

Philadelphia Visitor Center Announces Plan to Bring Back the Iconic Wanamaker Light Show and Dickens Village for 2025 Holiday Season

Fundraising campaign invites Philadelphians to help preserve beloved holiday traditions and the historic Wanamaker Organ

PHILADELPHIA (July 25, 2025) – The [Philadelphia Visitor Center](#) (Visitor Center), in partnership with TF Cornerstone (TFC), today announced plans to bring back two of Philadelphia's most cherished holiday traditions: the Wanamaker Light Show and Dickens Village. The Visitor Center will lead efforts to preserve, reinstall, and publicly present the attractions for the 2025 holiday season—and ensure their long-term stewardship for future generations.

Dating back to 1956, the Wanamaker Light Show has become a defining part of Philadelphia's holiday identity, captivating generations with its dazzling lights, music of the Wanamaker Organ, and magical storytelling. Hundreds of thousands of guests visit the Light Show and Dickens Village each year, making it one of the region's most treasured seasonal attractions.

The legacy was placed into uncertainty earlier this year when Macy's announced the closure of its Center City location, which had hosted the attractions for more than two decades.

"For nearly 70 years, generations of Philadelphians have stood beneath the twinkling Light Show and listened to the sounds of the Wanamaker Organ. I can remember coming here as a young girl with my parents, and have wonderful memories of bringing my own daughters here each holiday season," said **Kathryn Ott Lovell, President & CEO, Philadelphia Visitor Center**. "These aren't just attractions—they're emotional touchstones. When the closure of Macy's put them at risk, we knew we had to act."

To safeguard these iconic attractions, the Visitor Center, in partnership with the new owner of the Wanamaker Building, TFC, will oversee installation and public access to the attractions, as part of its mission to enhance the visitor experience in Philadelphia.

"Since our earliest conversations about the Wanamaker Building, we've heard again and again how essential the Light Show and Dickens Village are to Philadelphia's holiday experience," said **Jake Elghanayan, Senior Vice President, TFC**. "We immediately understood the significance and sought to honor that legacy and ensure these cherished traditions can continue in the hearts and holiday memories of Philadelphians."

"I commend the Philadelphia Visitor Center and TF Cornerstone for stepping up to preserve two of our city's most treasured holiday traditions," said **Philadelphia City Councilmember Mark Squilla (1st District)**. "Their leadership will ensure that the magic of the Wanamaker Light Show and Dickens Village will continue to bring joy to families across Philadelphia. I'm proud to support this effort and encourage the public to join in helping keep these iconic experiences alive for generations to come."

The Visitor Center is also working in partnership with the Friends of the Wanamaker Organ, who have extensive expertise in the Light Show and Dickens Village after stewarding their presentation for decades.

“We are delighted in this partnership, bringing back the thrilling experience that a crowd of 10,000 people paid homage to just four months ago when Macy’s closed,” said **Ray Biswanger, Executive Director, Friends of the Wanamaker Organ**. “Christmas is magic again in Philadelphia!”

Public Campaign to “Save the Light Show”

To bring the vision to life, the Visitor Center is launching a public fundraising campaign to **“Save the Light Show”** with a goal to raise \$350,000. Funds will support the installation and presentation of the Light Show and Dickens Village for the 2025 season, as well as their long-term care and accessibility. A portion of funds raised will also support the maintenance and tuning of the Wanamaker Organ for the holiday season as well as its daily concerts that accompany the Light Show, led by John Wanamaker Grand Court Organist Peter Richard Conte.

Contributions can be made at [SaveTheLightShow.org](https://www.savethelightshow.org).

Ott Lovell added: “I can’t imagine a holiday season without a visit to the Wanamaker Building with my family, and I know many Philadelphians feel the same. To keep this magical experience alive, we need your help. If you love the Light Show and Dickens Village, please consider a donation. We’re both confident and hopeful that Philadelphians will rally behind this effort, because without their support, the future of this beloved tradition is at risk.”

Donors to the “Save the Light Show” campaign will receive special incentives, including:

\$25 – “I Saved the Light Show” Magnet

Show your support with the exclusive “I Saved the Light Show” magnet—perfect for your fridge, office, or holiday decor.

