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Mural unveiled at Bloomfield bike depot

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Project incorporates art, sustainability



(Photo: Owen Proctor/NorthJersey.com)

Several groups came together in a short time to bring art and sustainability to a Bloomfield bike depot.

The Bloomfield Parking Authority unveiled a mural at the recently installed facility on the ground floor of the Glenwood Avenue Parking Garage.

VELO Bloomfield, a cycling advocacy group based in the Halcyon Park neighborhood, helped connect artist Papa Tall with township officials, turning the New Jersey Walk and Bike Coalition depot's blank walls into "Love and Family on the Road."

Tall, a Senegal native, has lived in the United States for two decades. He resided in New York City and Jersey City before settling in Bloomfield about 10 years ago.

CYCLING: [Coalition opens second bike depot in New Jersey \(/story/news/transportation/2017/03/27/coalition-opens-second-bike-depot-new-jersey/99600920/\)](/story/news/transportation/2017/03/27/coalition-opens-second-bike-depot-new-jersey/99600920/)

COMMUTING: [Bike depots connect cyclists to mass transit \(/story/news/transportation/2017/03/31/bike-depots-connect-cyclists-mass-transit/99714760/\)](/story/news/transportation/2017/03/31/bike-depots-connect-cyclists-mass-transit/99714760/)

"I love this town," said Tall, whose wife, Hill, and son, Jabari, 6, joined him at the ceremony on Thursday, Aug. 3. "I wanted to make our town more beautiful. It's part of me."

Artwork

"I go from the ground up," said Tall, referring to the garage's yellow parking lines meeting up with the yellow and black road colors in the mural's lower portion. Then there's lots of blue, representing sky and nature, conjuring a peaceful feeling for commuters on the go, he said.

The folk art features a family of four riding a bicycle, with a curved line over them, representing a smile. "They are brought together for love," the artist interpreted.

Tall began the painting in late June, noting the warm greetings expressed by commuters as he worked. It took about three weeks to complete, he said.



VELO Bloomfield's Lark Lo, second from right, introduces speakers on Aug. 3, 2017, at Bloomfield bike depot's mural unveiling, including Mayor Michael Venezia and artist Papa Tall, foreground right. (Photo: Owen Proctor/NorthJersey.com)

"This is a wonderful piece of art," Bloomfield Mayor Michael Venezia said. "We were excited about this. We just started a Beautification Committee, so this is part of what we're trying to do. We're trying to do another mural along [nearby] Bloomfield Avenue."

The artwork and bike depot are bringing art and sustainability into the community, observed the mayor, along with improving the town's aesthetics.

The project is "part of a much bigger vision to redefine our town," Councilman Carlos Pomares said, noting the work of the Beautification Committee and the Bloomfield Cultural Commission.

"Places like this may fall off the beaten path, but they are very important to highlight," the councilman added. "We want to celebrate our own artists."

Councilwoman Wartyna "Nina" Davis echoed those sentiments.

Bike depot

In March, the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition opened the Bloomfield 38-rack bike depot, steps away from the Bloomfield Train Station. The organization's first bike depot opened two years ago at Montclair's Bay Street Train Station. A third is planned for Elizabeth's Midtown Garage.

Members pay \$15 monthly or pay annually, with a month provided for free. There is also a universal membership of \$30 for use of multiple bike depots. Cyclists receive a key fob that gives them access to the enclosure.

Registration is available at njbwc.org (<http://njbwc.org/>).

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