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PHILADELPHIA'S ICONIC BOATHOUSE ROW LIGHTS RETURN

Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Debut Upgraded System on March 7

New on Instagram: [@boathouserowlights!](https://www.instagram.com/boathouserowlights/) Don't forget to tag [@myphillypark](https://www.instagram.com/myphillypark/) and [@philaparkandrec](https://www.instagram.com/philaparkandrec/) in posts!

PHILADELPHIA – February 7, 2024 – **Philadelphia's iconic Boathouse Row has received a major glow-up and will once again illuminate the historic buildings along the Schuylkill River beginning the evening of Thursday, March 7, 2024.** Fairmount Park Conservancy partnered with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation to replace and upgrade the previous light system, at a cost of \$2.1 million. The Official Boathouse Row Relighting Ceremony will be a free public event with leaders from Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, and city officials with speaking remarks at 6 pm and, at 7 pm, a short light show celebrating the new system.

Media are invited to a special viewing area for the Official Boathouse Row Relighting Ceremony on the evening of March 7. Please contact Cari Feiler Bender at cari@reliefcomm.com for details.

The previous lights experienced outages due to ongoing maintenance issues, as well as damage from animals and weather. The new project



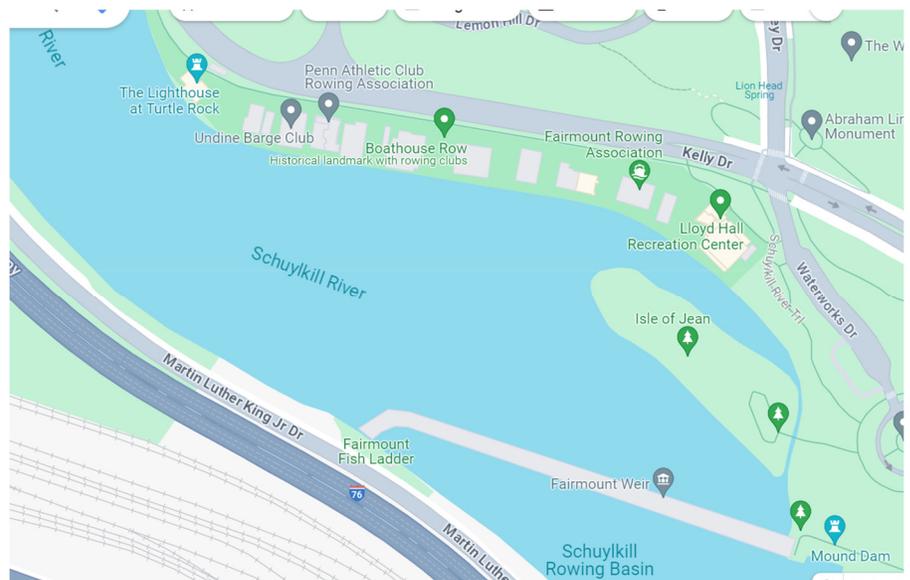
completely redesigned and upgraded the lighting system to keep Boathouse Row's lights on for years to come. The new lighting system has 6,400 individual LED lights, with 16 million color combinations. Lightings will be able to change from one color to another or be programmed in a way that appears to make them sparkle or "dance" along the boathouses. Lights will be able to fade from one to the next, also creating ombre effects and highlighting eclectic architectural features of the historic structures with different colors.

"We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Joanna McNeil Lewis for her unwavering support of this project and her ongoing commitment to showcasing what is best about Philadelphia," remarked **Maura McCarthy, PhD., Chief Executive Officer of Fairmount Park Conservancy**. "Fairmount Park Conservancy's staff brings a wealth of experience in managing complex projects, and our team has worked tirelessly to return this cherished symbol to the shining status it deserves to be."

"The light reflected on the Schuylkill River from Boathouse Row is there as we celebrate big moments as a City," said **Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Commissioner Orlando Rendon**.

"We are incredibly grateful to the project funders, and our partners at Fairmount Park Conservancy for preserving and modernizing the historic lighting traditions that make Boathouse Row such a cherished public space for all Philadelphians."

