

# WE ASKED: What's Next for West Colfax?

## HERE'S WHAT WE LEARNED...

This pandemic era challenged us all ... the social and economic impacts of this time affected organizations large and small. As our community turns our collective attention to renewal, reconnections, and recovery, we look to our community leaders to chart a course to a brighter future. This group of leaders—from elected policy makers to civic-minded business influencers to nonprofit leaders—all play a role in shaping West Colfax corridor's future. We asked them to share their thoughts on what's on the horizon.



Mayor Paul (left) celebrates at the 2019 West Colfax Lately Luncheon with Roger Wadnal, a longtime advocate of West Colfax (and 2019 LEGEND Award Winner) who led the team at the city that secured the major CDOT grant for Lakewood. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler

### CITY OF LAKEWOOD - MAYOR ADAM PAUL

While all five Wards and all 156,500 residents in our city are important in our policy and budgetary considerations, the West Colfax corridor, as our oldest commercial strip, holds a significant place in Lakewood's history and culture and clearly plays an important role in our future.

West Colfax is simultaneously one of our greatest success stories and most daunting challenges. While we will cover milestones and accomplishments worthy of celebration in the subsequent paragraphs, we need to acknowledge that West Colfax suffers from many of the same problems as other neighboring cities (and society at large): homelessness, mental illness, and addiction, and their very real impact on crime in our community. The city is not only dedicating resources to address these issues directly, but also rallying support from the county to work in unison to develop new and better ways for community policing that will lead to more positive outcomes. Even our infrastructure issues



The W-Line Light Rail travels along the West Colfax corridor to connect Lakewood and Golden to Denver.  
Photo Courtesy: City of Lakewood

acerbate this situation—but upgrades are in the works—including flood mitigation along North Dry Gulch and street and pedestrian improvements along the stretch of the avenue with the highest incident of pedestrian-vehicle accidents. As our partners with the Lakewood-West Colfax BID indicate, there is still much to do along West Colfax, as is clearly stated in the recent community review of The West Colfax VISION 2040 Action Plan.

A focus of the city is to continue to build on the success with our active partners—WCCA, 40 West Arts, the BID, and our neighborhood organizations to assist and continue the ongoing renaissance. Such is the case with the West Colfax Safety Project in progress on the east end of West Colfax (from Teller to Sheridan). After years of collaboration among city departments and community stakeholders, the Denver Regional Council of Governments awarded a \$10 million grant to the City of Lakewood to implement West Colfax Avenue safety and beautification improvements. Lakewood pledged \$2+ million in matching funds, making this a \$12.5 million investment in the future of this historic corridor. This project is one of 30 others funded in the metro area by \$58.9 million in CDOT grants as part of State of Colorado's Safer Main Streets Initiative.

While this is a major win for our community, we are not only focused on the two overarching goals of \$12.5M West Colfax

Safety Project: 1) to make this area of West Colfax Avenue a safer and more beautiful experience for residents, business patrons, and all users; and 2) to manage the construction process to minimize the disruption to local businesses and their patrons, (learn more at: <https://www.lakewoodtogether.org/westcolfax>), but we are also working to rejuvenate our westside along West Colfax and attract new businesses and amenities around RTD's Oak Street Station and influence the revitalization of the Westland Center. We have also applied for funding from The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and these funds are earmarked for improvements further west along Colfax.

With strong local leadership in place, we are following a similar formula of planning, visioning, and productive engagement that was successful in the 40 West Arts' core. Speaking of, the 40 West ArtLine—the 4-mile walking and biking art experience that connect three area parks with 80+ art installations along the way—continues to be a major success—both as a free outdoor arts experience for locals and as an attraction to visitors, giving them a new reason to frequent West Colfax galleries, eateries, and other entertainment destinations. Our aim is to continue to enhance and grow this unique experience and attract further investment in mixed-use development in the 40 West Arts core that support our community objectives, as we build critical mass for Lakewood's

state-certified creative district and attract more creatives and more patrons to support our local businesses.

Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD) and its historic campus, listed on The National Registry of Historic Places, is also within the 40 West Arts Core. As with all our institutions of higher learning, we want to see them all grow and thrive as they prepare the next generation of leaders for our community and the world.

Before I close, I would like to wish a Happy 10-year Anniversary to 40 West Arts District. What a remarkable achievement for our community ... we look forward to the next 10 years of creativity!

