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**SEE OMAHA DAZZLE**

***Lights Return to Gene Leahy Mall Through Partnership with The RiverFront***

(OMAHA, Nebr.) November 17, 2022 – A favorite wintertime tradition returns to downtown Omaha, this year shining brighter than ever before. Through a new partnership, Gene Leahy Mall will participate in the Holiday Lights Festival, with The RiverFront team installing countless sparkling lights throughout the newly renovated park. The Thanksgiving holiday will also mark the resumption of two treasured events: both the annual Lighting Ceremony and Making Spirits Bright Concert will take place on November 24th.

The Thanksgiving Lighting Ceremony will take place on Thursday, November 24th in the Gene Leahy Mall at The RiverFront. The Lighting Ceremony, led by Terri McCormick of STAR 104.5 The Christmas Station, serves as the official “kick-off” for the Festival. A short performance by Musical Kids will precede the program, and Mayor Jean Stothert will lead the entire Omaha community in a countdown to the start of the holiday season!

Along with traditional white tree lights and some sizable ornaments, this year the Gene Leahy Mall will also feature a festive multimedia show, debuting during the official Thanksgiving Lighting Ceremony. This exciting and innovative production, presented by The RiverFront, will feature color-changing “up-lights,” video projections onto the Gene Leahy Mall Performance Pavilion and Burlington Building, thematic video on the 10th Street Bridge LED wall and holiday music sounding throughout the park. The multimedia show, which is about seven minutes long, can be seen every Friday and Saturday throughout the holiday season, running every hour. The RiverFront will also welcome some community favorite food trucks during the lighting ceremony to include New Orleans Sneaux and Travelin’ Tom’s Coffee. Along with these lighting displays, The RiverFront is hosting a number of fun and free holiday events throughout the season – find the full online calendar at [TheRiverFrontOmaha.com](http://TheRiverFrontOmaha.com).

Immediately following the Lighting Ceremony will be the Making Spirits Bright Concert at the Holland Performing Arts Center. This concert is FREE to the public and family-friendly – there are no tickets and seating is available on a first-come first-served basis. The Making Spirits Bright Concert, with special emcee Jonah Gilmore from KETV Channel 7, will feature a selection of holiday music performed by the Nebraska Wind Symphony and guest vocalist Ryan Daly.

“These two events are the perfect start to the holiday season,” said Mayor Jean Stothert. “The renovated Gene Leahy Mall is a space for the community to gather and I am so excited for this partnership between Holiday Lights Festival and The RiverFront. I can’t imagine a better way to kick off

this year's Holiday Lights Festival than to see the park illuminated and listen to holiday music with the entire city of Omaha."

Due to construction, this is the first time that lights have returned to Gene Leahy Mall at The RiverFront since 2018. The Holiday Lights festival also illuminates the Old Market and North and South Omaha along 24<sup>th</sup> Street every night from November 24<sup>th</sup> until January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **About Holiday Lights Festival**

In 1999, a coalition of city officials, corporations, and foundations chose to present a legacy gift of holiday lights to the City of Omaha as the Millennium Lights celebration. The Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation was established the following year, and the Millennium Lights officially transformed to the Holiday Lights Festival. Since then, the Festival has become an annual celebration of Omaha's holiday spirit, complete with free, family-friendly events scheduled throughout the entire holiday season. In 2007, the Holiday Lights Festival added the Shine the Light on Hunger campaign, sponsored by Conagra Brands Foundation and in partnership with Food Bank for the Heartland. For more information on the 2022 Holiday Lights Festival, visit [www.HolidayLightsFestival.org](http://www.HolidayLightsFestival.org) and follow the Festival on both Facebook and Instagram.

### **About Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation**

For more than 50 years, Downtown Omaha Inc. has followed our mission to inform, promote and unite the Downtown community. Formed as a business group to discuss parking, retail, promotion, and development issues, the group was incorporated in 1968 and has become a fierce promoter of the common good in Downtown Omaha and its surrounding area. DOI helps to connect and build communities by serving downtown residents and putting on programs that attract people who are visiting Omaha and people from local neighborhoods. Through these programs, everyone is able to enjoy and experience all that downtown Omaha has to offer.

### **About The RiverFront**

The RiverFront is a transformation of 72-acres in downtown Omaha, renovating and interconnecting three previously existing city parks: Gene Leahy Mall, Heartland of America Park and Lewis & Clark Landing. The project spans from the Missouri River eastward into the city's urban core, extending to 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The Metropolitan Entertainment & Convention Authority (MECA) is managing park construction, activation and maintenance. The RiverFront, which is a highly programmed green space, rich with native plantings and permanent amenities, is reopening in phases starting with Gene Leahy Mall on July 1, 2022. Lewis & Clark Landing and Heartland of America Park will be completed in 2023.

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