 2016	68	32	23	13
Neighborhood Door-to-Door Surveys/Interviews	Neighborhood residents	Oct – Nov 2016	105	44	37	24
Policy Roundtable	Mayors, Councils members, Government officials, Land Banks, Nonprofits	Nov 2016	34 ⁵			
Post Breathing Lights Installation Data Collection						
Methods	Sources	Timeline	Total #	Total by City		
				Albany	Troy	Schenectady
Focus Groups	Government, Land Banks, Nonprofits, Business, Community members, Artists	Jan 2017 Mar 2017	37 ⁶		6	
In-Person and Phone Interviews	Land Banks and policy leaders	Apr – June 2017	10			

³ Stakeholders are individuals whose work seeks to address the problem of blight and include senior leadership in government, nonprofit and the business sector.

⁴ Participants are individuals who attended a Breathing Lights event or affiliated event. The numbers exclude those who have viewed Breathing Lights exhibits without attending an event and those who have viewed the exhibit online.

⁵ This number reflects the total number of participants in the Roundtable. While many were affiliated with one of the cities, a number of them worked on a statewide or a regional level.

⁶ The number reflects total number of focus group participants, some of whom were representatives of organizations that worked on the problem of urban renewal and community development on a statewide or regional levels.

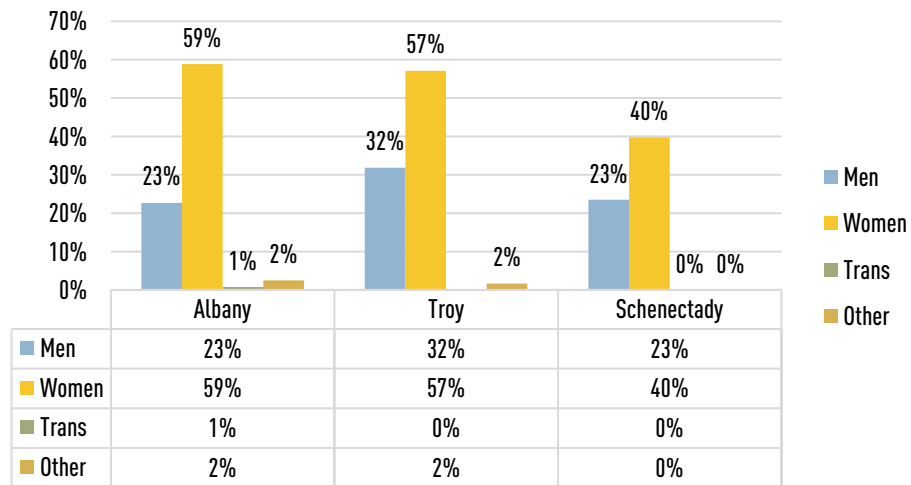


Visitor Demographics by City

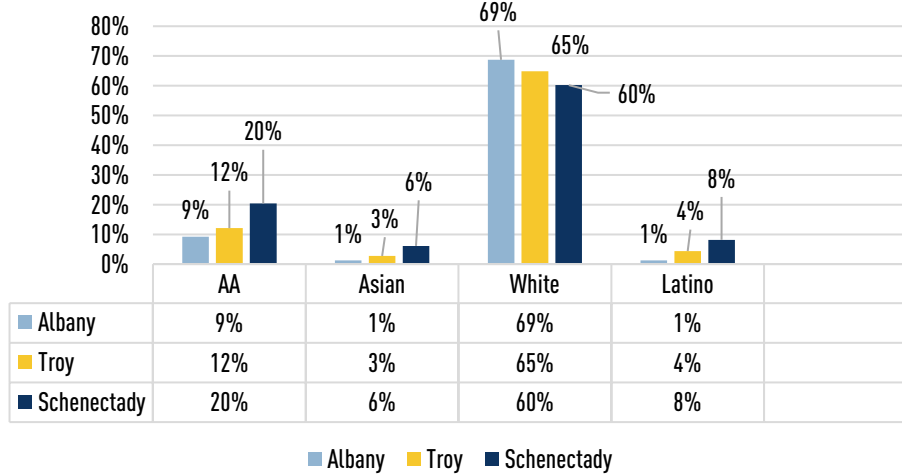
The *Breathing Lights* evaluation team collected information about visitor demographics, including gender and ethnicity.

As demonstrated by the graphs below, the City of Schenectady had more diverse visitors (34%) than the Cities of Albany and Troy (11% and 19%, respectively). This may be a function of the characteristic of the community partners that acted as hubs for related *Breathing Lights* activities. The Boys & Girls Club of Schenectady has more diverse constituents than its counterparts in Albany and Troy (The Albany Barn and Sanctuary for Independent Media).

Gender

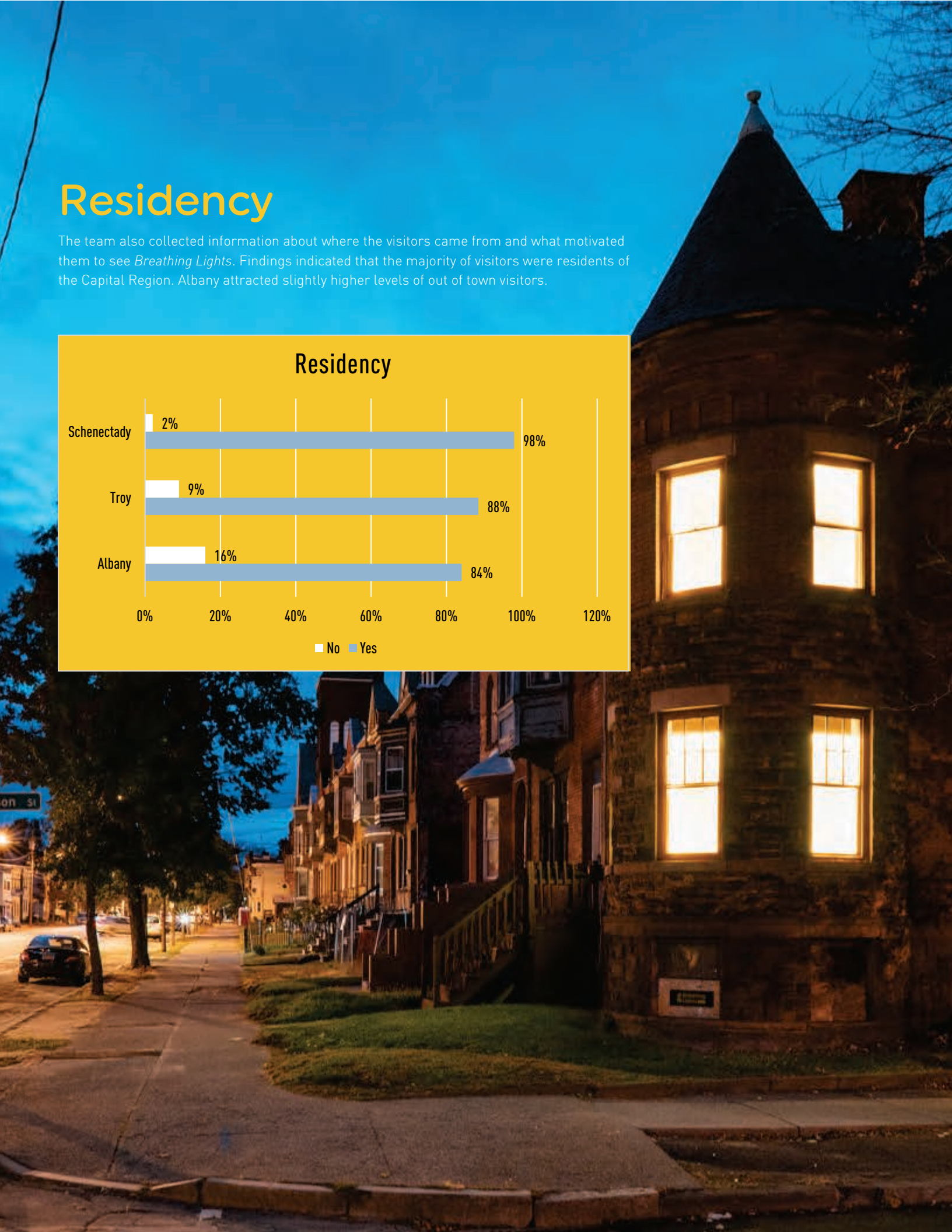
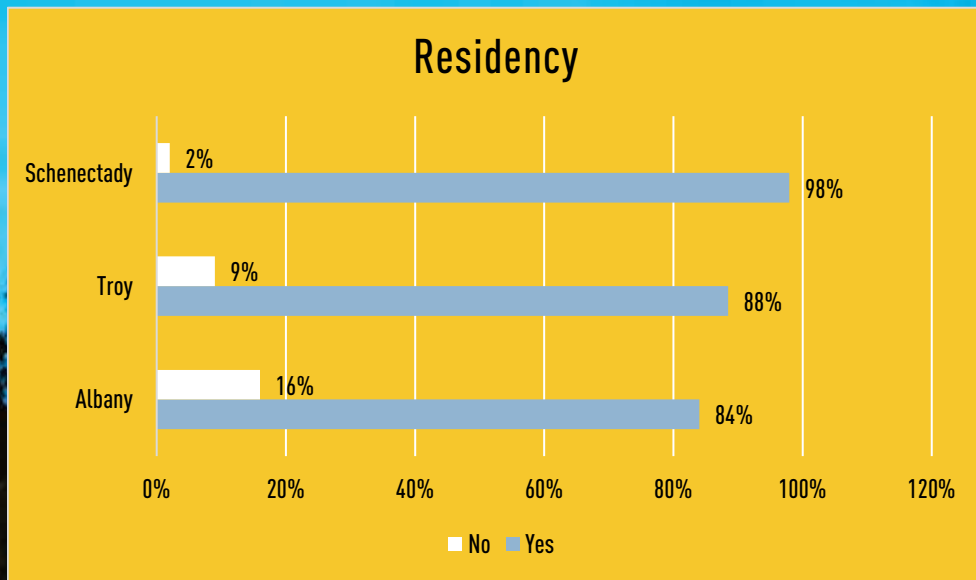


Ethnicity



Residency

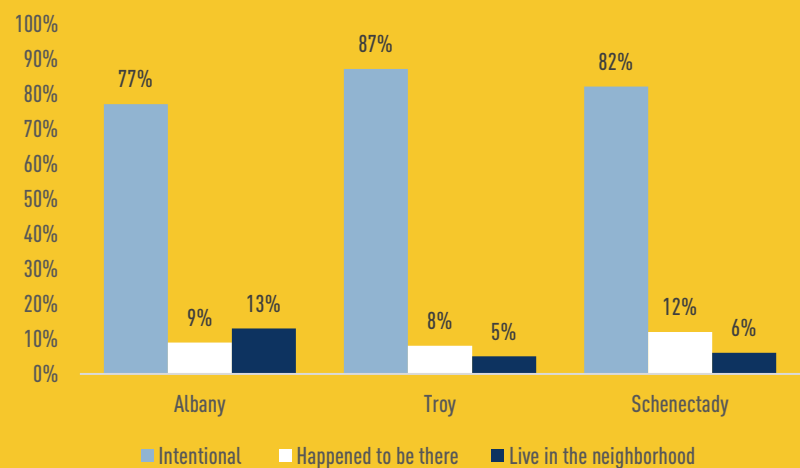
The team also collected information about where the visitors came from and what motivated them to see *Breathing Lights*. Findings indicated that the majority of visitors were residents of the Capital Region. Albany attracted slightly higher levels of out of town visitors.



Decision to Visit Breathing Lights

Public art projects are, by nature, created to be accessible to a wide range of viewers. While some people seek out such installations with the intent on having a meaningful art experience, other viewers stumble upon the artwork during travels for errands, work, school, or other daily activities.

From the surveys collected at programmatic events, meetings, and walking tours, and from door to door outreach, it appears that the majority of visitors to the *Breathing Lights* exhibit were intentional across the three cities.

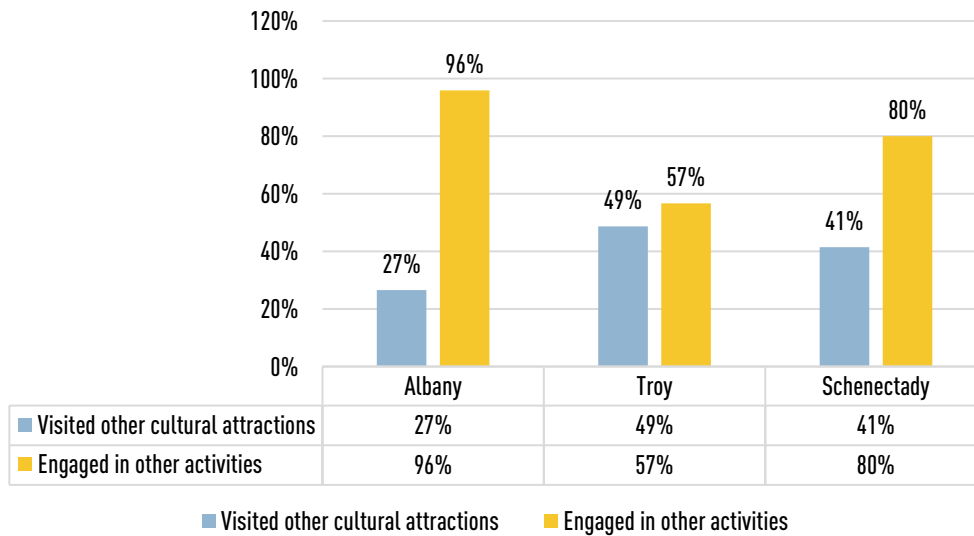


A photograph of an art gallery. In the foreground, a large, abstract artwork made of blue, white, and yellow fabric or paper is displayed on a wooden frame. Several people are in the gallery. A man with a beard and a dark suit is talking to a woman in a green patterned dress. Another man with a beard and glasses is standing to the right. In the background, other visitors are looking at art on the walls. The lighting is warm and focused on the art.