I invite you to join in our community conversation. The city offers multiple ways for to participate in city government. Visit <https://lakewoodspeaks.org/> to learn more.



The RMCAD campus is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo Courtesy: RMCAD

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## ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE OF ART + DESIGN - BRENT FITCH, PRESIDENT



As Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design prepares for our fall semester, the first time we welcome students back since March of 2020, our leadership team is focused on four near-term priorities.

**Returning students back to our historic campus.** First and foremost, we are thrilled to welcome students back to campus. Our team of dedicated faculty and staff have been preparing for this return since

summer and we are excited to welcome students to our campus this fall. To better support on-campus students, we are creating a support center for excellence, which will help our students find support for their non-classroom activity needs.

**Enhancing our employee and faculty experience.** We are leveraging the lessons learned from the pandemic to create a robust hybrid workplace. We have faculty and staff located in multiple states, so we are ensuring our technology infrastructure is well suited for a productive hybrid work environment. In addition, we continue to invest in our campus including current remodels to several administrative areas—always mindful of the historic character of our campus that is listed in the U.S. National Registry of Historic Places. By learning from our past and appreciating our post-pandemic journey, we move toward the future with hope and excitement.

**Enhancing our online student experience.** Many may not know that we have a number of our students who study online. We continuously seek to empower our online students with the best resources by enhancing

online tools and support services. To bolster students' online academic experience, we are testing something new this fall: digital textbooks that are fully integrated in the course outline from our student portal. This eliminates the inconvenience of physical textbooks. We will evaluate this pilot program later this year.

**Expanding our brand and programs to support our student population.** We believe RMCAD is on a positive trajectory, and we are working to showcase our unique learning experience and historic campus as we continue to invest in both to support our students.

That investment includes launching a new academic program later this year: an online BFA program in Music Production. This new program will showcase the creativity of our faculty and students in new ways. We have been working on this for a few years and are excited to add this to our other eleven degree programs.

Additionally, we continue to support student interest in our mainstay academic programs, including our Interior Design degree program—one of only two such programs in the United States, accredited by the Council of Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

These four priority areas are a subset of the goals we are putting in place in our updated five-year strategic plan. We are proud to invest in improvements which support our students, employees, and faculty.

When I accepted this position more than a year ago, I was delighted to find this historic campus as the setting and a growing creative district as our neighbor. I am grateful for the very warm welcome I received from the RMCAD team, Mayor Paul and the Lakewood staff, and the entire 40 West Arts creative community. The level of engagement and commitment of the RMCAD team has never been higher. We look forward to our path forward together in the Lakewood community and to our mutually beneficial future.

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## JEFFERSON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - JANSEN TIDMORE, CEO

The Jefferson County Economic Development Corporation (Jeffco EDC) may be a well-known name to some of you and completely new for others. As the countywide economic development organization, we focus on attraction, retention, and expansion of primary jobs – and we sometimes find ourselves more behind the scenes than on the front page. Both are places we are very comfortable, but it is important for you all to know that the



economic development table is one you are invited around, too. We are working hard, every day, to build opportunities for all our Jeffco residents, and we are proud of the work we have accomplished.

Jeffco is fortunate to have a lot of work being done, concentrating on creating opportunities for employment. As an EDC – we focus on five primary sectors and three target sectors:

Primary sectors consist of industries with a strong and growing presence within our county that exceeds national averages for that industry type. Our primary sectors include Aerospace, Bioscience, Beverage Production, Energy, and Engineering.



Among Jeffco EDC's many goals is attracting and retaining major employer such as FirstBank and Terumo BCT. Photo Courtesy: First Bank

Target sectors consist of growing sectors in our economy but have not reached the national concentrations yet, and include Aviation, IT/Telecom, and Advanced Manufacturing – specifically within electronics and outdoor recreation products.

From 2017 to 2020 Jeffco added 8,173 new jobs and \$1,539,000,000 in investment to our primary job sector, with 2020 setting a record amount of investment of \$842,000,000. We know, now more than ever, we must carry that momentum forward.

A primary function of any economic development organization is to be the keeper of reliable data. One of the systems we use frequently is called Buxton, which really helps us better understand consumer behaviors and information – i.e., all of you, our residents. In looking at our latest data, we have seen a rise in Jefferson County average household income to an impressive \$104,509; with median income equaling \$78,340; and per capita hitting \$42,912. As community metrics go – these are impressive numbers. Over 50% of our population hold a college degree, and we have a diverse talent pool in terms of fields and training. Our job creation focuses on these strengths – looking

to build opportunity for those that live here rather than a need to import talent to fill the roles. We want to make sure all have an opportunity to live, work, and play in our beautiful community.

