

LOWELL
WATERWAYS
VITALITY
INITIATIVE



PROJECT UPDATE

2025

It is an honor to co-chair the Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative (Waterways). From the dramatic confluence of the Concord and Merrimack Rivers to the unique beauty of the 5.6 mile canal system, to the legacy – both positive and negative – of our once humming and massive mills – there is so much to share and highlight when it comes to Lowell’s rich history and water-based assets.

The city has seen and overcome many challenges. In Lowell and many other urban environments, economic decline pushed history and pride aside. The future was very much in doubt. Residents turned their backs on what were once strengths and assets. Struggling with day-to-day challenges, resources were lost or abandoned. In the 1970’s, a group of educators and business leaders stepped forward. They helped Lowell to recognize and capitalize on the value of its culture and physical attributes.

Today, the Waterways Initiative, with technical and financial guidance from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF), strives to continue efforts to preserve, illuminate and make accessible Lowell’s amazing assets, for both present and future generations.

In the future, we hope to light smokestacks, aid in access to water based assets trails and pathways, inspire and involve young people, and in general, add to the vibrancy of the city by enhancing these opportunities. You are welcome to join us by making a contribution or volunteering your time. We thank our partners for their inspiring work to date.

For additional information about Waterways, visit lowellwaterways.com. For additional information about the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, visit glcfoundation.org.



Jay Linnehan
President & CEO
Greater Lowell Community Foundation



Fred Faust
Chair
Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative

About the Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative

Waterways is a partnership coalition created by the Lowell Heritage Partnership with the City of Lowell, GLCF, Lowell National Historical Park, and others. Waterways operates under a fiscal sponsorship with GLCF. Its mission is to enhance the everyday experience of people in Lowell by making the city’s historic waterways more accessible, active, and vibrant. Waterways is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion inviting all interested parties to participate in these efforts, as well as expanding partnerships, and engaging young people in our work and history.

Waterways envisions a Lowell community that is forward thinking about protecting and utilizing its wealth of water resources for the enjoyment and benefit of residents and visitors.

SWAMP LOCKS LIGHTING PROJECT



In April 2024, Waterways completed its latest lighting project, the illumination of the Swamp Locks gatehouse, which was unveiled in a public lighting ceremony. The multi-color lighting of this historic gatehouse, located in the heart of the Hamilton Canal Innovation District, marks the third completed lighting project for Waterways. Previously completed projects include the John E. Cox Memorial Bridge (May 2018) and Joseph R. Ouellette Bridge (October 2022).

The Swamp Locks project would not have been possible without the strong and continuous support of State Senator Edward Kennedy. As a result of this and the championing of Waterways initiatives, Senator Kennedy was awarded the first "Waterways Champion of the Year," as part of the lighting ceremonies.

Project partners included the City of Lowell, Lowell National Historical Park, and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

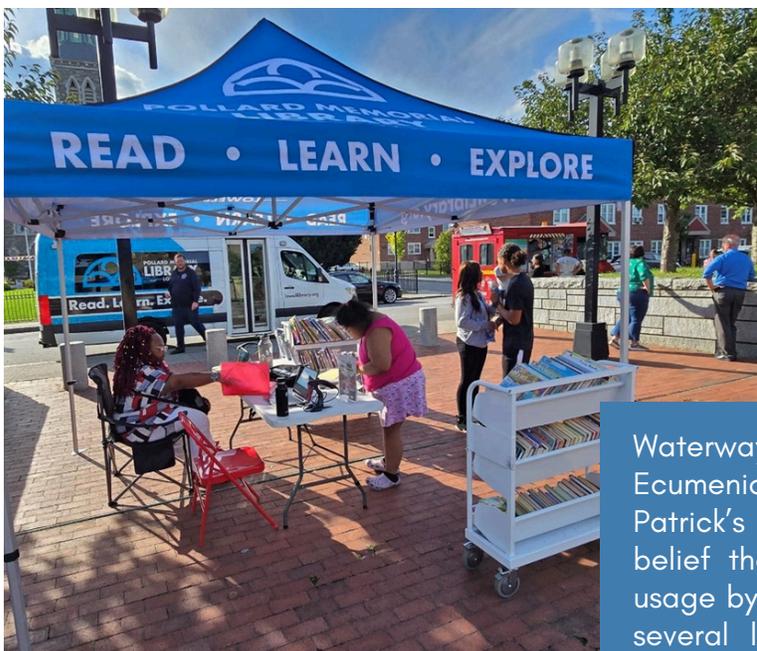


CHURCH LIGHTING PROJECTS



Waterways has advocated for and helped fund the design for the future lighting of the facades of the historic St. Patrick's Church and the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. The lighting at St. Patrick's Church is expected to be completed in 2025.