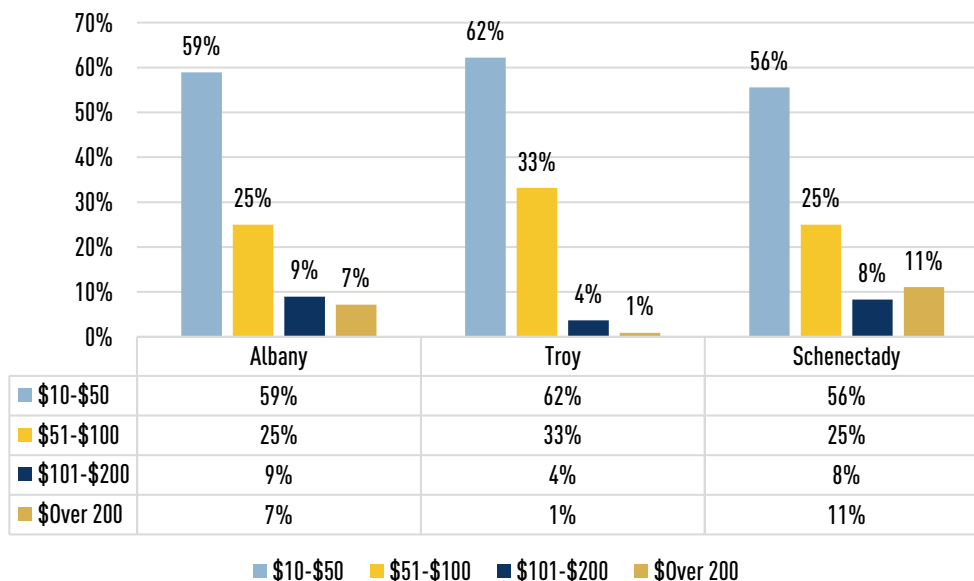
Activities Conducted While Visiting Breathing Lights and Visitor Expenditures

The evaluation team was interested to see if visitors to *Breathing Lights* were inspired to visit other cultural institutions in the region as part of their art experience, or if the visit stimulated any ancillary purchases or spending at local businesses and restaurants. According to survey responses, the majority of people who made intentional trips to see the art across the three cities engaged in other activities alongside *Breathing Lights* and spent between \$10 - \$50.

Activities While Visiting Breathing Lights



Visitor Expenditures by City



Goal 1: Appreciation of Public Art

Pre-Breathing Lights – Evaluation of Community Perception of Public Art

A community “Think Tank” was held in each city in December 2015 to gauge residents’ perception of the project and receive feedback on maximizing impact from *Breathing Lights*. The majority of participants received the project positively.

Participants in all three cities offered valuable ideas including working with local photographers to photograph buildings, creating a digital art workshop, hosting an art show, and offering opportunities for youth and local artists to engage through affinity projects and art awards. While a majority of participants were excited that the Capital Region was “spearheading this project,” few participants expressed skepticism. One community member who participated in the Schenectady Think Tank stated that he thought this project took “money out of the community.” His initial misconception reflected what some residents felt at the first stages of the project, before in-depth information about *Breathing Lights* was shared and when sources of funding were mistakenly thought to be public tax payers’ funds.

Interviews of stakeholders conducted prior to *Breathing Lights* revealed that a majority of participants were interested in art’s ability to unite people, inspire innovation, educate, and spark conversation in neighborhoods that are traditionally not open to art. There was a sense that art would be powerful for the Capitol Region and that *Breathing Lights* would help public art in general, creating jobs for artists while raising awareness about the positive benefits of art among residents living in installation areas.



Voices of the Community

“People would never look at these buildings, now they will look at them with admiration...The houses are coming back to life.”

“This art project will bring beauty, and seeing beautiful things make people feel that we can make a change here.”

“The Breathing Lights project can work as an advocate to raise awareness about the opportunities with the vacant buildings (fixing up and maintaining) and monetary value in them.”

“People would admire and would not vandalize, they might be curious.”

“The Breathing Lights project will bring more attention and positive energy to these buildings, because it is an art project and uses light.”

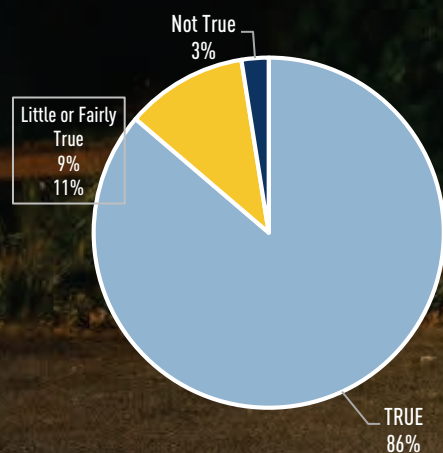
“Art will be informed and improved by coming to grips with the problem (of urban blight).”

During Breathing Lights: Evaluation of Community Appreciation for Public Art

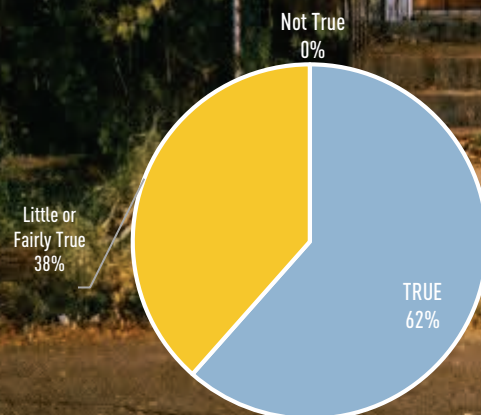
Breathing Lights, as an artistic expression, was very well received in the three cities. Negative reactions were limited to few voices who initially did not understand the nature of the project. Many skeptics were won over once the buildings were lit and they understood that the source of funding was not 'tax payers' money.' Surveys in the three cities show that a majority of visitors felt that *Breathing Lights* was positive for the region and the neighborhoods. A majority of neighbors who lived next to lit buildings said that they "liked the lights." In addition, at the time of publishing this report, efforts were underway to explore the formation of a public art commission that would advance the objective of strengthening cross-sector collaborations and promote a regional creative brand.

The tables below represent survey responses from residents, visitors, and stakeholders collected during the installation period at meetings, walking tours, programmatic events, online, and from door-to-door outreach. Please note that percentages shown in the charts might not add up to 100% if participants chose the option of "do not know," "prefer not to answer" or left response blank.

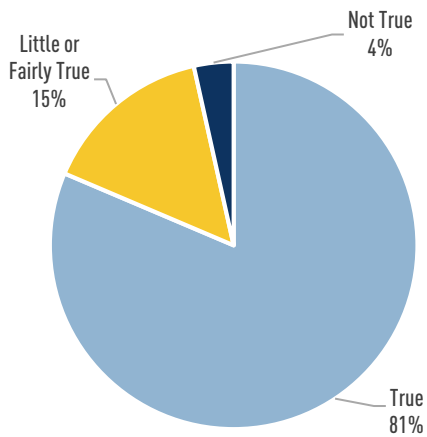
The majority of the visitors surveyed (86%) agreed that Breathing Lights reaffirmed their belief that public art can be a catalyst for addressing social problems.



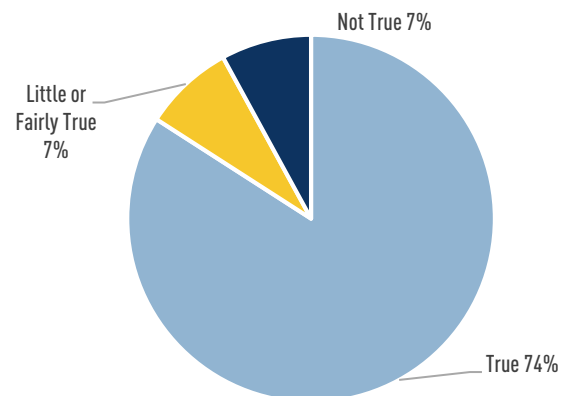
A little over half of the survey participants (62%) believed Breathing Lights increased their interest in supporting public art.



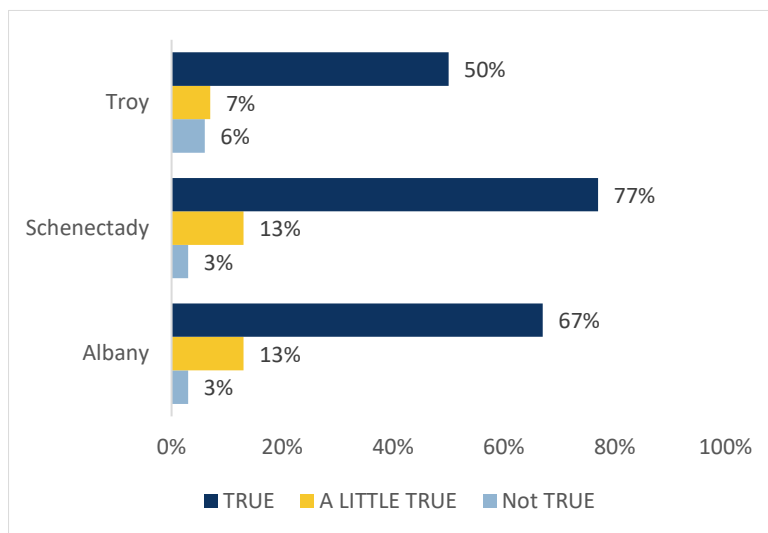
An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (81%) thought that *Breathing Lights* was beneficial for the Capital Region.



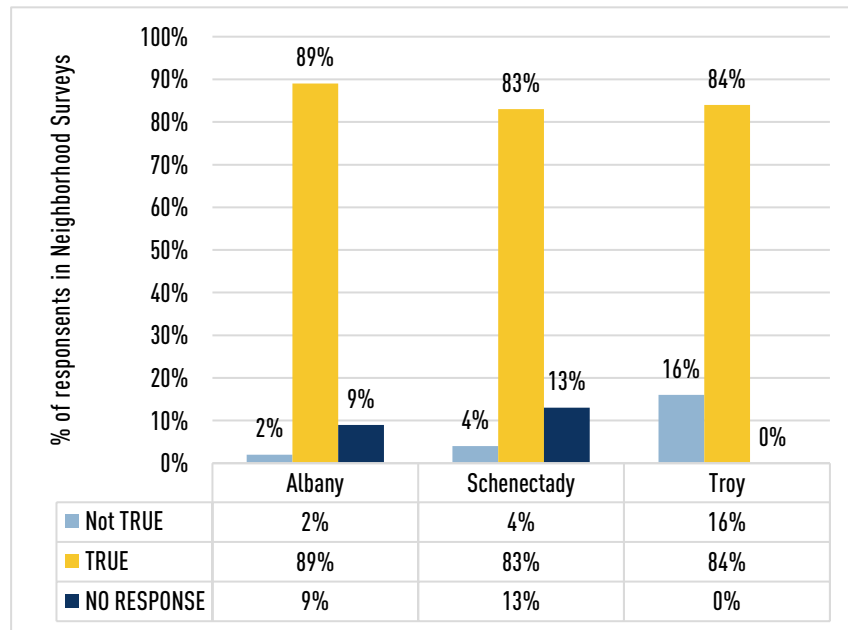
A preponderance of survey participants (74%) thought that public art projects like *Breathing Lights* are beneficial for the Capital Region.



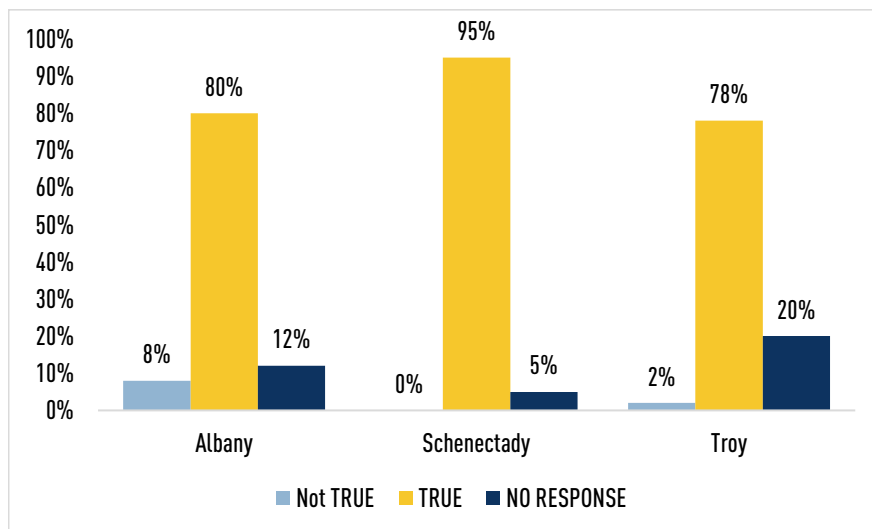
The City of Schenectady had the highest percentage of respondents (77%) who believed that *Breathing Lights* and similar public art projects are valuable to the community and region.



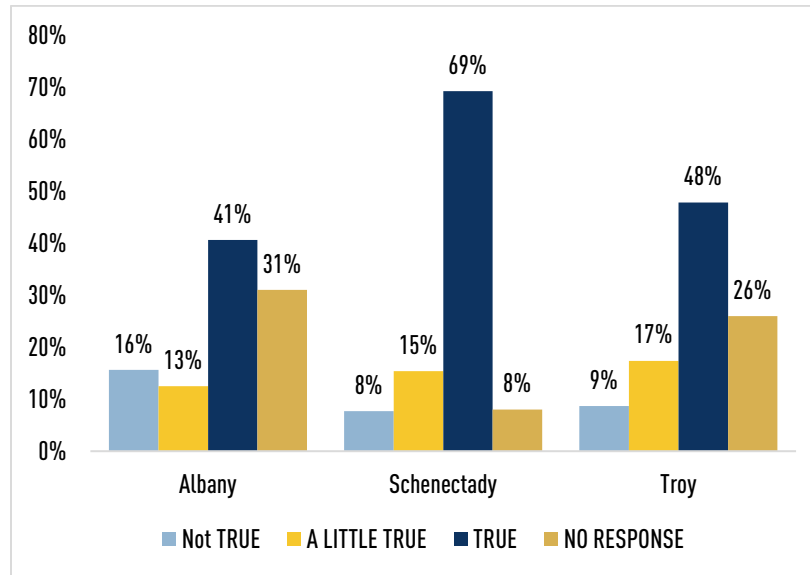
A majority of respondents across all three cities agreed that they liked the lights.



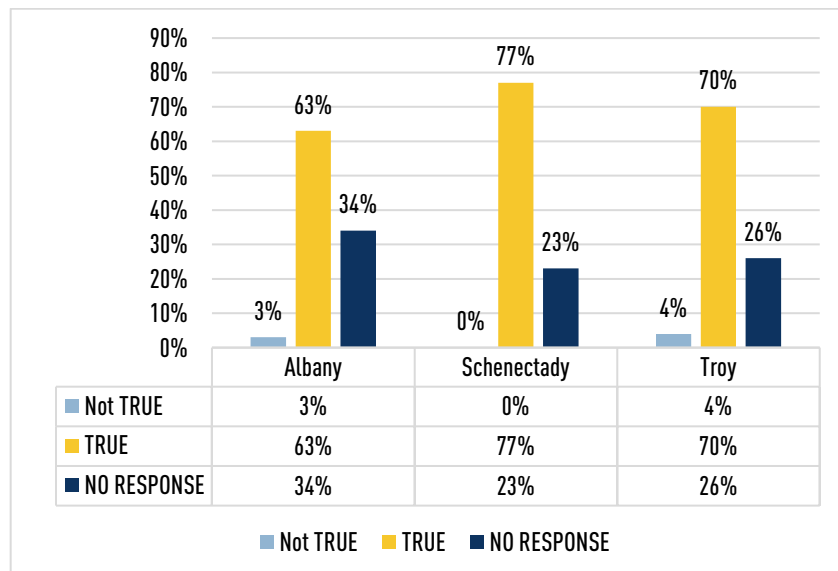
There was an overwhelming agreement among respondents that Breathing Lights brought positive energy, excitement, economic benefits and opportunities to improve conditions of the neighborhood.