However, we recognize these numbers alone are not the whole story. We work with many community partners from education; our county workforce center; Community First Foundation and more to discuss our underrepresented and underemployed populations. Over the next few months, you will start to see initiatives targeting these disparities with

a goal of economic opportunity for all our residents.

Economic Development has also found itself around many community-issue tables. COVID-19 demonstrated many strengths we have as a community, but also highlighted our flaws. As we look at the needs of our small business and entrepreneurial community, we see an opportunity to engage and enhance this critical sector of our Jeffco economy. There are over 41,000 businesses in Jefferson County with 40,000 of those employing fewer than 50 individuals. It is one of the reasons you see us focus on sectors instead of sizes of companies. We know that every large company started with a single person with an idea. Jeffco has a storied history of entrepreneurs and small businesses becoming global leaders – and we want to make sure we are continually encouraging that ecosystem of growth. While still taking its form of what that means and looks like in Jeffco – we are working with our community partners to shape and build how we provide for success in these vital small business and entrepreneurial sectors.

In addition, we are working hard to put better context around what development means for Colorado. It seems to get a bad “rep” in some circles. When I look at the social issues we face as a community, it often comes back to me as a need for economic opportunity.

Who has been afforded it? Who has not? I am a believer that education coupled with career opportunities, are the cornerstones for a healthy and cohesive community. This is why you see us partnering heavily with our K-12 system; community colleges; and 4-year institutions to align those opportunities with the talent being developed. There is no better talent than that which you develop, and our role is to provide that chance for individuals

to take those skills into our workforce community. From our perspective, we need to embrace development—thoughtful, smart, and contributing development.

Our strategy is built around being an opportunity beacon for Jefferson County. And remember, our strategy table is not full. You are always welcome with your thoughts, encouragement, and dissent. That is what a healthy community is built upon.

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## THE ACTION CENTER - PAM BRIER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Walking into The Action Center in Lakewood is like suddenly entering the elves' workshop. There are boxes lined up on tables and volunteers packing all kinds of food. In the midst of these tasks is a busy volunteer with a unicorn hugging his midsection. It's a blowup unicorn meant to keep a child afloat. While another determined worker is introduced as the "fun officer."

Despite the fun atmosphere, the staff and volunteers are working purposefully to get boxes of fresh, healthy food ready for struggling neighbors to pick up in the drive-through.

A staff member says she's embarrassed by all the stuff piled in the main entrance. All I see are happy people filling boxes with care and hard work. But I never saw the main entrance before the pandemic. Many things changed with the pandemic and The Action Center needed to adapt on a dime in order to keep helping the community.



Luckily, this wasn't its first rodeo. One year before the City of Lakewood was incorporated, a group of volunteers who were concerned about struggling families in their community formed The Action Center. The year was 1968. The Smithsonian calls it, "the year that shattered America."

Reporting on the newly formed organization, the Colorado Transcript from June 9, 1968, said that The Action Center would "meet problems of culture, deprivation and social disorganization in areas described as 'comfortable suburbia.'" No matter where you lived, 1968 was not a "comfortable" year and concerned neighbors decided to do something about it.

Sometimes history finds ways of repeating itself in supremely inspiring ways. The Action Center did just that when it faced the socially shattered year of the COVID pandemic with determination, grace, and real grit. And yes, magic.

### COVID Response

Before March 16, 2020, people could "shop" at The Action Center as if it were a regular grocery store with beautiful cases full of fresh food. The COVID restrictions changed

that. The staff and volunteers had to adapt quickly. They came up with a drive-through solution that let people come for fresh food

recruit new volunteers and contend with the constant flux of changing protocols and quarantines to keep people safe.



U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter speaks at the Program Services Building on The Action Campus that includes the mural ("Stardust" by Marth Pinkard) donated by the Lakewood-W. Colfax BID and 40 West Arts. Photo: 40 West Arts District

that's pre-packed in boxes ready for pick up. At the peak of the pandemic, The Action Center supplied 250 households with a week's supply of groceries every week! More than 35,000 households have been served in the drive through with more than three million pounds of food.