ECUMENICAL PLAZA ADVOCACY



Waterways is advocating for the renovation and activation of Ecumenical Plaza, an underutilized public space adjacent to St. Patrick's Church and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. It is our belief that with small improvements this space would increase usage by the neighborhood and for events. Waterways has hosted several listening and idea sessions with neighbors and other stakeholders. In September of 2024, we hosted 'An Afternoon on the Plaza' that featured the Pollard Memorial Bookmobile and free ice cream as an example of how a small activation livens up the space.

RIVERWALK MAINTENANCE



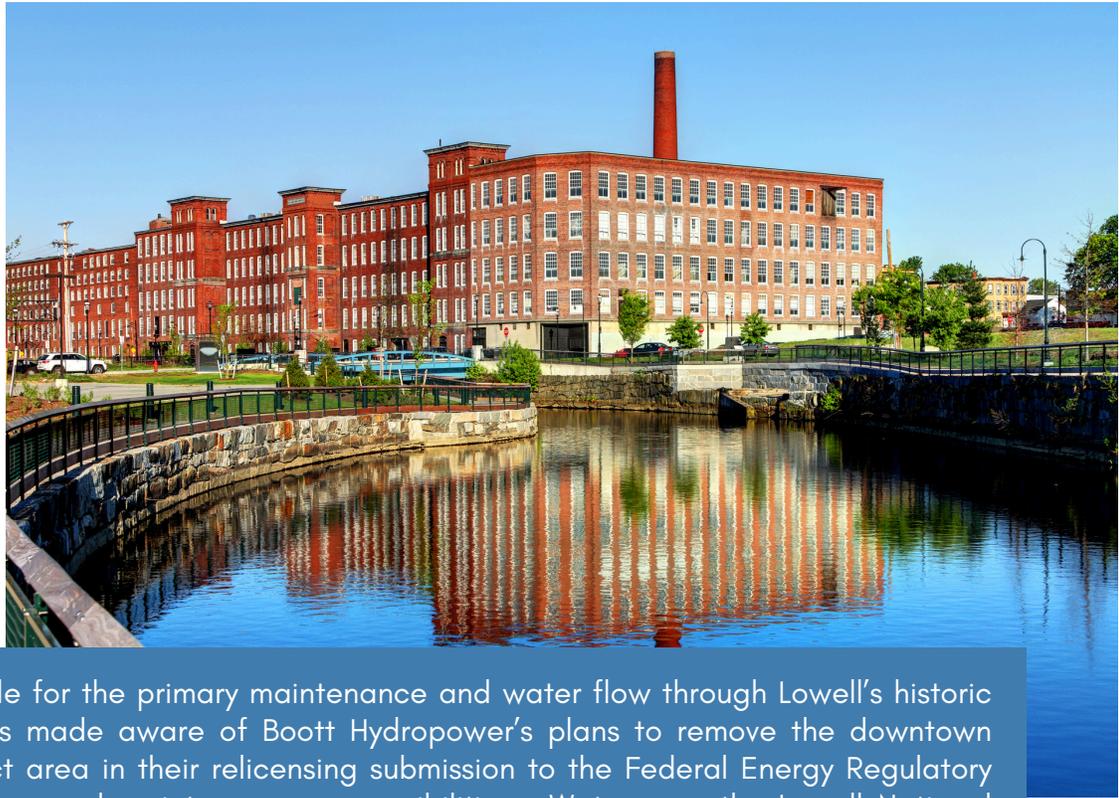
The downtown side of the Riverwalk on the Merrimack River is a great resource for Lowell residents and visitors. Waterways is advocating for improved maintenance of the Riverwalk including graffiti removal, litter pickup/reduction, and vegetation management. Waterways is working with the City, UMass Lowell, Downtown Neighborhood Association, residents, and others to improve this amazing resource and make sure that it is accessible and welcoming. The City has recently implemented a new Lowell 311 maintenance app and website which includes a link for Riverwalk maintenance needs that can be submitted by the public. Go to: Lowellma.gov/311.

SMOKESTACK LIGHTING



Waterways is exploring lighting a series of smokestacks around downtown Lowell prioritizing those visible from the Merrimack River. This includes the smokestacks at Boott Mills, Renaissance on the River, Massachusetts Mills, and Wannalancit Mills. Much like the lighting of the iconic Merrimack River bridges, a series of illuminated smokestacks would dramatically enhance and highlight Lowell's nationally significant industrial history. Below is a photograph of the test lighting of the Wannalancit smokestack.