Many visitors who participated in the survey were glad they experienced *Breathing Lights*.



The majority of visitors across the three cities agreed that public art has the power to improve quality of life and bring attention to important social issues.





In Their Own Voices:

Community Member and Stakeholder Reflections

Can we get the lights back on?

"I really didn't realize the impact of having all the houses lit until they weren't there anymore and I have yet to find anyone on the street that has said anything negative about Breathing Lights. [There has been a] 'What can we do to get these lights back on?' kind of response... which I just think is terrific."

– Hub Leader, Schenectady

Can you keep the lights on?

"I had a hundred conversations with people. I love living across the streets from these buildings and I do not want it to go away."

– Hub Leader

Array of light in dark places

"There was a very positive reaction to what is being done. This is an array of light in a very dark place that does not get a lot of attention, concern, or people thinking about it."

– Community Member

Broadened perspectives

"A lot of people were never aware of public art, never knew it existed until this project. I do think it broadened people perspectives and changed people's ideas of what public art is."

– Community Member

What's next?

"The amount of times I have been asked 'What's next?' shows a demand for public art. Constant asking is tremendous."

– Hub Leader

There was a transformation

"People were very skeptical [but] when they saw it, there was a transformation. The idea offended people in the beginning. More people went from being frustrated and disdainful to interested and excited than the other way."

– Albany Nonprofit Leader

A wild turn

"A lot of people, when they knew we were the hub, they came up to me and were like 'This is crazy, this is ridiculous, how is this going to help anybody?' [But there was a] wild turn around that happened once the lights went on."

– Hub Leader

Artists got recognition

"The artists... not only did they get their work out there, but [they got] recognition and more jobs."

– Art Awardee

I can connect to something bigger

"I am used doing things on a small scale, so this was a big step for me to connect with something bigger and broader. And because the work that I did was successful, I said 'Ok, what else can I do at this scale or larger?'"

– Art Awardee

More confident to engage social justice

"We struggled for years with the question of whether our [art] center can implement social justice issues... [Breathing Lights allowed us to] see how it could without anybody getting upset...It has allowed us to explore what other topics we can get into...It allows us to be a little bit more confident in engaging social justice topics."

– Art Center Leader

Artists can connect and unite

"As an artist and gallery director, [I think] anything that you can do in a creative way to bring conversation to topics [is good]...I think that's always part of what an artist and the arts vision should be. I really think that artists can connect and unite people [from] different backgrounds and different positions, and really get people to see what's there. This can open things up to a broader discussion."

– Art Gallery Owner

It brought politicians and the community together

"The cities Albany, Schenectady and Troy uniting – that's always something that people have discussed. But now, through art, they have been able to bring politicians and community members together for a larger conversation. That's one of the great things about it."

– Artist

I became an artist again

"Being a part of a project of this scale was awesome and encouraging to me. I was an artist when I first started, I was not able to do this project for two years. Breathing Lights allowed me to become an artist again."

– Art Awardee



Considerations: Two Perspectives on the Function of Art

During the planning process, *Breathing Lights* became a focal point for a larger discourse about the function and purpose of art.

On one end of the spectrum, art is seen as the central commodity—both the means and the end. In this worldview, success is measured by engaging the largest number of people to experience the art. Relationships in this world are transactional and temporary, and art is celebrated for its ability to enrich people's lives through the mere act of viewing it.

On the opposite end of the continuum, art is viewed as the means to the end, or as a vehicle to bring about positive change. In this worldview, art is employed to serve the community, to foster relationships, and to build trust and loyalty. The goal of enhancing communities is often at the center of this effort, and art's ability to communicate difficult or complex messages in powerful ways provides an effective platform to raise awareness about pressing issues. According to this perspective, success is measured by the extent to which art sparks change and brings people and organizations together to solve problems.

Throughout the planning process, the project team considered where *Breathing Lights* would sit on this spectrum of worldviews. Was the primary goal of *Breathing Lights* to create a beautiful art exhibit to be enjoyed on its own without any other consideration? Or was its main objective to engage community members around persistent and challenging problems? For *Breathing Lights* to be responsive and responsible, does it measure its success by the magnitude of viewership, or by the extent to which community members are mobilized and activated to address the problem of urban blight and disinvestment?

Ultimately, the *Breathing Lights* team determined that they would aim to straddle both perspectives: create a work of art that was enjoyable and meaningful on its own while using the opportunity to engage the community around issues of blight and vacancy.

There was an agreement to dedicate 10% of the overall grant to community engagement. The funds enabled the development of the community hubs, youth media, neighborhood ambassadors, art awards and reclamation clinics. Walking tours of the artwork, which spanned several neighborhoods throughout the three cities, were created to provide opportunities for visitors to both have a meaningful art experience and interact with other members of the community. For at least a short time, this helped dismantle the formidable social walls that divide urban and suburban communities.

Neighborhood ambassadors were cultivated in each community, and their prominent role at the table during major decisions and milestones signaled a

participatory spirit. Community Think Tanks were held before the project started and inspired vigorous debates about vacant buildings. Overall, this effort reinforced a broader notion of art practice that engaged the community's participation in a respectful and creative manner.

However, embracing both worldviews also meant that, at times, community engagement took a back seat. There were missed opportunities, for example, to be more inclusive by engaging a wider audience from the divided and fragmented Albany community at the onset of the project. Increasing the number of community ambassadors would also have made community outreach more effective and possibly helped bring divided communities closer together. In addition, more could have been done to strengthen community organizations, particularly the community hubs, by increasing their visibility in the media and deepening their relationships with potential funders.

Despite the internal struggle regarding the purpose of the art, the majority of visitors enjoyed the *Breathing Lights* exhibit, and appreciated the power of an art exhibit to bring people together to address a persistent social problem. Skeptics who were critical of artists and claimed that the project promoted "poverty tourism" overcame their incredulity when they realized, through community engagement programs, that behind *Breathing Lights* was a real effort to bring about change. In the end, when the lights were gone, connections remained. Those connections inspired people to think of the next phase, and *Breathing Lights* eventually gave birth to *Breathing Lights*, an effort led by the Community Foundation of the Capital Region to address and mitigate the problem of urban blight in the three cities.⁷

Breathing Lights grappled with its place in two divergent worldviews. The outcome, however, was a phenomenal success by all accounts. It is a testament of the spirit of partnership and compromise that advocates of conflicting and opposing perspectives made to overcome barriers and ensure success. The words of artist Adam Frelin sum up the outcome of the process: "Community engagement enriched the art and was enriched by the art."

⁷ Since launching, *Breathing Life* has received technical assistance from the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative to improve the quality of housing in

Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. The group has also applied for a state grant to create a large-scale effort to prevent and mitigate blight in the Capital Region.

Goal 2: Impact on Urban Blight

Pre-Breathing Lights— Evaluation of Impact on the Problem of Urban Blight

At community Think Tanks held in each city in December 2015, the evaluation team asked residents and stakeholders their ideas about what should be done with vacant buildings in their communities. Below are some ideas and comments expressed during this effort.

Rehabilitation

- Tear down buildings that cannot be renovated and start from scratch.
- Turn demolished property spaces into community gardens, public open spaces and parks.
- Transform abandoned buildings into facilities that meet community needs, such as community centers, battered women shelters, daycare centers, recreational spaces, and homes for single mothers or refugees.
- Stabilize, rehabilitate, and renovate while keeping historic beauty.

Education

- Train youth in construction skills including plumbing, electrical and carpentry skills.
- Teach community members about rehabbing and owning homes.
- Educate community members about existing resources. Conduct door-to-door outreach.

Economic Development

- Revitalize areas by creating businesses such as strip malls, grocery stores, etc.
- Provide tax incentives to retail developers and office developers.
- Hire people from the community to rehab buildings.
- Develop rehabilitation fund for community.

Community Engagement

- Create comprehensive solutions that address the community's problems holistically to make neighborhoods desirable places people to want to live in it.
- Activate residents to become real estate agents to advance the welfare of their community.
- Have the community drive the change process and implement its vision for the neighborhood
- Activate community members to donate time and materials to help rebuild.
- Carefully guide the change process to balance public investments, public interest, urban planning policy, to avoid displacing community and having the market alone drive change.

Policy Changes

- Cut through red tape and enable city government to maintain control and stabilization of a property once it becomes vacant to avoid further deterioration.
- Stack various grant programs to make the process simple for would-be homebuyers.
- Strengthen sweat equity programs in the communities.
- Strengthen Land Banks' capacity and Land Trust programs.

Public Perception

- Change attitudes about city living to drive demand up.

In Their Own Voices: Stakeholder Perceptions Before Breathing Lights

Hope it sparks conversation

"I really hope that it fosters conversations around solutions and how this issue touches a lot of people and organizations and different neighborhoods... I hope it sparks a conversation for how it can bring everyone who's battling this [issue] together... I think the way they designed it will stoke the fire for those conversations and hopefully will have some good outcomes."

– Adam Zaranko, Albany County Land Bank

Raising awareness and involving the community

"It is a very serious issue and I very much like to see it dealt with and like to see the community get involved in the project. I hope it does bring awareness. I have reservations though... There are a lot of things that go along with the problem."

– Policy Maker

It's systematic

"This is a systemic problem pushed around and not solved."

– Policy Maker

More than musical chairs

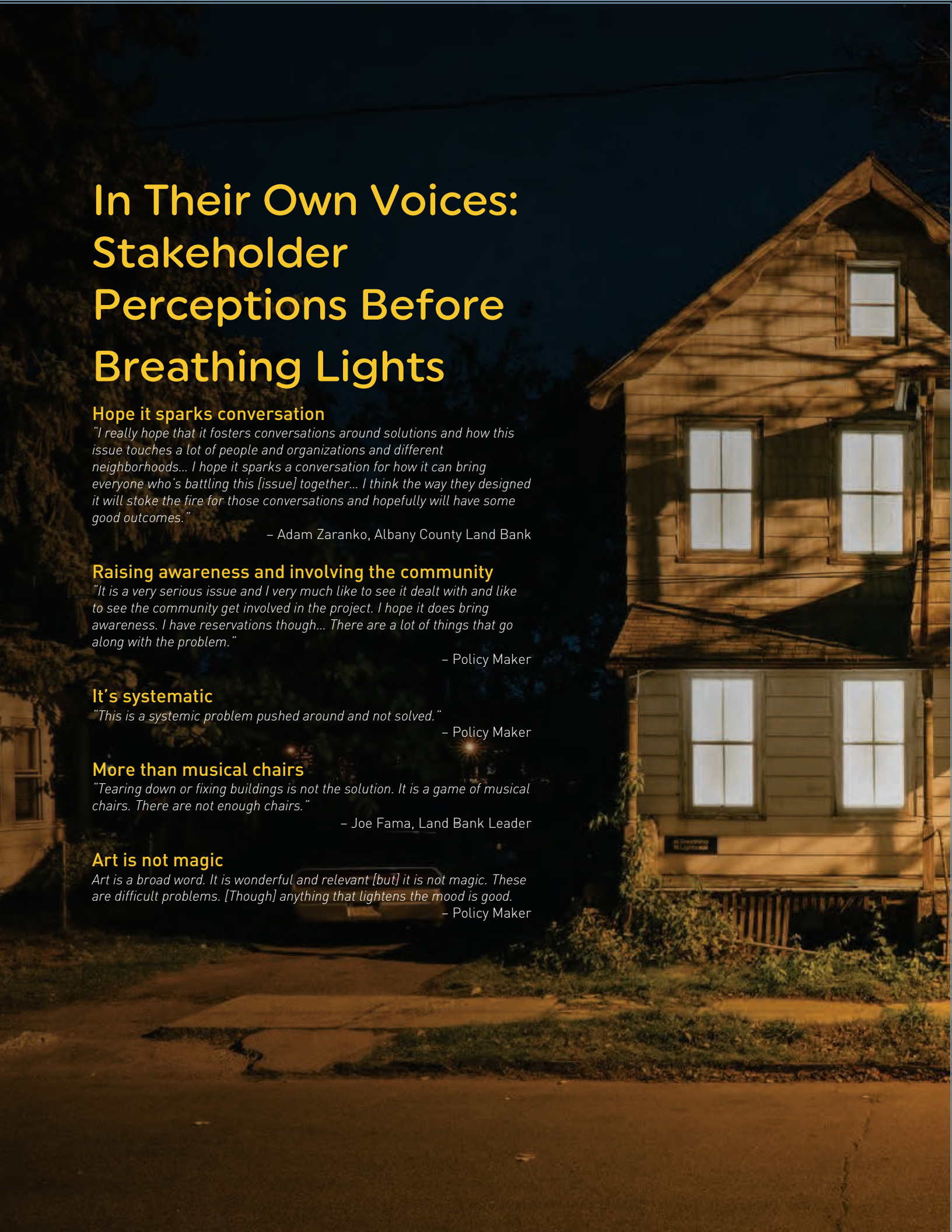
"Tearing down or fixing buildings is not the solution. It is a game of musical chairs. There are not enough chairs."