"Everyone else in the world who wasn't on the front lines were told to stay home, but our staff and volunteers couldn't stay home," says Pam Brier, Executive Director of The Action Center. "They are passionate and want to give, but they never thought of themselves as frontline workers in that way." They took the risk to themselves and their families and managed to change the way the organization works by doing jobs they'd never done before.

Adapting wasn't a piece of cake. Many of the volunteers were the age of the folks who were at highest risk. Many of them had to stay home, so the staff had to quickly

During this past year, these amazing volunteers contributed 35,000 hours of work. Besides providing critical food support during the pandemic, The Action Center provided over \$2 million for rent or mortgage assistance to help struggling families. This program is expected to continue for the next year. There has also been nearly \$375,000

provided for utility assistance, and hundreds have come to The Action Center to pick up their mail. The Action Center also provides those experiencing homelessness with a mailing address. This allows people to receive critical mail regardless of their living situation.

### Going Forward

When you're in a routine and seeing what isn't working it's hard to stop and say we're changing. But COVID forced a reflective disruption that translated into action for The Action Center. That disruption of routine helped the staff realize that going forward they needed to focus more on members of the community who are the hardest to reach. The next step is moving outside the walls and bringing food and services to them. Also, adding diverse staff and board members is an important step that will not only serve the community, but partner with it more inclusively. To jumpstart this new focus is a pilot program that reaches out to five schools in the area as points of contact.

With COVID restrictions lifting, one of the short-term goals for The Action Center is,

transitioning back into the building to serve people more personally and deeply. At its peak during COVID, The Action Center served 250 households a day – now it's down to 150 households per day, which is about double what it was pre-COVID. In order to continue meeting the larger needs and provide personal assistance, the center will offer two days a week where people can come inside for self-select groceries and/or connect with an advocate, and two days a week where we continue drive-through service. Early October is the target date to start the new plan. Very nimble, indeed.

The next big thing has been to hire a housing navigator who will work with the

rent assistance staff to help participants stay housed and stable, while working with families to find more affordable housing. With the cost of living rising and almost 6% of our Jeffco neighbors unemployed, these are services that can make all the difference. The whole community becomes healthier from the ground up.

The Action Center started in a tumultuous year as a grassroots organization that was volunteer and community based. That continues to be its strength today, along with some brass-tacks magic that gives people a tangible stepping-stone to stability, community connection and vitality. Unicorns couldn't do a better job.

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## **MOUTAIR CHRISTIAN CHURCH - REV. RUBEN RODRIGUEZ, PASTOR**

One might ask, what is a church doing in a publication like this? My answer is my contribution to this article—and I am grateful to be invited to do so.

Mountair Christian Church (MCC) is a business, a non-profit organization dedicated to the spiritual and physical wellbeing of our Two Creeks/Mountair neighborhood and beyond for the past 100 years. We are part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination, but what really defines us is the faithful dedication to our community. Did I mention that we have been in the same area for 100 years? From the humble beginning in a meeting at Mountair High School, to the building of a sanctuary at 1400 Ames St., to the development of the current location at 1390 Benton St., we



have been within four blocks of where we started since 1921. That is faithful dedication. In church lingo, steadfast love for a neighborhood.

Through this journey MCC has participated in many community events and activities. Some of our members were involved in the beginning of the Action Center, the annual Thanksgiving dinner that provides more than 500 meals (now in its 38th year), and we have maintained a food and clothing pantry for more than 50 years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 17 ministries and civic entities were using our building. Meals on Wheels (Volunteers of America), Family Leadership Training Institute (CU sponsored effort), PASO (an early childhood education program from Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition), Brown Bag Ministries and Jeffco Eats, all operated out of our space. Community organizations, like the Two Creeks Neighborhood Organization (TCNO), and several other homeowners' associations have used our space. We can't forget Zumba! In addition, we have a room for police with 24 hours a day access. All these are free of charge or for voluntary contributions.

Churches used to be at the center of community life, and we continue to think of ourselves as a vital element of the community. We are making progress in recovering from the pandemic and reopening to full capacity. The congregation has been meeting online and in a hybrid format through the pandemic, overcoming the technology phobia and maintaining this vital connection that feeds the soul. Our volunteers have worked through the pandemic with all the precautions established by the County. Our goal is to continue collaborations and partnerships that will improve the welfare of our neighbors. Along with some current church improvements in progress, we are in the infant stages of creating a family resource program with a Lift Zone to provide internet access. Not bad for a small non-profit whose average attendance on Sundays is 50 people. All due to relationship building—connecting with the faith community, like-minded civic leaders, the business community, as well as with the City of Lakewood and Jefferson County.