DOWNTOWN CANAL ADVOCACY



Boott Hydropower is responsible for the primary maintenance and water flow through Lowell's historic canal system. Waterways was made aware of Boott Hydropower's plans to remove the downtown canal system from their project area in their relicensing submission to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), giving up canal maintenance responsibilities. Waterways, the Lowell National Historical Park, and other organizations advocated for continuing maintenance and repair as part of the relicensing process with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Fortunately, Boott Hydropower recently revised their relicensing application to keep the canals in their project area and to continue maintenance of the canal system, which is central to Lowell's history and critical resources.

ROURKE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT LIGHTING

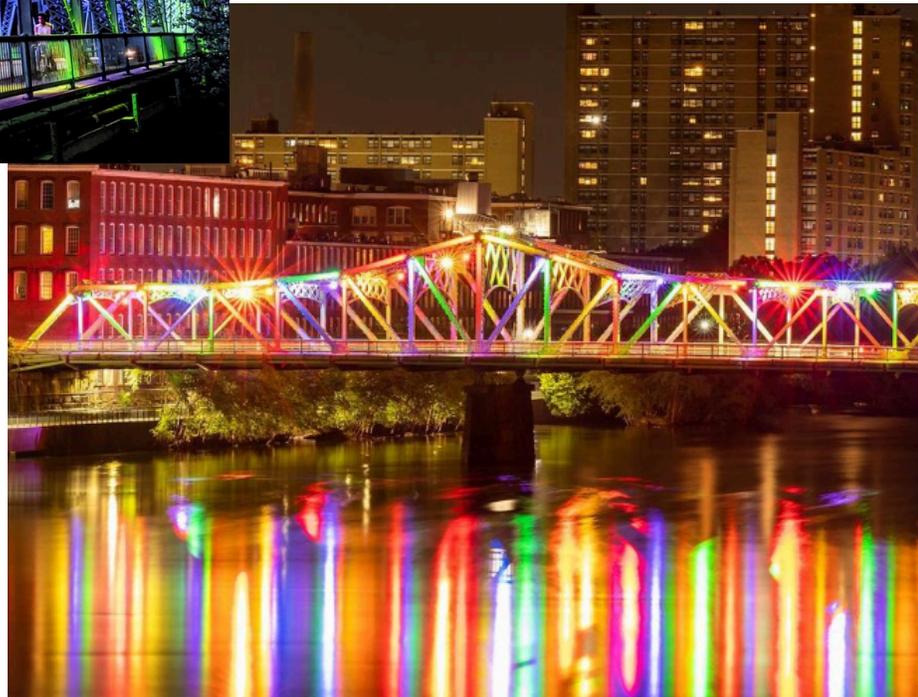
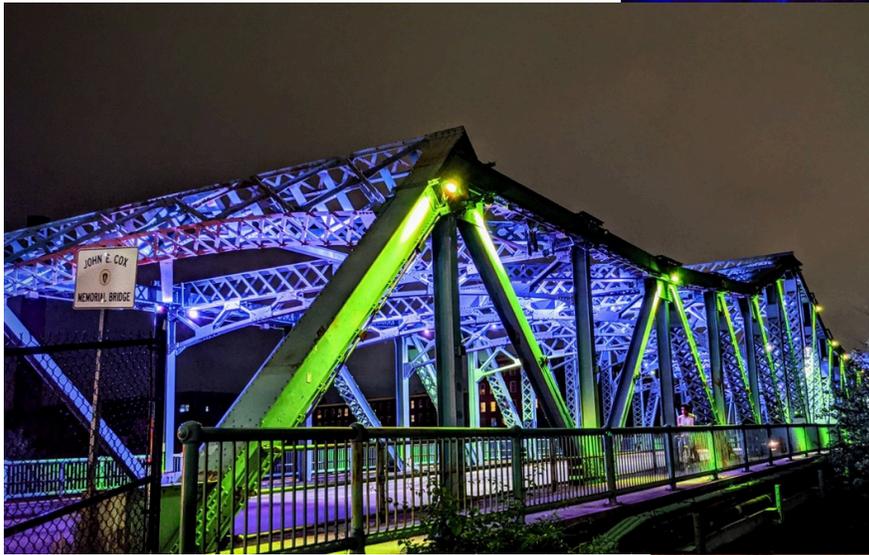