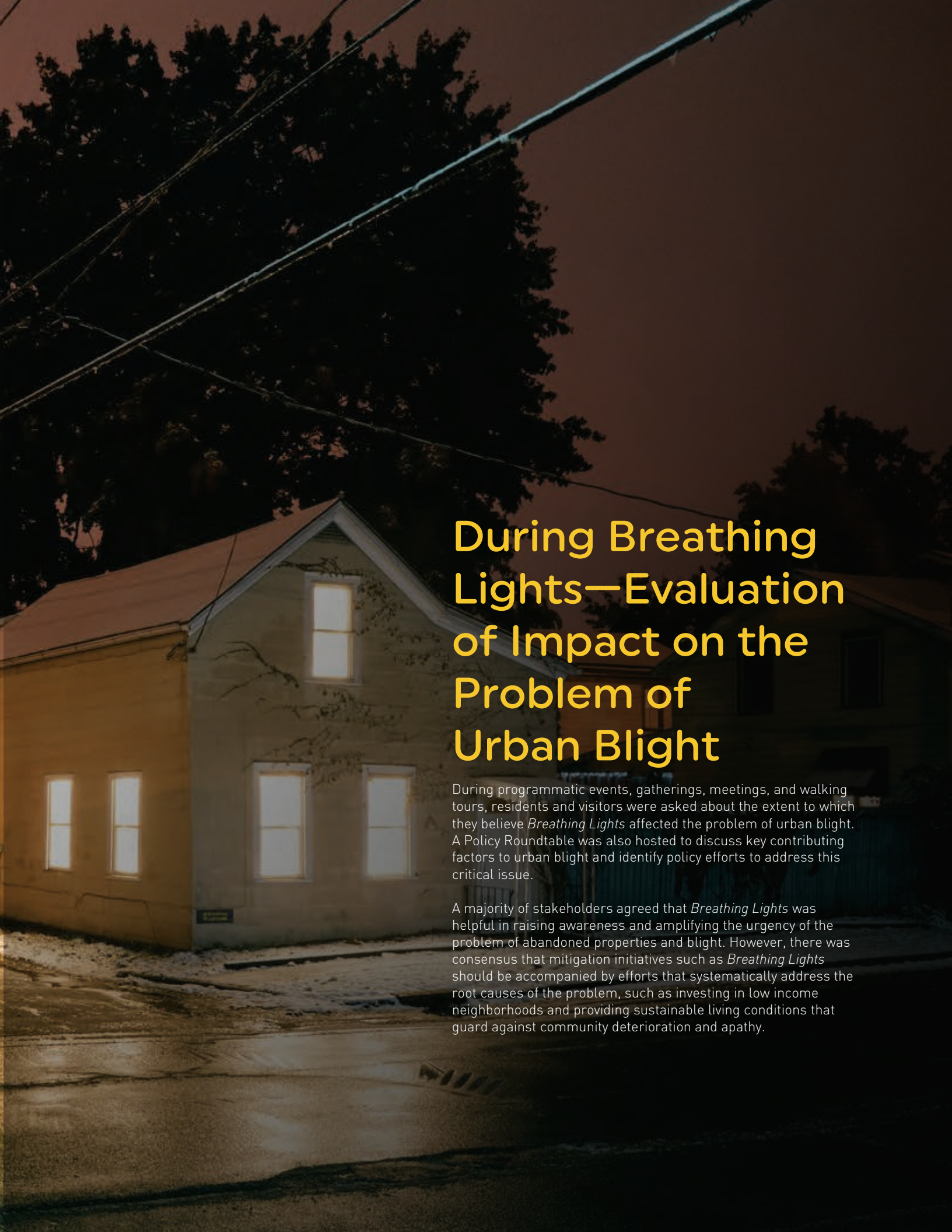
– Joe Fama, Land Bank Leader

Art is not magic

Art is a broad word. It is wonderful and relevant [but] it is not magic. These are difficult problems. [Though] anything that lightens the mood is good.

– Policy Maker



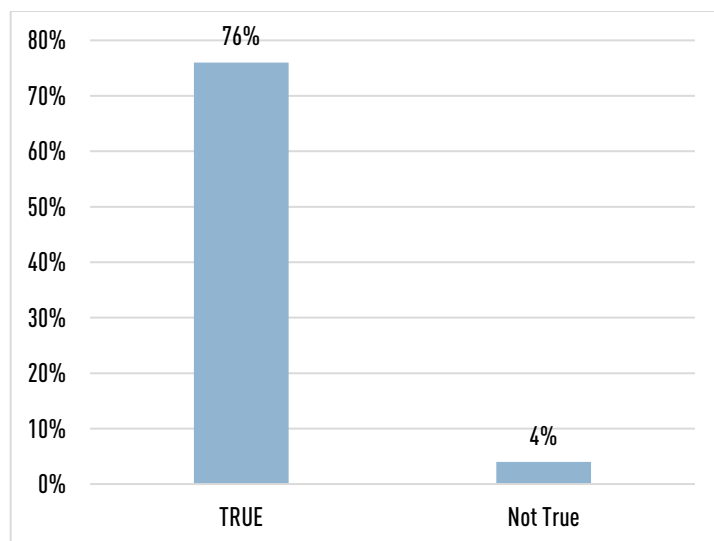


During Breathing Lights—Evaluation of Impact on the Problem of Urban Blight

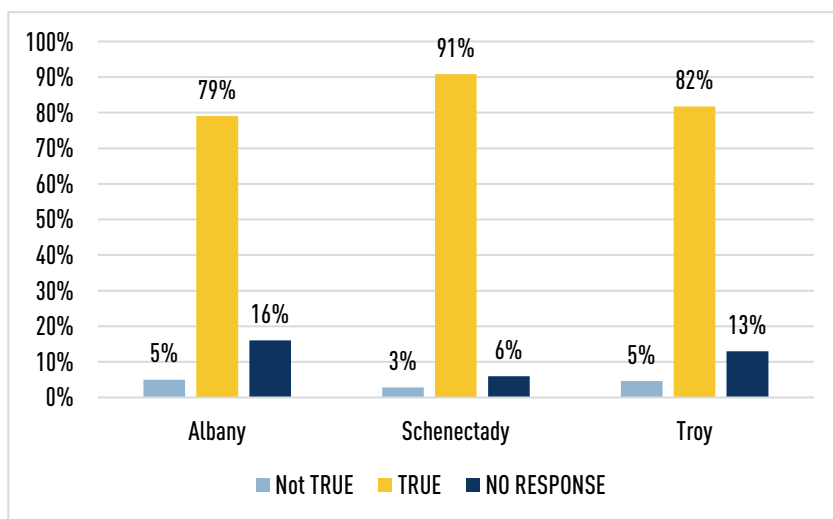
During programmatic events, gatherings, meetings, and walking tours, residents and visitors were asked about the extent to which they believe *Breathing Lights* affected the problem of urban blight. A Policy Roundtable was also hosted to discuss key contributing factors to urban blight and identify policy efforts to address this critical issue.

A majority of stakeholders agreed that *Breathing Lights* was helpful in raising awareness and amplifying the urgency of the problem of abandoned properties and blight. However, there was consensus that mitigation initiatives such as *Breathing Lights* should be accompanied by efforts that systematically address the root causes of the problem, such as investing in low income neighborhoods and providing sustainable living conditions that guard against community deterioration and apathy.

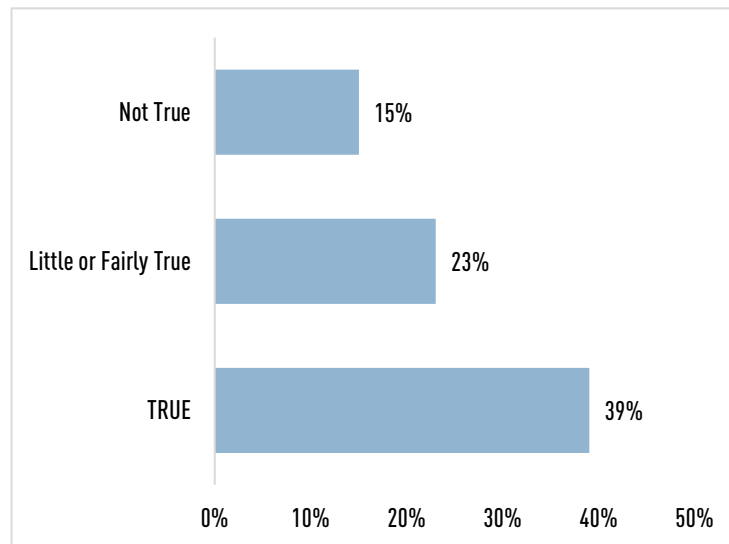
The majority of the visitors (76%) thought that *Breathing Lights* brought positive attention to the issue of blight and abandoned buildings in the Capital Region.



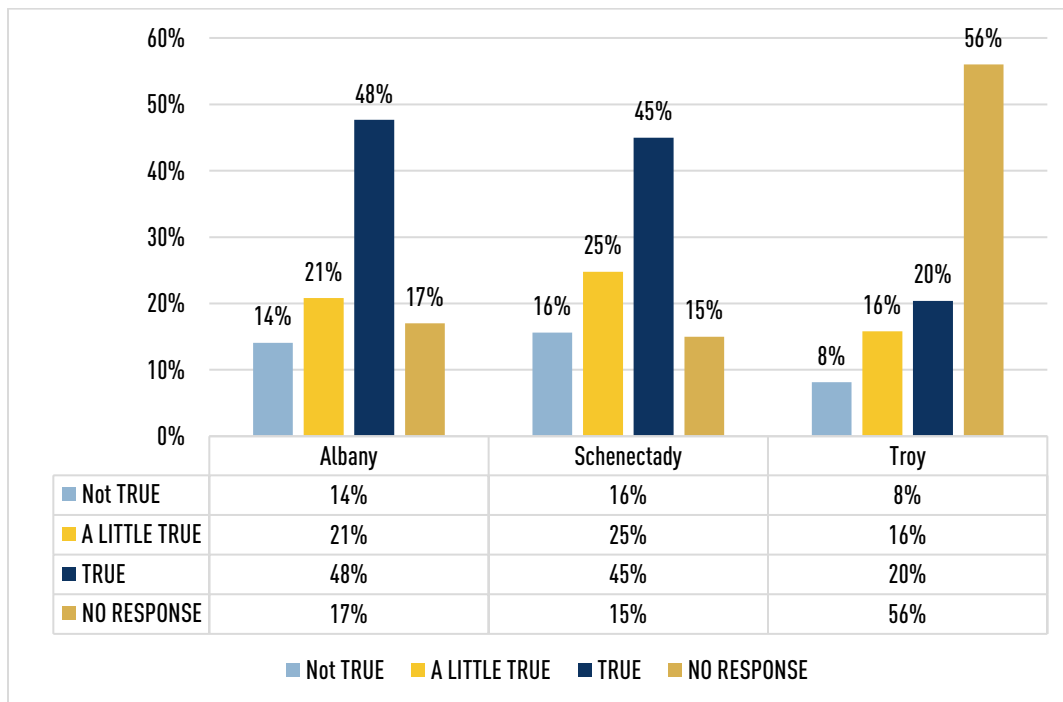
This feeling that *Breathing Lights* brought attention to the problem of urban blight and abandoned buildings was consistent across the three cities.



Thirty-nine percent of visitors believed that the project changed their perception of the Capital Region.

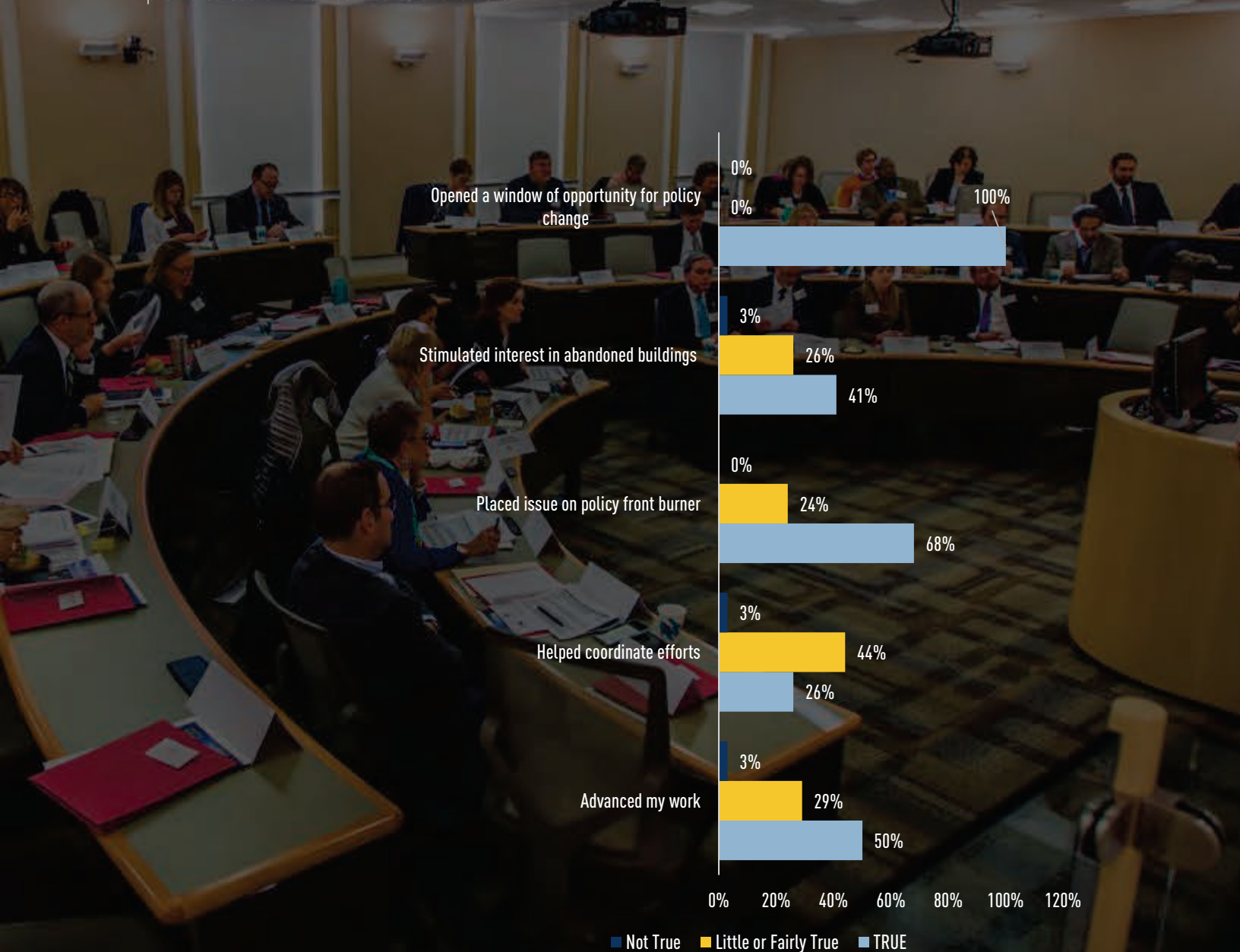


During their visit to the exhibits, many visitors changed their thinking about abandoned buildings as assets instead of deficits and urban blight as preventable instead of avoidable.



Several *Breathing Lights* partners sponsored a Policy Roundtable that hosted nearly 60 policy and decision-makers across the state to discuss issues of blight. Participants were asked a series of questions to assess their perception of the extent to which the project advanced their day-to-day work on alleviating urban blight and their policy priorities.

All the participants of *Breathing Lights* roundtable agreed that the project had opened opportunities for policy change, and a significant number of attendees agreed the project stimulated interest in abandoned buildings. The majority of participants also agreed that the project helped advance work to address vacancy and abandonment and that it promoted coordination between stakeholders.





Reactions to Blight

During community meetings and programmatic events, the evaluation team asked residents to write down words that describe their feelings about abandoned properties in their neighborhoods. While most phrases conveyed a sense of frustration and pain, some responses were hopeful.

In Their Own Voices: Community Member and Stakeholder Reflections⁸

From normalization to awareness

"Growing up in Arbor Hill, vacant buildings were normalized. [Breathing Lights] brought it back up to awareness for me and out of normalization."