As the growth continues in these areas, we realize that our efforts to reach others are imperative. The changes in our community have displaced some and attracted others. This has created a vacuum of relationships that begs for more than a social media band aid and screams for real human connections. Our work is focused on providing forums for those connections, whether through the arts, music, or simple game and movie nights. We are already having monthly BBQ's where all are invited, working also with Two Creeks

Neighborhood Organization, the Lakewood-West Colfax BID, and the Mountair Park Farm (Sprout City Farms) on community events. These fill a need, but there are deeper necessities in life. We want to have a relationship with those in our community. To be there to celebrate joys and to provide support during the struggles. A church can be a parish, both in the religious sense and the civic sense. We want to bring diverse groups together and create a sense of unity in a divided world—for those who are religious and those who are not. We are working to establish programs with 40 West Arts in a way to feed the soul in multiple ways.

I personally arrived in Colorado in 2014, at the beginning of all the changes the neighborhood and the state have experienced. Having lived in Puerto Rico, Florida, Washington State, Kentucky, Georgia, and with my journey originating in New York, I realize that every place has blessings and struggles, with history and narratives that are embedded in the minds and souls of its inhabitants. That dynamic creates challenges. I think it is good to have those, but not if they are swept under the rug, because that is a formula for more division. In my view, through MCC's history, our church has been a miracle—because it brings together people who otherwise would not be. Could it be that the church is part of the answer for the unity that is needed? I believe so. And MCC, a small non-profit in the community, will work towards that end, as we continue to serve, perhaps even for the next 100 years.



Volunteers prepared a thanksgiving meal for members of the community at Mountair Church.  
Photos: Ruben Rodriguez

## 40 WEST ARTS CREATIVE DISTRICT - LIZ BLACK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On a recent First Friday in July of 2021, 40 West Arts, in many ways, exemplified the vision, mission, and ideals of a district that only ten short years ago seemed like just an incredible dream. Families meandered on sidewalks playing ground games along the 40 West ArtLine. A dozen galleries opened their doors to the summer heat, encouraging patrons to check out exhibitions and installation art. Vendor tents dotted the street, filled with artisan goods, local foods, and even a booth with unusual plants, whose tendrils spilled through the edge of the white canvas, inviting visitors to come take a look. The outdoor market was the brainchild of Creature Arcade and Tattoo, a newcomer to the 40 West Arts movement but one that immediately hit the ground running with new ideas and sweat equity. On the other end of the parking lot a small skateboard ramp enticed boarders to test their skills, while musicians on a temporary stage kicked off a set. This gathering, through local business THIS Print & Design, merged with the art market, creating one large event with multiple community members, artists, visitors, and guests in attendance. The vision for 40 West Arts has always been one created by, for, and through the individuals and groups who yearn for a space to play and create. And it's always been one of artistic inclusivity, whether that means art in the form of skateboard tricks, or the art of tricking an exotic plant to grow in the dry, sometimes harsh climate of Colorado. 40 West Arts has weathered a global pandemic and emerged stronger and ready to redouble our efforts for the next decade (and beyond).



### *Key strategic initiatives for 40 West Arts:*

**Equity:** 40 West Arts recognizes the continued need for a focus and vision that includes all people. We acknowledge that we still have more work to do in reaching underrepresented groups. Our goal is to create a space for creatives of all types, from all backgrounds. 40 West Arts will work harder in 2021 and beyond to fulfill our goals to create an equitable environment for all artists, and to develop, market, and implement our events to ensure equitable access for all individuals, particularly our underserved neighbors who live in and around Lakewood's West Colfax corridor.

**Community:** 40 West Arts will continue to encourage, utilize, support, and promote our partners throughout the West Colfax corridor and beyond. We recognize that everyone has something to bring to the table, and that we would not be where we are today without our many partners, from newcomers like Solstice Ink, All Its Own and Mint & Serif Coffeehouse, to long-time collaborators like Colorado Mills, Metro West Housing Solutions, Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design, and the Lakewood-West Colfax BID. Partnerships and community-building will continue to be at the core of what we do.