\$150 – Limited Edition Candle

Includes the magnet, plus a custom-poured Wanamaker Light Show scented candle by local, woman- and minority-owned business Color and Flame.

\$250 – “Behind the Lights” Art Print

Includes all previous gifts, plus a limited edition art print capturing the magic behind the show.

\$500 – “Best Seat in the House” Experience for Four

Includes all previous gifts, plus exclusive access to the “Best Seat in the House”—a private viewing area for up to four (4) guests at a Light Show time of your choosing. Donors will receive a special link to reserve their preferred time slot online.

\$1,000 – VIP Preview + “Best Seat in the House” Experience for Six

Includes all previous gifts, with upgraded access to “Best Seat in the House” for up to six (6) guests with a view of the Wanamaker Organ, and two (2) tickets to the exclusive 2025 VIP Preview Lighting Event, offering a behind-the-scenes first look before the show opens to the public.

No incentive gifts will be mailed and instead will be available for pickup in person at Philadelphia Visitor Center locations.

To amplify the impact of public giving, the William Penn Foundation has issued a generous challenge grant, pledging to match all donations dollar-for-dollar up to \$100,000.

“Philadelphia has long been defined by the traditions that bring people together,” said **Shawn McCaney, Executive Director of the William Penn Foundation**. “By supporting iconic experiences like the Wanamaker Christmas Light Show and Dickens Village, we’re helping to preserve the cultural heritage and a shared experience that makes this city so unique - for today’s residents and future generations alike.”

The Connelly Foundation has also generously contributed a \$100,000 grant to the effort.

“Philadelphians love their traditions,” said **Tom Riley, President of the Connelly Foundation**. “Preserving this family classic is a cheerful boost for our city—and a great way to kick off a year of celebrations in 2026.”

A Cultural and Economic Anchor

Beyond their cultural significance, the Wanamaker Light Show and Dickens Village deliver a significant economic impact on the Philadelphia region. A study by Econsult Solutions estimates that 400,000 unique attendees visit the Light Show and Dickens Village each year—nearly half from outside the city—contributing an estimated \$31.7 million in total economic impact. Their return is key to Center City’s vitality during the holiday season.

“Center City’s holiday experience has grown into something truly special over the past 20 years, with the Christmas Village, activations at LOVE Park, City Hall, and Dilworth Park. The Wanamaker Light Show is where it all began,” said **Karen Fegely, Acting Director of Commerce, City of Philadelphia**. “Preserving these traditions supports our local economy—bringing Philadelphians and visitors out to enjoy local restaurants and shop at our exceptional retailers.”

TFC continues to emphasize its commitment to preserving the Wanamaker Building’s historical integrity and cultural character. As part of the Save the Light Show announcement, Opera Philadelphia General Director & President Anthony Roth Costanzo also shared plans to curate and present live musical performances and artistic programming in the building highlighting the Wanamaker Organ through the summer and fall of 2025. More details and ticketing information will be available in the coming weeks.

About the Philadelphia Visitor Center

The Philadelphia Visitor Center connects visitors to memorable, authentic, and fun Philly experiences at our four visitor center locations: 6th and Market, City Hall, Love Park, and the Parkway. It facilitates the operation of the Independence Visitor Center, the primary point of orientation for Independence National Historical Park and the official visitor center of the Philadelphia region, including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. PVCC also operates the Philly PHLASH seasonal public transit service, and The Liberty View, a private event space at The Independence Visitor Center overlooking the Liberty Bell and Independence Mall. For more information, please visit www.phlvisitorcenter.com.

About TF Cornerstone

TF Cornerstone (TFC) is a family-owned real estate development company with origins in Queens. The company is committed to long-term, multi-generational ownership and management and becomes a permanent fixture in all communities where it develops. From initial planning and construction, through leasing and management, TFC cultivates and supports surrounding communities long after a project's completion. Founded by Tom and Fred Elghanayan in 1970 with the renovation of a small brownstone, TFC now owns and operates nearly 12,000 residential units in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Long Island City, and over 5 million square feet of commercial, office and retail space in NY, DC, VA and PA. With several momentous developments on the horizon, TFC continues to build on its tradition of long-term investment in New York City and beyond.

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