– Community Member

⁸ Community member is defined as an individual who resides in a community that hosted a Breathing Lights exhibit. Stakeholder is defined as someone who is affiliated with an organization that seeks to address the problem of urban blight.

Narratives and meaning

"The narratives that came out of these buildings, they have deep meanings."

– Community Member

Breathing Lights rekindled life

"It brought attention to these abandoned buildings that were once just forgotten about [and] lay dormant, dark and spooky... It brought attention, it brought hope for rekindling life. The neighbor didn't turn on the lights, the city didn't turn on the lights... it happened by Breathing Lights."

– Community Member

Beautiful neighborhoods

"People...were talking about how important the architecture is and that these buildings are beautiful. We do live in a beautiful neighborhood and it needs to be given the respect it deserves. I really think the project lit up people's neighborhoods in a positive way, not just with the lights but with the attention brought to the area."

– Community Member

Awareness of Land Bank

"There are a lot of people who knew about the Land Bank in the context of Breathing Lights...I was surprised to see the number of people who came to our office looking for information about those buildings that were lit."

– Land Bank Official

Heightened awareness

"It increased awareness of the issue but I think it also increased awareness of the level of scale of the issue and geographic concentration...There is real potential and Breathing has opened the door to [that] potential."

– Land Bank Official

Ramping up actions

"The dialogues have been so ramped up because of Breathing Lights. The action steps are so much more realized for so many different people."

– Nonprofit Leader

Inspired to donate

"We have a button on our website that says donate to the Land Bank. and no one ever clicked it ever since we were there. After Breathing Lights, we got two donations, one guy referenced directly being inspired by [the project]."

– Land Bank Official

Not as bad as people say

"These were the ugliest structures during the day and then clearly the most beautiful structures at night, and that [flipped] as soon as that light went on. The pride was about what these houses can be... Look at this... this neighborhood is really not as bad as people are saying it is."

– Community Member

Oh... I get it

"From a hub's perspective, the key was those teenagers that said can you keep the lights on, to that girl who looked out her window every night and felt comfortable in her neighborhood, and to the buyers coming in. I think those lights symbolized hope...because before the lights went on, people were complaining about [how] 'This is a waste of money and a waste of time' and as soon as they went on, everyone went 'Oh I get it...'"

– Hub Leader

Broadening the market

"The [Building Reclamation] workshops are a tremendous example of Breathing Lights creating and identifying a market that was much stronger than I understood."

– Nonprofit Advocate

Catalyst for me

"It was a catalyst for me to think a little differently. It is a huge portfolio and a lot of challenges but it can create a lot of opportunities. It made me think differently [which], to me, is the selfish benefit of the program. We can glean that benefit for the community if we think differently."

– Land Bank Official

Got me thinking

"This program has got me thinking: Can we continue to make connections between our portfolio of properties and art programs? Why can't properties for sale showcase something? And why can't we tie this to the local school? Why can't we work with institutions like the Albany Barn to get into the artists and to say here is what we have?"

– Land Bank Official

More people at the table

"I do see an increased level [of] the general populations that care about the problem. That is critical. Breathing Lights helped a lot more people come to the table and say we need to be doing something about this... Breathing Lights placed information on the table."

– Nonprofit Leader

New faces

"I would say that the faces that you do not always see at community meetings have come to meetings and they do reference Breathing Lights. They are aware of [the project] and see the connections between Breathing Lights and what the Land Bank is trying to do."

- Land Bank Leader

Changed perspectives

"The perspectives about these buildings have changed. There [is] a sense of ownership that 'those buildings are in my neighborhood'...Before it was this eye sore that [residents] did not want to think about."

- Community Leader

Major improvements

"There's some major improvements already happening... it's made an impact and not just to the houses that had the lights on, but the houses next door to them that are now occupied, rented, lived in. So yeah it really drew some good attention... well overdue."

- Community Member

Interest in purchasing vacant buildings

"People came out of the workshops wanting to buy buildings. They did not want to learn theoretically. They wanted to learn what you have for sale. They were there and they were who we wanted to reach. They had all the questions they wanted to ask of us."

- Land Bank Official

Hope in finding solutions

"The project has brought hope that solutions are available and some people are taking it into their own hands."

- Community Member

Stimulating dialogues

"The buildings are the corpses of a diseased system. And bringing attention to the buildings did good work. It did engender discussions that I regret were not more robust. Black Lives Matter and gentrification are critical issues to be dealt with."

- Land Bank Leader

Real value for Land Banks

"The Land Banks will never be self-sufficient. When Breathing Lights comes along and – may be instead of selling 15 buildings, we sell 17 – that's not the outcome. [The] real effect is the public perception of the problem...The real value is the changed perception. A couple more sales is not going to have us operate in a self-sustaining manner. Get us the resources we need and the visibility."

- Land Bank Official

Visibility

"Breathing Lights was a great vehicle to amplify what we are doing, get more attention and get more people interested."

- Land Bank Official

Get the message out

"Breathing Lights has been very helpful for our visibility. Being on websites, in discussions, [in] articles, people [are] learning about our portfolio and our properties. That helps what we do and getting the message out there."

- Land Bank Official

Wonderful opportunity

"We have no capacity to get our information in the news and to say that any coverage we had was a direct outgrowth of Breathing Lights. It is a wonderful opportunity."

- Land Bank Official

Reference for grants

"We reference Breathing Lights in grants and it helps people make that connection of what the Land Banks does to people who do not know and the problem we are trying to solve."

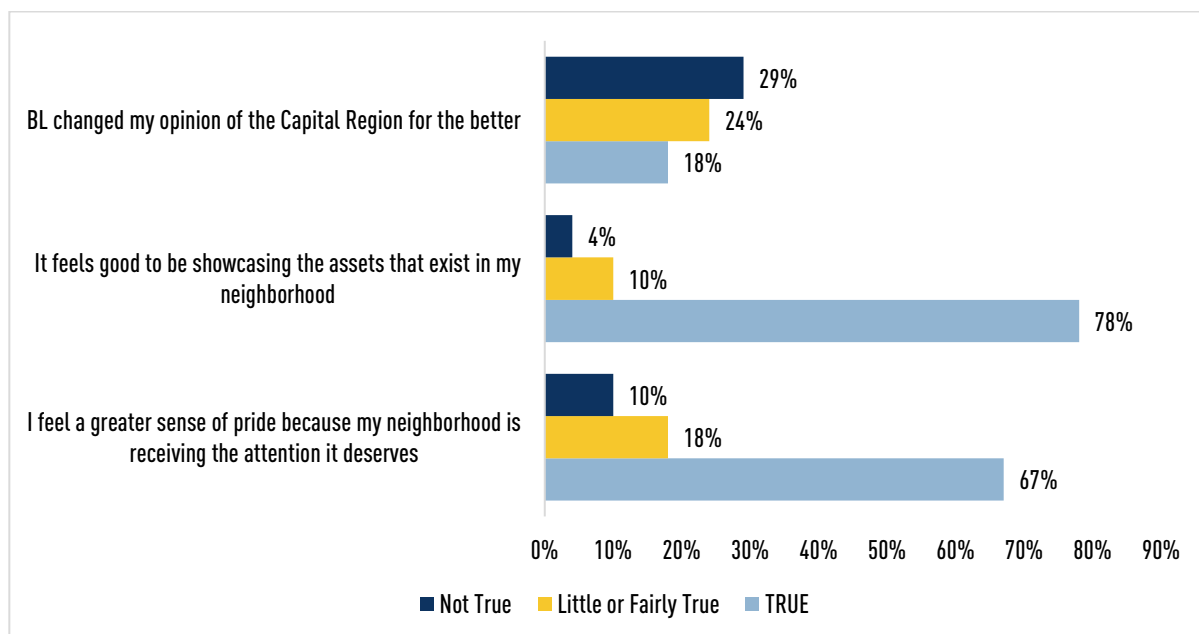
- Land Bank Official

Goal 3: Impact on Social Capital, Community Cohesiveness and Connectedness

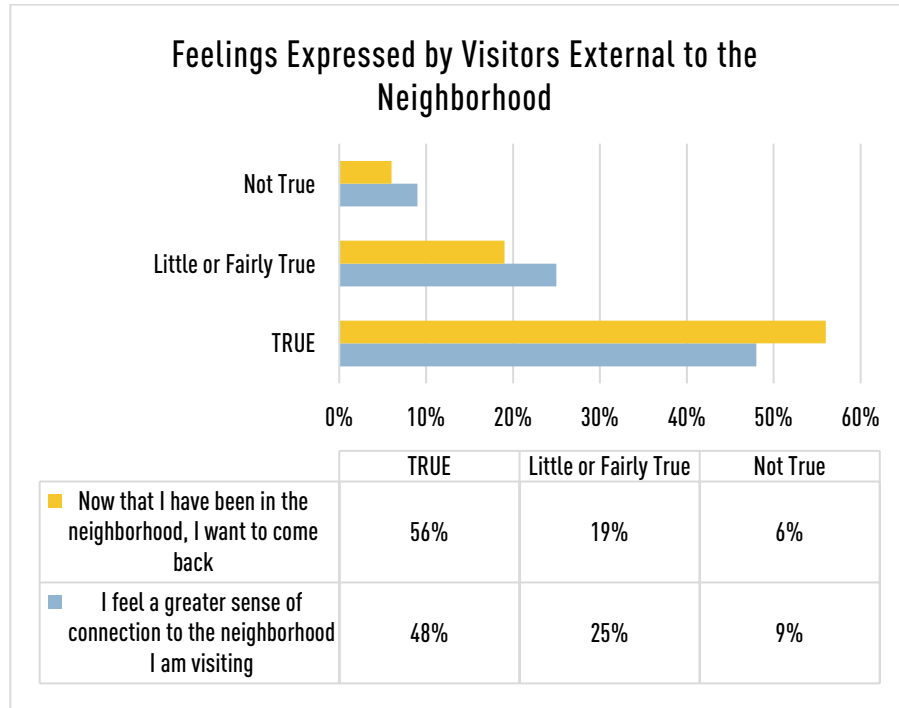
During Breathing Lights—Evaluation of Impact on Social Capital, Community Cohesiveness and Connectedness

One of *Breathing Light's* central aims was to enhance the sense of connection residents felt to their communities, city, and neighbors. During the exhibition period, residents and visitors were asked about their feelings of pride of place and connectedness. Surveys took place online, during programmatic events, gatherings, meetings, walking tours, and through door-to-door outreach.

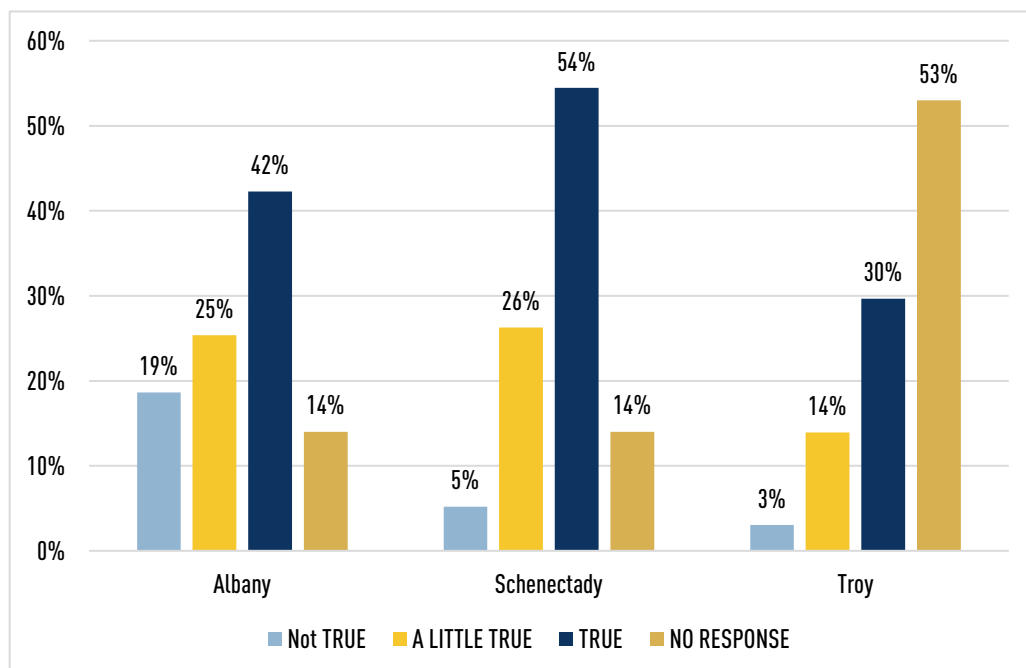
A majority of residents (67%) expressed a greater sense of pride in their immediate neighborhood. Forty-two percent of respondents said that they had an improved perception of the Capital Region as a whole.



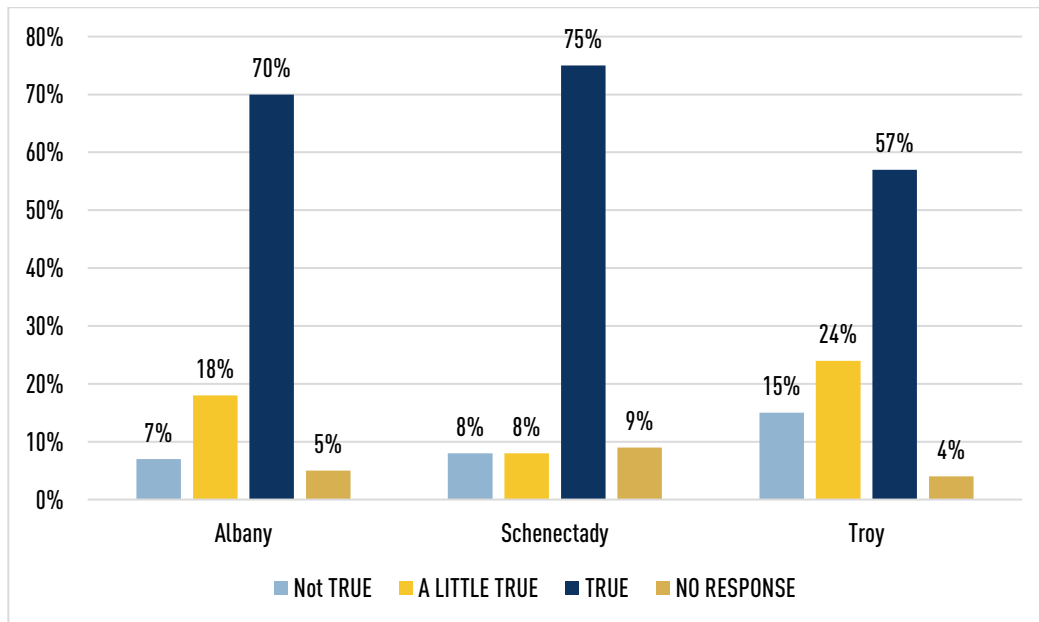
Most of the visitors (73%) who came from outside neighborhoods said that *Breathing Lights* helped them feel more connected to the community. 75% of visitors expressed that they would want to visit the neighborhood again.



