

Community gets first look at NASA Lifelines mural on Tulane's downtown campus

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“Rings of Ecology: Louisiana Explored,” by local artists Lee Hay and Sheri Philips of SaxonLynn Arts, is a collaboration between Tulane, the Downtown Development District of the City of New Orleans and NASA Lifelines. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Anyone visiting Tulane’s downtown campus will be greeted by a new mural on the corner of Canal and S. Liberty Street that is both out of this world and earth-focused at the same time.

Titled “Rings of Ecology: Louisiana Explored,” the mural focuses on how satellites monitor coastal changes and the critical role of Louisiana’s ecosystems. It features sea life as well as ecology from the coastal, lowland and upland areas of Louisiana, surrounded by NASA satellites on the outermost ring.

The mural, by local artists Lee Hay and Sheri Philips of SaxonLynn Arts, is a collaboration between Tulane, the Downtown Development District of the City of New Orleans and NASA Lifelines. The NASA Lifelines project is a nationwide initiative celebrating the contributions of space exploration to everyday life. The New Orleans installation is part of the NASA Lifelines Mural Contest, which will lead to such creations in cities across the United States.

Leaders from all three mural partners spoke at a community event last week that featured a first look at the painting that covers the side of the Saratoga Garage on the corner of S. Liberty and Canal streets.

President Michael A. Fitts said of the project, “It is perfectly timed, given the extraordinary sense of growth that we’re seeing downtown.”

He also spoke of the connection Tulane has with NASA, specifically through Col. Douglas Hurley, a Tulane alumnus and former NASA astronaut. He recalled a Tulane [event](#) with Hurley during which the Space Shuttle pilot and Crew Dragon Demo-2 commander highlighted NASA’s ability to bring people together from different backgrounds.

“Many of you have heard me talk about the genius of Tulane and why we’re different,” Fitts said, “and it’s the ability to bring people together from different fields, from different backgrounds, and from that, sparks fly, genius flies.”

Tulane Chief Operating Officer Patrick Norton welcomed guests to the mural celebration, calling the piece “a key part of our ongoing efforts to enhance Tulane’s downtown campus by integrating art and inspiration to our campus.”

Josh Barnes, the manager of the NASA Disaster Response Coordination System, said, “The NASA Lifelines initiative is an opportunity for us to find ways to bridge the humanitarian and community with science.”

Davon Barbour, the president and CEO of the Downtown Development District of the City of New Orleans, spoke of the partnership between the Downtown Development

District and Tulane. “There is nothing more powerful than leveraging an anchor institution to fuel growth in our community.”

“We were super excited to be picked by NASA Lifelines and the prestigious Tulane University, and for the prominent location for our mural, which is amazing considering how large it is,” said Lee Hay, one of the artists.

“It’s amazing to see public art along Canal,” said Megan Herrington, a Tulane employee who walked over from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine for the unveiling. “This could be an entire corridor of beautiful public art, and it’s great!”

The New Orleans mural is only the second to be unveiled, after one in St. Louis earlier this year.



Leaders from all three mural partners spoke at a community event last week that featured a first look at the painting. From left to right: Patrick Norton, Josh Barnes, President Michael A. Fitts, Sheri Philips, Lee Hay, Councilmember Lesli Harris and

Davon Barbour. (Photo by Kacie Fayard)