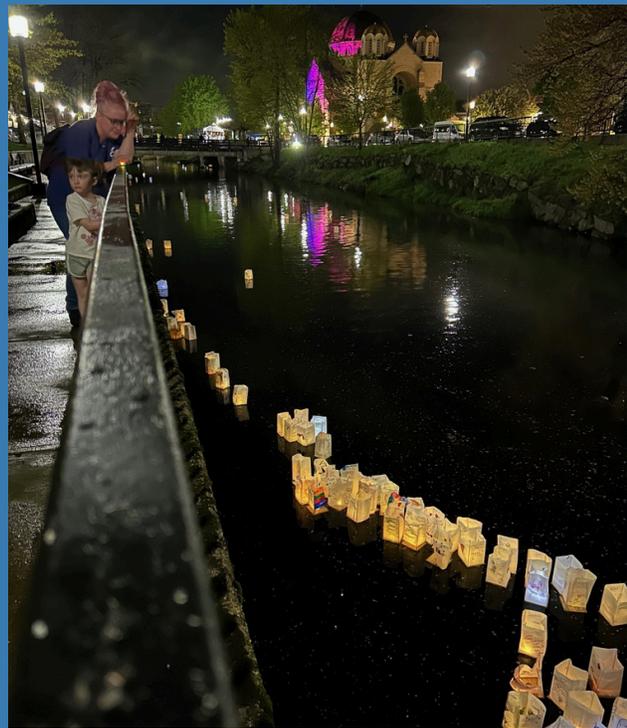
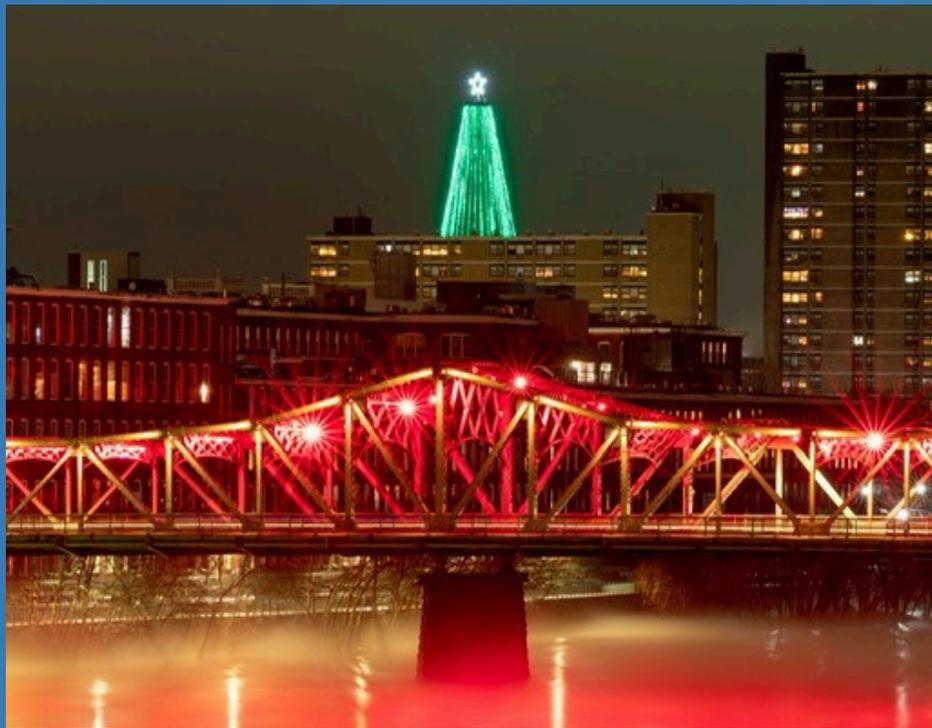
The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) designed a long-awaited replacement for the Rourke Bridge in Lowell. Waterways consulted with Mass DOT on decorative lighting for the replacement bridge, sharing our experience with the lighting of the Cox and Ouellette Bridges. The accelerated project has been awarded to the Skanska Company and is scheduled to start construction later in 2025. Mass DOT will make a final decision on lighting design and maintain lighting controls for the bridge as part of their operating authority. Waterways is excited to see the Commonwealth recognizing the opportunity to illuminate our local bridge crossings on the amazing resource that is the Merrimack River.

HOLIDAY LIGHTING PROGRAMS

Waterways has maintained a robust calendar of holiday lighting programs on the John E. Cox Memorial Bridge since the lights were first unveiled in May of 2018.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Valentine's Day
President's Day
St. Patrick's Day
Easter
Earth Day
Memorial Day
Juneteenth
Independence Day
Halloween
Veteran's Day
Hanukkah
Christmas
New Years Eve





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