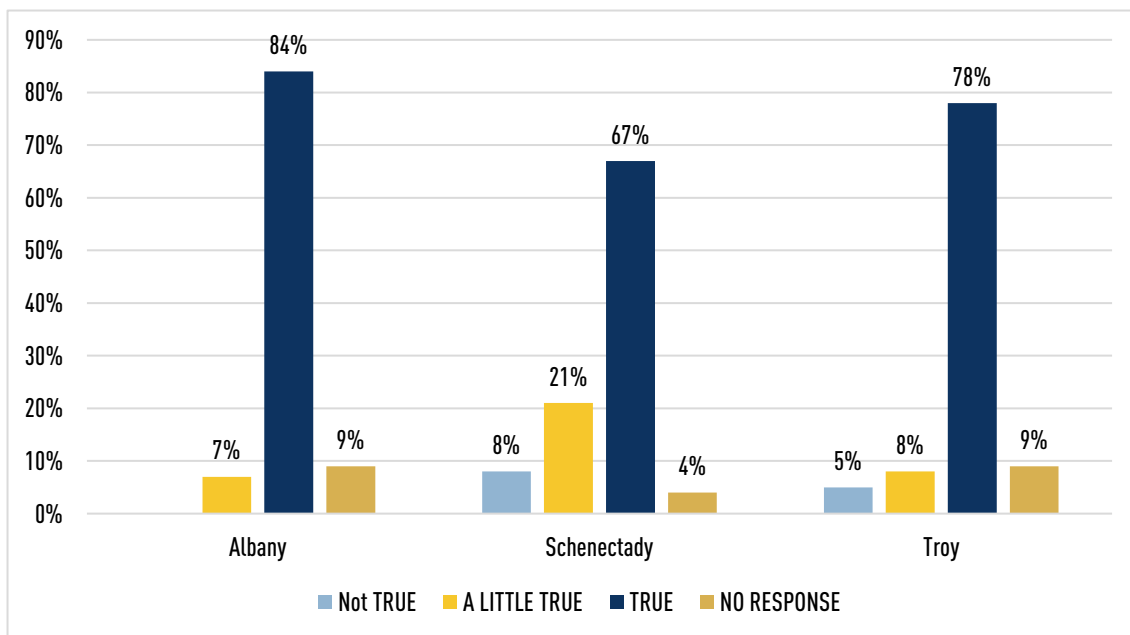
Visitors to installations in the three cities reported higher feelings of connectedness to the neighborhood they visited.



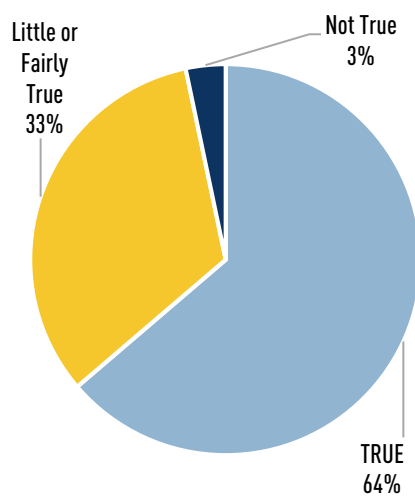
Most community members felt a greater sense of pride that their neighborhood is receiving the attention it deserves.




A majority of community members felt that it was good to be showcasing the assets that exist in their neighborhood.



A majority (64%) of people surveyed believed that *Breathing Lights* stimulated greater community engagement.





In Their Own Voices: Community Member and Stakeholder Reflections

Sense of pride and hope –

"We counted 27 vacant buildings from our hub to the Little League and in that walk, that short half way around the corners walk, I saw people picking up their garbage instead of tossing out on the street and putting it in the garbage can. They are sweeping the street in front of the house so it did bring a sense of pride and hope...You know it is possible to revitalize these communities... it's not hopeless."

- Hub Leader

This happened to us

"There is a huge sense of pride that this happened to us - that we could put a beautiful project on. This could never be underestimated."

– Community Member

An enormous platform

"Discussions happened everywhere... those lights were very provocative. Say what you want about them... they created an enormous platform to discuss..."

– Nonprofit Leader

Momentum and a lot of glue

"The group that [ended up being] brought together was impressive. It is not people I imagined would sit down together... There is momentum, reason to come together, and a lot of glue."

– Nonprofit Leader

A platform for community engagement

"We will use Breathing Lights as a platform to deepen our community engagement in all our communities, including outside the city of Albany."

– Policy Maker

Deepened partnerships

"From an organizational stand point, one of the biggest benefits [of being] in this program [is] just giving our group a chance to engage with our partners in the area, including other Land Banks but not just limited to that - Historic Albany, Tap, the Breathing Lights [team on] the academic side... A big part of the program will focus on strengthening existing partnerships and identifying new ones that would be beneficial to tackle what we are doing. This is a huge step toward that."

– Nonprofit Leader

New partners

"I met a lot more people through Breathing Lights, a lot more organizations. I work more closely with them since. I do notice a lot more folks who are nontraditional stakeholders, a lot of artists now and folks who may not [be the first] people you would think we can work with. [But these] people introduce new opportunities to solve what we are trying to solve."

– Nonprofit Leader

Cross-city, cross sector connections

"Cross communication between the cities, Land Bank connections or the artist's connections were significant, and this area has a hard time crossing those borderlines when we need to. It is hard to get all three cities or four cities into a conversation about any one topic. I feel that this project really forwarded that effort. It maybe even helped people understand the need for that cross-city [and best practice] discussion to continue."

– Policy Maker

Melding the left and right parts of the brains

"Part of the 'aha' of this is how non-artists were required to pull off a very artistic thing and how those two different kinds of brains and ways of thinking influence each other for a year."

– Nonprofit Leader

The stir

"Breathing Lights created the stir, made things bubble underneath."

– Nonprofit Leader

Self-efficacy and awareness of hope

"For me what this project did was not showing that the problem was there, but that we can do something about it... Suddenly to hear mayors talking about it...it is not that we grew awareness, we grew awareness of hope."

– Nonprofit Leader

New ways of thinking

"One of the things it activated, which is very valuable to me and to us, is divergent thinking... We started thinking we can do this or that. We have not done public art before but why not, we have not done social justice for a while, but why not. Let us test the water."

– Nonprofit Leader

Broadened perspectives

"It just broadened my ideas about what we can exhibit and what kind of people with what kind of skills we could collaborate with. A wider direction than we had before."

– Nonprofit Advocate

Many voices

"For years and years, we were the only voices for those buildings. This brought so many voices and it is great."

– Nonprofit Advocate

A new realization

"The suburbs are further apart than I thought. I may not be able to change my budgeting overnight, or make huge plans quickly. But this information that I hold - that the suburbs are further away than I imagined - that stays with me."

– Nonprofit Leader

Networked

"Social capital increased a lot. I have my own organization that addresses social issues. I tend to work alone and come up with ideas so always being a leader keeps me out of networking groups. So, it was great to be in a position where I was forced to be in situations and meet people I would not have met otherwise."

– Nonprofit Leader

A record of success

"We can point to it and say look how they succeeded. When we are jumping over hurdles and obstacles, we can point to Breathing Lights as our poster child."

– Nonprofit Leader

Curiosity about each other

"I think it made people curious to learn more about the project, about their neighborhood, and about their neighbors. I got a lot of phone calls, a lot of questions from people wanting to know about buildings – people interested in the backstory of the building but also the neighborhood. You know, what it was, what it is now, what's going on, what's potentially happening, so that was great."

– Nonprofit Leader

Breaking down social barriers

"This felt like an opportunity to just be heard and hear others and that's really the only way to break down those barriers...It was a great vehicle to get people from outside our neighborhood in [and] get people from different neighborhoods to discover each other..."

– Community Leader

Promoting understanding

"It brought people from other neighborhoods who may never have come to that neighborhood and allowed them the chance to get on the bus to go see the Breathing Lights... it gave a better understanding and brought people from different walks of life and different economic standing to come together and I thought that was really positive."

– Community Leader

Formalized partnerships

"We formalized new partnerships in the city with the Albany Community Development Agency. We have a much easier time doing work. It is changing and the Land Banks are changing too. So, we have a lot more people sitting around the table doing problem solving which we had but was not as formalized and was on the fly, now it seems to have more of a purpose."

Land Bank Official

Legitimacy

"I think Breathing Lights gave us more legitimacy to everybody - from the politicians and other stakeholders."

– Nonprofit Leader

Regional focus

"Breathing Lights brought that regional focus that was the intention of the funder. How do you solve problems not just on a city level but regionally?"

– Policy Maker

Resource development

"There are so many things that have happened because of Breathing Lights. Every time you put pen to paper to write a grant you highlight how art projects [and] community revitalization are already networked together, and it is easier and faster to mobilize and be successful."

– Nonprofit Leader

Creating a sense of community

"I think it creates a sense of community and builds neighborhood fabric. You get people who have a lot more pride in the neighborhood and [they are] less likely to vandalize the area and take more pride in their individual properties."

– Community Member

Lessons Learned

LESSON 1: DEFINING METRICS—VOLUME OF VIEWERSHIP VERSUS PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC ART

Breathing Lights took place in three cities that were not massively populated (as other cities these types of generously-endowed projects usually take place). Exhibits were scattered around many relatively quiet residential neighborhoods. It also was an exhibit that cannot be viewed except at night. Given the fact that these neighborhoods were perceived to be unsafe to walk at night, many visitors viewed them in their cars (or using a trolley tour). A comprehensive measurement of the number of viewers of an art exhibit that is scattered along three cities and can only be viewed by driving at night posed a challenge to the evaluators. Additionally, viewership expectations would never be comparable to those of large cities' public art exhibits. Evaluators felt that it is critical to measure the force of change that comes with viewers' perceptions of public art, and not just focus on the intermediate output of volume of those who choose to view of the art.

One may argue that public art is meant to be enjoyed by the public and volume of viewership becomes an important output that is an antecedent to appreciation of art. Increasing appreciation of public art was a project goal. Volume, however, is a different metric from appreciation of the art itself. It does not necessarily lead to appreciation.

A counter argument posits that viewership is an indirect or intermediate output that has implications on activating community change (a project primary goal). Although exhibits were embedded in communities that were disenfranchised and that primarily lacked immediate control over the levers of change, when a community is activated, it will apply pressure on those who are situated within the locus of influencing change. Responsive government is an outgrowth of community activism. In this case, however, we cannot establish causality. Volume of direct viewership does not necessarily induce community activation. Additionally, the short term of this project would make this process impossible to achieve.

Furthermore, the nature of viewership has changed. The infiltration of communication and information technologies including social media which the project extensively leveraged add another layer of complexity. Viewership and experiencing the art transcends space and geographic boundaries. Indeed, *Breathing Lights* extended its reach beyond the geographic boundaries of the U.S. through virtual viewership which was tracked through its website. Is there a reason we would place more value on direct viewership than virtual viewership?

As evaluators, we decided to focus our efforts on measuring the volume of those who chose to come to (or virtually view) *Breathing Lights*. We conducted a door-to-door surveys of neighbors of the exhibits; i.e. primary beneficiaries who may or may not have chosen to attend *Breathing Lights* events. The surveys allowed us to assess how those stakeholders viewed the art and gauge the impact of the art on their sense of pride; i.e. antecedents of community change.

A comprehensive measurement of the number of viewers of an art exhibit that is scattered along three cities and can only be viewed at night, by driving posed a challenge to the evaluators.

Evaluators felt that it is critical to measure the force of change that comes with viewers' perceptions of public art, not just the intermediate output of volume of those who chose to view the art.

The nature of viewership has changed. The infiltration of communication and information technologies including social media which the project extensively leveraged add another layer of complexity. Viewership and experiencing the art transcends space and geographic boundaries.

LESSON 2: BECOMING THE “OBJECTIVE ADVOCATE/RESEARCHER”

We struggled with a sense that we are somehow betraying our professional ethics, but soon realized that the paradoxical relationship we felt between being advocates and researchers was a fallacy.

Did community engagement mean the mere interest of a community in addressing community problems? Did it mean the community coming together and discussing the problem? Or did it mean activation of the community to resolve issues that affect its members from blight and disinvestment?

As university-based researchers, we are bound by standards that dictate that we retain an objective stance that is not invested in either success or failure, but gather data diligently to assess the extent to which the project achieved its stated objectives.

We quickly realized that it was very difficult to stay emotionally objective and retain an objective stance. We found ourselves rooting for the success of the project and moving from distanced and detached researchers to project advocates. Going door-to-door in neighborhoods ravished by blight and poverty, we talked with neighbors, corrected misconceptions about the project, argued for why the project is a good investment for the community and affirmed commitment of the project team to community renewal and regeneration. We struggled with a sense that we are somehow betraying our professional ethics, but soon realized that the paradoxical relationship we felt between being advocates and researchers was a fallacy. Our desire to see the project succeed and achieve its community renewal objectives was not in conflict with our ability to rigorously collect, analyze, interpret and present data in an objective manner.

Our consciousness of the space we occupied as advocate researchers made us even more aware of the need to be vigilant about our biases and the need to validate every piece of data we gather and consider all possible lenses of interpretations. Our passion for the project made us more enthusiastic and motivated to go to extreme length to collect data.

There is no need to reconcile personal feelings about a project and objectivity. Passion for a project will translate to passion for collecting, interpreting and presenting data whether it supports or negates impact.



LESSON 3: CLARIFYING AMBIGUITIES: SOCIAL CHANGE VERSUS SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

Breathing Lights had an explicit social change agenda. Engaging community and raising awareness about the problem of urban blight were stated goals. Approximately 10% of overall resources were allocated to community engagement.

The evaluation team had to struggle with the intent and definition of community engagement. Mixed messages were often given about the interpretations of the concept. Did community engagement mean the mere interest of a community in addressing community problems? Did it mean the community coming together and discussing the problem? Or did it mean activation of the community to resolve issues that affect its members from blight and disinvestment? Where did community engagement as envisioned by the core team lie on the spectrum? To take interest is one thing. To shed apathy and move the wheels of change forward through direct and indirect action is another. It is understandable that the project directors wished to keep expectations low on this front and focus 90% of resources on production of the art. From an evaluation point of view, this created a dilemma. Defining the logic of change and measuring indicators of that change had to be clear from the outset. Are we measuring community sense of pride, hope and increased social capital? Or are we measuring policy change and funds allocated to implementing a change process? Feelings and perceptions are very different outcomes than actions by policy makers and community leaders.