The Official Boathouse Row Relighting Ceremony will take place on Thursday, March 7 from 6-8 pm along Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive at the Fish Ladder, directly across the river from Boathouse Row. Food trucks, music, and the ideal viewing location will be available to the public, with a ceremony beginning at 6 pm, followed by



the illumination at 7 pm. The illumination will feature a short light show that will repeat. **NOTE:** Due to the ongoing construction of the MLK Bridge, access to the viewing site along MLK Drive is

only accessible from Sweetbriar Drive or Black Road. Limited parking is available at a lot between those two streets along MLK Drive (west of the Fish Ladder). Guests will then have approximately a 15-20 minute walk to the ceremony and viewing location. Alternate public viewing is available from points near the Fairmount Water Works.

The Boathouse Row Lights can be booked for special events, holidays, sponsored shows, and individual requests, with fees going directly to the ongoing maintenance of the Boathouse Row lights. Anyone can become a Boathouse Row Lighting Partner to put a special cause in the city's spotlight. Pricing will vary for non-profits and private companies as well as depending on the complexity and duration of the display. To learn more about customized lights and to make a request, email info@boathouserowlights.org or visit boathouserowlights.org. A new Instagram handle, [@boathouserowlights](https://www.instagram.com/boathouserowlights), will showcase the new lights regularly, highlighting special events and unique lightings.

Introduced in 1979, the lighting along Boathouse Row has become an iconic feature along the Schuylkill River, where most of the boathouses date back to the 19th century. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The houses moved over to LED lighting in 2005 and were last refurbished in 2016. The \$2.1 million project, managed by Fairmount Park Conservancy, completely replaced the failing system, which struggled with significant connectivity challenges, regular power outages, and mounting issues. The project included upgraded technology and durable housing boxes to protect the system from weather and wildlife damages.

Women-owned and Philadelphia-based lighting design firm The Lighting Practice designed an upgraded custom lighting system with robust mounting channels for installation on Boathouse Row's 12 historic buildings. Fairmount Park Conservancy worked with Eagle Industrial Electric as the onsite contractor and Nanometer to custom fabricate lighting materials. Special thanks is due to the Schuylkill Navy for coordinating with each of the 15 rowing clubs who occupy the 12 buildings, and to the clubs themselves for their cooperation during the construction.

The houses went dark in March 2023. Following the removal of the old light system, the individual boat houses had an opportunity to address any deferred building repairs that were previously inaccessible because of the lights. Some of the houses replaced their roofs, and a few did structural

repairs which were uncovered after the removal of the previous lighting system. Many did carpentry repairs and painting on the exterior of their historic buildings. One house even completely replaced the chimney because drone footage from the construction team revealed necessary masonry stabilization. In the long term, the time spent on repairs will protect both the lighting system and the historic houses.

The lighting system all feeds to a central control at Lloyd Hall. Each night the lights are automatically scheduled to go on at sunset and off at sunrise. For special events, holidays, sponsored shows, and individual requests, the lights will be programmed by the staff of Fairmount Park Conservancy through a custom web application.

For Frequently Asked Questions about Boathouse Row's lights, visit here:
<https://myphillypark.org/what-we-do/capital-projects/relighting-of-boathouse-row/>.

Funds to replace the lights and underwrite the lighting project were provided by the Joanna McNeil Trust and the City of Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR) advances the prosperity of the city and the progress of its people through stewardship of nearly 10,200 acres of public land and waterways, and management of 500 recreation buildings, 166 miles of trail, and 250 playgrounds. PPR offers safe, enjoyable recreation, environmental and cultural programs and events throughout Philadelphia's parks and recreation system. PPR promotes the well-being and growth of the city's residents by connecting them to the natural world, to each other and to fun, physical and social opportunities. More than 3,000 full-time and seasonal employees proudly serve Philly residents every day, ensuring the department remains a modern, equitable and exceptional parks and recreation system. Visit www.phila.gov/parksandrec, and follow @philaparkandrec on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

Fairmount Park Conservancy brings parks to life. We work with the City of Philadelphia and its communities to steward our parks and nurture our shared environment, cultural resources, and public health. We lead capital projects and historic preservation efforts, foster neighborhood park stewardship, attract and leverage investments, and develop innovative programs throughout the 10,200 acres that include Fairmount Park, six other watershed parks and more than 130 neighborhood parks and gardens around the city. For more information, please visit myphillypark.org, and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @myphillypark.

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Photo by Albert Yee for Fairmount Park Conservancy.

NOTE this photo is of the PREVIOUS lights. New photo and video assets of the upgraded system will be available in advance of March 7. Contact Cari Feiler Bender for more information.

For more historic photos of Boathouse Row, download high-resolution images here:
<http://bit.ly/ConservancyPressKit>.