We wrestled with several conflicting arguments. The theory of change suggests that mechanisms of support had to be in place to maintain the change process. *Breathing Lights* is a temporary project that was on display only for two months. If the project limited itself to inspiring community engagement as the mere interest in a problem, and that change is anticipated to be a temporary condition since the project itself is temporary, does the project sell itself short by adopting a temporary change that does not lead to any lasting impact? In this case, is the investment in the project justified? A counter argument suggests that it is not fair to ask a public art project to induce lasting change in a condition that is has deep historical and is extremely complex as urban blight. If the art can cause even a temporary state of joy, engagement and pride, then it has met and exceeded its goals. The project is also taking place in a very short time frame. To expect any meaningful change to take place in such a short time is unrealistic.

We adopted an open-minded discovery approach that looked for change on the overall spectrum and did not limit measurement to one dimension. We utilized the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology which lend itself well to evaluating a project that has social goals. SROI monetizes the social value produced by *Breathing Lights* and accounts for dollars generated in social value in return from every dollar invested by Bloomberg Philanthropies. SROI is discussed at length in a subsequent segment of this report. The process we followed in calculating SROI allowed us to capture all outcomes along the spectrum of change that are experienced by key stakeholders. The methodology allowed us to measure impact on each of the key stakeholders and give equal weight to all dimensions of change.

The use of SROI allowed us to include all social change experienced/ induced by stakeholders. It allowed us to place the emphasis on the stakeholders and not be restricted to monitoring change in any single areas.

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LESSON 4: USING THE EVALUATION PLAN AS A DYNAMIC AND LIVING DOCUMENT

We realized that to be successful, we have to be flexible and adaptable. We have to let internal and external forces surrounding the project drive the evaluation effort and not view evaluation as a static and fixed roadmap.

Evaluation plans are never static, but are living and changing documents that must be subjected to revisions to accommodate discoveries or changes in the external environment of the project.

The evaluation team integrated itself fully in the project from the outset. Before the project even started, a detailed evaluation plan was drawn with measurable, attainable, times and specific objectives, activities and outcomes for all project goals.

We soon realized that the real world operates very differently from the world conceived on paper. For example, it turned out that *Breathing Lights* exhibits were scattered within and across three cities. There were no concentrations of blocks where the exhibits were displayed. You had to travel around a city to view the exhibit. This scattering meant that we needed to cover a wide geographic space. Additionally, instruments that were initially developed to capture quantitative data were found to be too limiting and unable to capture the richness of the contextual dynamics of the many community that are affected by this project in the three cities.

We realized that to be successful, we have to be flexible and adaptable. We have to let internal and external forces surrounding the project drive the evaluation effort and not view evaluation as a static and fixed roadmap. We viewed the plan as a guiding document that is dynamic and changeable and that needed to adapt to circumstances in the real world. For example, when we saw that the scattering of the project within and across the three cities hindered the abilities of many people to participate in *Breathing Lights* events which were largely concentrated in the cities' hubs, we had to devise a plan to capture these voices. So, in addition to covering every *Breathing Lights* event, we developed survey instruments and went door-to-door in neighborhoods which hosted *Breathing Lights* exhibits and gauged their perspectives. We went to neighborhood corner grocery stores and at public libraries and asked people and interviewed people. The scattering effect also meant that we needed more human resources to collect data rigorously than we anticipated initially. We also realized early on that relying on community ambassadors to collect data from community members was not an effective method, as these representatives were often busy administering other essential tasks related to the project. We therefore hired graduate and undergraduate students from the University who assisted us in covering all community data collection efforts.

Evaluation plans are never static, but are living and changing documents that must be subjected to revisions to accommodate discoveries or changes in the external environment of the project. While the goals of the evaluation have not changed, our strategies have. The evaluation team needs to be present at every community meeting, every event and every session to monitor those changes and change course accordingly. Utilizing university students in data collection has proven to be a win-win situation.



LESSON 5: BUILDING COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

A primary task for the evaluation team was to gauge community perceptions of the *Breathing Lights* project. The communities affected by urban blight are communities that are disenfranchised by poverty and were often hostile to art projects that are perceived as exploiting the community. History was not on the side of artists who enter the community as outsiders, to implement project and leave.

We were conscious of our position as outsiders to the communities affected by *Breathing Lights*. We were university-based researchers who did not necessarily have relationships or connections in the affected communities. There was a negative reaction in some quarters about the significant investments made in an art project. It was not surprising in communities that have suffered from long-term neglect and disinvestments.

We needed allies in the community to introduce us, and help us gain credibility and trust. Community Ambassadors were included in the initial evaluation plan. We envisioned that the Ambassadors will be assigned the data collection from community members. The underlying assumption was that an ambassador chosen from the community is much more likely to more effectively reach community members, and gauge an honest feedback from them. Meetings were held to solicit community Ambassadors' help in phrasing the survey instruments so that they are culturally and linguistically sensitive. Through this effort, we found that community Ambassadors were great allies who paved the way to us in the community. Some Ambassadors accompanied the evaluation team in conducting door-to-door neighborhood interviews. This facilitated the process and allowed us to get access to places we would not otherwise have.

Community members are critical allies in the data collection effort. They help smooth over community ambivalence about the data collection effort. When selecting community allies, care must be taken that these members are themselves trusted and maintain deep ties in the community. Living in the community is not sufficient to make a person a good ally who will facilitate the process of bridge building.

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LESSON 6: USING DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

The evaluation team sought collection of data from different key stakeholders in the three cities including community members (inside and outside communities which hosted *Breathing Lights* exhibits); local and state policy makers (elected and appointed); Land Banks; nonprofit advocates and service providers; *Breathing Lights* community hubs; and artists.

We needed to capture as many of these key stakeholders as possible to gauge their feedback before, during and after the project. Because of the scope of the project, the vast geographic coverage and the numerous stakeholder involved, we needed to think of the data collection method that would be most suited to capture feedback from these diverse stakeholders.

Different methodologies were used to capture feedback from different stakeholders. At *Breathing Lights* events, interviews were used, but when noise at events interfered with our ability to conduct recorded interviews, we opted to use paper surveys. Phone interviews were used to reach policy makers. Door-to-door interviews were used to reach community members who did not participate in *Breathing Lights* events. Events in the community, whether related or unrelated to *Breathing Lights* including the Policy Roundtable were used as a venue for collecting feedback. We hosted a celebration event at the end of the project to capture a wide range of stakeholders who were involved in the project. Because the evaluation team was part of the larger Capital Region community, and were fully integrated into the *Breathing Lights* core team, they participated in every event related to *Breathing Lights* and were aware of other events taking place in the community. We viewed every event as a data gathering opportunity to reach different stakeholders.

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Conclusions

Breathing Lights demonstrated the power of public art in lighting the spark of change.

The *Breathing Lights* effect was significant. The social transformation that happened during the project is notable.

It moved people:

- From resistance and skepticism to understanding of the social change agenda;
- From disdain to appreciation of the power of the lights and a sense of loss for its disappearance;
- From undervaluing of the role of public art to curiosity and admiration of the beauty art brings and what it can do to impact social change;
- From apathy to increased care about the problem, increased pride in the neighborhood and hope for solutions to its problems;
- From normalization of vacancy and acceptance of the reasons why it exists to awareness and rejection;
- From a sense of resignation to engagement, activation and mobilization; and
- From disinterest about the buildings to recognition of their potential and interest in becoming homeowners.

The Capital Region experienced a revival of a sense of possibilities. Self-efficacy was gained, driven by the understanding that if the Capital Region can win a national competition and activate its community, it can effectively address the problems it faces. One can only wonder if this temporary project were to continue longer, where on the continuum of change the region would have been today, how much of the policy window *Breathing Lights* would have opened, and how many lasting legacies it would have left. Most importantly, one wonders if it would have sustained dialogues about the social and economic inequalities that create vacancies, blight and poverty. Would *Breathing Lights* have compelled Capital Region residents to keep chipping away at the racial, social and geographic divides that keep us apart? One can only wonder! More than ever, our communities need public art to communicate messages that can often only be communicated through the art.

The background image is a photograph of a sculpture. It depicts three stylized, colorful figures (two standing and one crouching) holding up a dark, multi-story house. The house has several windows, some of which are illuminated from within. In the background, there is a wall with graffiti. The word "WE" is visible in large, block letters, and the word "THITS" is written in a stylized, outlined font. To the right of "THITS", the words "The Kids" are written in a cursive script. The overall scene is set against a dark, textured background.

SUCCESS STORY

Engaging Youth and Encouraging Creative Expression

"[We have] kids from 6 to 18 years old in Schenectady's Boys & Girls Club. They've never been asked the question about abandoned properties in the neighborhood... And they walk past them every day... We asked [them the] questions 'What does it feel like to live in a community with abandoned homes?' and 'What does a community that cares about its residents look like?' They answered one of those questions on black canvass that we put up.

[We found that] they did not even realize there were abandoned properties and they walk past them every day... that's how normal it is for them ... that's considered a normal thing to walk past ... so [this effort] created an enormous platform... I looked at the paintings that these kids came up with and they make me emotional because it poured out of them and then we had sessions to really think about it.

Youth at the Boys and Girls Club in Schenectady put together a black art exhibit that illustrated what it feels like to live in a community with so many vacant buildings. 600 people walked through the gallery space. It was a manifestation of art bubbling out of the community.

There's a sculpture in there [with] teenagers holding up one of the Breathing Lights houses. That was thought of by the teens... They said, 'You never ask us to help with problems... you think we are the problem...' They came up with [the idea of them] holding up one of the houses breathing, and that is what we need them to start thinking... It's good to show them the world we want them to experience but we want them to experience the world from their beautiful home in Schenectady..."

Shane Bargy
Executive Director
Boys & Girls Club (Hub Leader)



SUCCESS STORY

Inspiring Investment in the Community

"Our first direct sale from Breathing Lights came last month and the applicant bought a building in the South End. They went to the Reclamation Clinic and learned about the Land Bank. They [also] went to Toolbox A at the Albany Barn and [afterward] they wrote us a letter. They were inspired by that presentation and discussion to kind of invest in the community, and they bought the property. There is direct sale and there is someone who attended the clinic and learned about the Land Bank and entered our process that we already have in place and made it more successful. "

Land Bank Executive Director



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The Center for Women in Government and Civil Society is a premiere academic research and education center with a social change agenda. The center advances a vision of a society where all people participate equally in shaping the future.

The center is part of Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York.

FOUR EMPHASIS AREA AND FOCUS OUR WORK

Women & Leadership

- We develop women leaders through academic and experiential learning.
- We conduct studies that critically examine women's leadership and monitor women's progress toward gender equity domestically and globally

Economic Security

- We facilitate restructuring of institutions and expanding opportunities for women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations

Health and Gender-Related Disparities

- We promote the proactive and deliberate integration of gender consideration in health policy development and implementation
- We study language access to healthcare for Limited English Proficient Patients

Safety & Wellbeing

- We study violence against women and its far reaching devastating impacts.
- We facilitate capacity building of civil society organization to combat violence against women in all its forms

For further information about the center, please contact us at cwgcs@albany.edu and 518.442.5127 – visit us at www.albany.edu/womeningov/

ADDENDUM

Social Return on Investment: Measuring Public Art's Impact

In addition to collecting data to verify that the targets above were achieved, we collected and analyzed macro-level data to see if there were any tangible outcomes, including movement on addressing the problem of vacant buildings, as well as opening of a window for policy change and economic revitalization.

We utilized the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology which lend itself well to evaluating a project that has social goals but those goals had different interpretations depending on the stakeholder. SROI monetizes the social value produced by *Breathing Lights* and accounts for dollars generated in social value in return from every dollar invested by Bloomberg Philanthropies. The rationale of monetizing social value is explained best in Nicholls et. al. (2009):

"Every day our actions and activities create and destroy value; they change the world around us. Although the value we create goes far beyond what can be captured in financial terms, this is, for the most part, the only type of value that is measured and accounted for. As a result, things that can be bought and sold take on a greater significance and many important things get left out. Decisions made like this may not be as good as they could be as they are based on incomplete information about full impacts. ... (Nicholls et. al. P. 8).

SROI is defined as follows

"Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework for measuring and accounting for this much broader concept of value; it seeks to reduce inequality and environmental degradation and improve wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits....SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organizations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value" (Nicholls et. al. 2009).

SROI is promoted as a means of capturing the value of social enterprises and in order to enable a deeper understanding of the broader impacts of social services. This evaluation tool enables us to quantify the value of these services in monetary terms (Millar & Hall, 2013). SROI uses the cost-benefit analysis principles to assign monetary values to social and environmental return and to capture social value created by investments. Yates & Marra (2017) contend that SROI "is being used increasingly in many areas of the world to advocate for, make, and manage major funding decisions." (P. 95).

The process we followed in calculating SROI allowed us to capture all outcomes along the spectrum of change that are experienced by key stakeholders. The methodology allowed us to measure impact on each of the key stakeholders and community members and give equal weight to all dimensions of change. The use of SROI allowed us to place the emphasis on the stakeholders and not be restricted to monitoring change in any single area. SROI is "designed to understand, manage and report on the social, environmental and economic value created." (Millar & Hall, 2013, P. 925).

SROI measures the value of social benefits to the relative cost invested to achieve those benefits. For example, SROI can measure impacts of social program such as interventions targeting eradication of

We recognize that change occurs on a continuum where outputs (activities generated by the BL project) create short-term outcomes (including change in perceptions of public art, increased appreciation and awareness of problems; and increased sense of pride and belonging) and long-term impacts (including translation of feelings to actual actions in support of art, mitigation and prevention of vacancy and support for community wellbeing). While the preceding analysis captured short-term outcomes, SROI is focused on primarily capturing long-term impacts and the translations of feelings of appreciation, awareness, pride and belonging to actions. SROI accounts for the monetary value of those actions.

infectious diseases, community policing, pollution mitigation initiatives and educational programs that target acquisition of skills and knowledge. (Yates and Marra, 2017). SROI, for example calculates savings no longer needed by healthier citizens, increased income, increased tax return to government, wellbeing and health knowledge that can be values in monetary units. Chisholmet et. al (2016) for example, quantified the social return on investments from depression and anxiety treatments. They conclude that scaled up treatment lead to 43 million extra years of healthy life and produce a net value of \$310 billion.

SROI can also measure negative benefits including increased use of health services caused by substance abuse treatments; reduced earnings by parents spending more time with their children, or reduced earnings as a result of individuals seeking personal growth opportunities (Yates & Marra, 2017).

SROI analysis produce a ratio of monetized social value.

$$\text{SROI} = \frac{\text{Net present value of benefits}}{\text{Net present value of investment}}$$

SROI calculates the net benefits to society after subtracting program costs including salaries, communications, facility rental, etc.).

SROI uses the same principles of cost/benefit analysis. SROI is created for the third sector and is ideally suited for evaluating social enterprises. While using similar elements if cost benefit and seek to express value in monetary terms, it heavily involves stakeholders at every stage of the evaluation. It captures how stakeholders value interventions.

The seven principles of using SROI methodology include (a) involving all stakeholders in measuring change; (b) understanding, describing and locating evidence for change experienced by stakeholders; (c) monetizing and valuing the change that is important to stakeholders; (d) providing sufficient information about inputs and outcomes to clarify logic of arguments and conclusions; (e) taking a conservative approach that refrains from over-claiming value and relies on research literature, stakeholders' information and program data to estimate value; (f) being transparent and explaining clearly the approach used to identify outcomes and indicators; (g) verify assumptions and estimations with stakeholders to ensure they are reasonable.

1. What is the theory of change of each Innovation fund program?
 - Who was involved in the program?
 - What were the investments (financial and other inputs)?
 - What activities were funded by the grant (outputs)?
2. What outcomes are attributable to the programs?
 - Which stakeholders experienced changes as a result of the program?
 - What were the outcomes of program activities (expected and unexpected)?
 - What evidence exists of changes connected to program activities?
 - What activities/changes would have occurred even without grant funding?
 - What or who else contributed to outcomes connected to Innovation Fund Activities
3. What is the value of those outcomes?
4. What is the ratio of inputs to outcome value?

The SROI Network establishes six key stages of an SROI analysis:

1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders who were involved in the process.
2. Mapping outcomes through fully engaging stakeholders and developing an impact map/theory of change, which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes.
3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value. Locating evidence of outcomes and assessing the value of those outcomes.
4. Establishing impact by verifying the change that happened as a result of the intervention and eliminating change that would have happened anyway with or without the intervention.
5. Calculating the SROI by adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives and comparing the result to the investment.
6. Reporting findings to stakeholders.

We used this staged process for generating the SROI as follows:

Step 1: Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders: At this first stage, we defined the scope of the analysis and the key stakeholders affected by the Breathing Lights project.

Step 1: Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders and Community Members

Stakeholders

- Neighborhood Residents
- Ambassadors
- Artists
- Community Hubs
- Policy Makers
- City employees
- Land Banks
- Non-profit Advocates
- Business Community



Step 2: Mapping Outcomes. An impact map or theory of change is developed to establish a relationship between inputs, outputs and short and long-term outcomes.

Stage 2: Mapping outcomes			
Inputs	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1 million Vacant Buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art Exhibit Art Awards Reclamation Clinic Trainings Hub Events Affinity Events Policy Summit Policy Roundtable Communication Plan Evaluation Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased appreciation of public art and creative assets Increased awareness of problem of vacant buildings Increased Community Engagement Increased awareness of role of Land Banks Increased sense of pride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Support for the Art Government-Level interventions, prevention and mitigation efforts to address vacancy and blight Fiscal support of the Land Banks Community investments of volunteer time and effort as well as philanthropic and charitable donations.



Step 3: Providing value and evidence for short and long-term outcomes. This stage involves documenting outcomes and placing a value on those outcomes.

Step 3: Valuing Outcomes				
Domain	Indicator	Financial Proxy	Value in currency	Source
Support for the Art	Funds for the Art	1. Grant to establish Art Plan for Capital Region ¹	\$49,000	• BL Project Director & Elizabeth Reiss, Art Center Director
		2. University at Albany President's Award to digitize BL ²	50,000	• BL Artist Adam Frelin & UAlbany news
		3. Grant to Albany Barn	500	• Albany Barn ED Kristin Holler
Prevention and mitigation efforts to address vacancy and blight	Increased capacity (human and financial to address issues Building Sales	4. City of Albany grant to address vacancy and hire new Vacant Building coordinator	250,000	• City of Albany official Robert Magee
		5. Land Bank Building sale value ³	905,704	• Land Bank Executive Directors
Support of the Land Banks	Funds for the Land Banks	6. Grant to Albany Land Bank ⁴	100,000	• Albany Land Bank ED
		7. Land Banks' Attorney General grant ⁵	3,442,421	• Public media
Community investment-volunteer Time, money and effort	Time and funds	8. Visitors' Expenditures	11,520	• Project survey data
		9. Philanthropic Donations ⁶	227,000	• BL project Director
		10. In-Kind Donations ⁷ 11. Volunteer Time ⁸	240,280 12,000	• BL Project Director • Community Foundation ED
		12. GHFI Learning Network ⁹	75,000	• Community Foundation ED
Contributions to the regional economy	Taxes, revenues and increased property value	13. Income tax – All project hires ¹⁰	70,715	• BL Director Judie Gilmore
		14. Property Tax revenues generated from Bldg. Sales ¹¹	40,815	• Estimates are based on buildings sold
		15. Anticipated increase in vacant building registration revenues. ¹²	30,000	• Robert Magee, Albany City official
		16. Increased Property Value for Adjacent Houses ¹³	967,680	• Study conducted by Temple University ¹⁴
Total Value			\$6,472,635	

Step 4. Establishing impact - Calculating Deadweight, i.e. aspects of change that would have happened anyway, displacement, i.e. displaced activities and attribution, i.e. other factors contributing to change. Impact is then calculated by subtracting deadweight, displacement and attribution.

Step 4: Establishing Impact				
Domain	Financial Proxy	Value in currency	Deadweight & Displacement	Impact
Support for the Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant to establish Art Plan for Capital Region University at Albany President's Award to digitize BL Grant to Albany Barn 	\$49,000 50,000 500	80% ¹⁵ 0% ¹⁶ 0%	9,800 50,000 500
Prevention and mitigation efforts to address vacancy and blight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Albany grant to address problem and hire new Employee Land Bank Building sales 	250,000 Albany 760,000 Troy 75,000 Schenectady 70,704	50% ¹⁷ 92% ¹⁸ 90% ¹⁹ 40% ²⁰	125,000 60,800 7,500 42,422
Support of the Land Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant to Albany Land Bank Land Bank Attorney General grant 	100,000 3,442,421 Total 1,040,834 Albany 701,587 Troy 1,700,000 Schenectady	90% ²¹ 90% ²² 80% ²³ 75% ²⁴	10,000 104,083 140,317 425,000
Community investment- volunteer Time, money and effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors' Expenditure Philanthropic Donations In-Kind Donations Volunteer Time GHHI Learning Network 	11,520 227,000 240,280 12,000 75,000	23% ²⁵ 0% ²⁶ 0% ²⁷ 0% ²⁸ 0% ²⁹	8,870 227,000 339,400 12,000 75,000
Contributions to the regional economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income tax – All project hires³⁰ Property Tax revenues generated from Bldg. Sales Vacant Building Registration Revenues Increase anticipated (after hiring new coordinator) Increased Property Value for Adjacent Houses 	70,715 Total 40,815 Albany 34,128 Troy 2,961 Schenectady 3,726 30,000 Albany 967,680 Schenectady 645,120 Troy 80,640 241,920	0% 92% ³¹ 90% ³² 40% ³³ 50% ³⁴ 92% ³⁵ 90% ³⁶ 40% ³⁷	70,715 5,262 2,730 296 2,236 15,000 51,609 8,064 145,152
Total Net Attributed to BL Investments		1,839,638		

Step 5: Calculating the SROI. – This stage involves dividing the net value created by *Breathing Lights* by the investments made in the project by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

NET TOTAL VALUE OF BL PROJECT	\$1,839,638
NET INVESTMENT IN BL PROJECT by BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES	\$1,000,000
SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENTS IN THE BREATHING LIGHTS PROJECT	1.84

The results show that every \$1 invested by Bloomberg Philanthropies in the *Breathing Lights* project, \$1.84 were stimulated. This is a very conservative estimate that did not take into consideration municipal costs involved in the management of abandoned buildings including trash removal, policing, fire abatement, etc. Every building that becomes occupied translates into municipal savings that we could not estimate for this project despite best efforts to have city managers provide an estimate. It also does not take into consideration the impacts of youth development activities including youth media and youth art on participants.



SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

ENDNOTES

¹ Art Center of the Capital Region plays a critical role in the art community.

² This is a competitive grant received from the University at Albany. Application was submitted by lead Artist Adam Frelín.

³ Albany County Land Bank sold 24 properties at a total of \$760,000. Schenectady Land Bank sold 9 properties at a total of \$70,704 and Troy Land Bank sold 3 properties at a total of \$75,000. All sales occurred during the Breathing Lights project. Total Building sales are \$905,704.

⁴ Albany County Land Bank received a national Technical Assistance scholarship, competitively awarded by the Center for Community progress. The grant was valued at \$100,000.

⁵ New York State Attorney General issued a grant to Capital District Land Banks. Source of funds is financial settlements made through the Office of the Attorney General. Albany received \$1,040,834, Troy received \$701,587 and the total award for Schenectady was \$1,700,000.

⁶ Philanthropic matching funds include all hard cash contributed by corporations, foundations, businesses and individuals.

⁷ In kind donations include 65,000 WMHT documentary production, 75,000 WMHT marketing & communications about BL documentary, 35,000 office space for artist, 10,000 Design Engineering Consultation, 7,500 Design Prototype, 2,000 Building Reclamation Clinics, 7,800 Affinity Projects, 2,500 Summit/Finale space, 17,980 Community Foundation in-kind staff time, 17,500 Evaluation team in-kind time.

⁸ The three cities collaborated to develop a collective proposal to New York State to secure \$10 million from the State of New York to address prevention and mitigation of blight. Approximately 20 organizations were involved. Group met three times in person and interacted virtually over 3 months. On average (with some spending more time than others), five people, 40 hours x an average rate of \$60/hour = \$12,000. Effort is trying to activate \$6-10m.

⁹ The three cities of the Capital applied and received a *Green & Healthy Home Learning Network* designation. \$75,000 were raised to receive technical assistance from the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative <http://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/>

¹⁰ The personnel hires through BL include the salaries of Project Director - \$65,000, Lead Artist - \$65,000, Lead Architect - \$12,000, CFGCR Staff/Admin - \$37,980 (\$20k from Bloomberg; \$17,980 in-kind), TAP Staff/Admin - Budgeted \$83,050, Event manager, site coordinators & assistants - \$9,400, Ambassadors - \$11,400, Contracting Labor - \$255,000. Does not include subcontractors. Local income tax burden used is 12.7% referring to the following resource: <https://files.taxfoundation.org/legacy/docs/BurdensMap-01.png>

¹¹ Property taxes are estimated for the City of Albany at 34,128 (properties sold are valued at 760,000. There were 24 vacant buildings sold. Average value of each building is \$32,000 and taxes levied for each building would be estimated at \$1,422. For Schenectady, property taxes are estimated at 3,726 for properties sold at 70,704. Each of the 9 buildings are estimated to be worth \$7,856. Taxes levied for each building are estimated at \$414. For Troy, property value for each of the three buildings is \$25,000. For each building, property taxes of \$987 are estimated for a total property taxes of 2,961. Figures are generated from the Empire Center for Public Policy's Property Tax Calculator. Available at <http://seethroughnny.net/benchmarking/property-tax-calculator/#>

¹² Increase anticipated after hiring new coordinator.

¹³ A study by Temple University's Center for Public Policy in 2001 estimated that the presence of an abandoned house on a block decreases the value of all other adjacent properties by an average of \$6,720 according to multivariate analysis of the effects of abandonment on sales prices. <https://astro.temple.edu/~ashlay/blight.pdf>

¹⁴ Estimates are based on increased value to four adjacent buildings from the sale of each building. In Albany 24 buildings sold will generate \$645,120 in total value to adjacent properties. In Troy, 3 buildings sold will generate \$80,640 in increased value and in Schenectady, 9 buildings sold generated \$241,920 in total value. Each building will generate 26,880 for the 4 adjacent properties. Total generated value is 967,680.

¹⁵ Estimate of deadweight is provided by Elizabeth Reiss, ED of the Art Center. ED attributed 20% to the BL effect.

¹⁶ Award would not have happened without BL. Award is provided to create a digital archive of BL.

¹⁷ Survey of city staff to determine deadweight and displacement %. The response from the city official indicated strongly that BL was a significant factor and very likely was part of the reason they won the maximum amount of \$250,000. Percentage is attributed by the evaluation team based on the response.

¹⁸ Albany County Land Bank said that 2 out of 24 vacant buildings were sold as a direct result of the Breathing Lights Toolbox Training Program. \$760,000 were collected from 24 buildings. Displacement rate was calculated at 92%. 8% of sales are attributed to the BL effect.

¹⁹ Troy Land Bank sold 3 properties at \$25,000 each. ED of Troy Land Bank attributed 10% of these sales to BL.

²⁰ Schenectady Land Bank sold 9 vacant homes for a total of \$70,704, since October of 2016; attributed 60% of sales to BL.

²¹ ED of Albany Land Bank indicated that winning a national technical assistance scholarship was a direct result of BL-induced visibility to the Land Bank of Albany County. He attributed 10% to BL.

²² The percentage is based on estimates provided by Albany Land Bank ED who attributed 10% to the BL effect.

²³ The percentage is based on estimates by ED of Troy Land Bank who attributed 20% to BL effect.

²⁴ Capital Region Land Bank (Schenectady) ED indicated that 25% should be attributed to the BL effect. BL contribution is 25% to the award of the grant.

²⁵ 77 % of respondents stated that they were at BL installation or affinity event(s) intentionally and planned accordingly. We used this as a proxy to determine what the deadweight visitors' expenditure would be if the BL project had not happened.

²⁶ We surveyed the Community Foundation to determine deadweight %. ED confirmed that all the giving can be attributed to BL.

²⁷ All attributions for In-kind contributions are attributed to BL.

²⁸ ED of Community Foundation attributed collective proposal development to BL.

²⁹ ED of Community Foundation attributed collective mobilization to become a Green & Healthy Home Learning Network to BL.

³⁰ Income tax for all project personnel hired during the project period was estimated using The Tax Foundation Calculator. Available at <https://taxfoundation.org/> No deadweight calculated. Hires would not have happened without BL.

³¹ ED of Land Bank attributed 8% of sales to BL. Deadweight is calculated at 92%.

³² ED of Troy Land Bank attributed 10% of sales to the BL effect. Deadweight is calculated at 90%.

³³ ED of Schenectady Land Bank attributed 60% of sales to the BL effect. Deadweight is calculated at 40%.

³⁴ Albany City official indicated that the BL effect is estimated at 50%. Deadweight is calculated at 50%.

³⁵ 8% of sales of vacant buildings is attributed to the BL effect according to Albany Land Bank Executive. 92% is deadweight.

³⁶ 10% of sales of buildings in Troy is attributed to BL and deadweight is calculated at 90%.

³⁷ ED of Schenectady Land Bank attributed 60% of sales of the 9 buildings to the BL effect. Deadweight is calculated at 40%.

References

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