**Exploration:** The 40 West ArtLine has physically transformed the look and feel of Lakewood's West Colfax corridor. Our many galleries, from NEXT to Pirate: Contemporary Art have hosted exhibitions and openings that challenge, inspire, and (sometimes) overwhelm. Art is a dialogue, a feeling, a statement on current times and historical messages. The global pandemic offered many lessons but one of the most important is this. Art is essential. Art is indispensable. Art is exploration.



Kids and adults play on interactive ground murals along the 40 West ArtLine. Photo: Will Strathmann

place to host activities and events that the whole community will enjoy. 40 West Arts deeply recognizes the need for perpetual space for artists, galleries, and creative businesses and we are grateful to have a business improvement district in our corner who shares these goals. The newly acquired 40 West Arts building will serve as a forever home for our district and an accessible hub for our community.

**Permanence:** With real estate escalating, 40 West Arts' partnership with the Lakewood-West Colfax BID to purchase a building will create a dynamic, lasting destination for locals and visiting patrons to explore hands-on arts experiences, a venue for creatives to gather, display, and sell their work, and a

Our goals are big, our vision is grand and yet, we are ready for the future. And personally, I would like to sincerely thank the Boards of Directors of 40 West Arts and the Lakewood-West Colfax BID, and our small, but mighty staff: Katy Zeigler and Morgan Cameron, you are both a gift to our organizations. Your passion and commitment to our district does not go unnoticed. We salute you.



## THE LAKEWOOD-WEST COLFAX BID - BILL MARINO, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

What a year we've all just been through! It's refreshing to turn our attention to the future and brighter days. And for our little group of tight-knit organizations based here along West Colfax, including 40 West Arts, West Colfax Community Association (WCCA), and the Lakewood-W. Colfax BID (the BID), we remain focused on our core mission: Re-energizing historic West Colfax corridor.

As 40 West Arts celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, this arts and culture nonprofit is really spreading its wings, and with its partner



Lakewood-W. Colfax BID board at a community event in 2018 (left to right) Gloria Enger, Chris Marconi, (Marino), Stu Wright, Nina Rockley, and Kevin Yoshida. Photo: Lakewood W. Colfax BID

(every 3rd Wednesday at 7:30am!) and provide a consistent drumbeat of news and updates about the corridor (that's reflected through social media and newsletters). In addition, the funding

venues throughout the district, 40 West Arts continues to make a difference by providing free arts experiences that the whole family can enjoy. While the BID provides sustainable funding to 40 West Arts, supporting its ongoing positive impact within the community, it is noteworthy to report that the district has become an SCFD-funded Tier III nonprofit—a significant milestone for any nonprofit in the seven-county service area. Liz Black, in the 40 West Arts section earlier, highlighted the focus areas for Lakewood's only state-certified creative district, and a significant West Colfax success story.

The BID was created to provide predictable funding for a community vision of a new arts district along West Colfax and to rejuvenate West Colfax's oldest community association (WCCA). The BID provides predictable funding to 40 West Arts, so it can bring arts and culture programming to the city and county at large, with an emphasis on this historically underserved area and to help continue the resurgence of West Colfax as a commercial and entertainment destination. Funding for 40 West supports the BID's goals for arts & culture, but it's an economic development strategy as well. The BID also funds WCCA to support its business-related and community engagements goals, providing this all-volunteer organization the capacity to hold its mainstay monthly WCCA's monthly meetings

provides micro-grants and support to local civic and neighborhood organizations and allows WCCA to take on a number a small business beautification projects every year.

#### **The BID's mission also includes several strategic initiatives:**

**Vision 2040:** The development and review of the community conceived and city-council adopted West Colfax Vision 2040 Action Plan (adopted in 2015), which since the 2020-2021 updates to the plan includes initiatives around future planning for the award-winning 40 West ArtLine and efforts to revitalize the west end of the corridor around the Oak Street Station area and to influence the redevelopment of the Westland retail site. Conversations are in process with the Westland ownership group and RTD, which own a meaningful tract adjacent to Oak Street Station. We envision the tract as a potential site for redevelopment that could include the type of retail and entertainment amenities desired by local neighborhoods. As a potential people-centric entertainment district with its own green spaces and destinations, this area would leverage and connect arts and cultural programming activities of 40 West Arts District, such as: live performances, arts markets, and festivals—and eventually have a themed trolley to take patron to and from popular West Colfax destinations.

### **A Building to Repurpose for Community Use:**

Through a convergence of opportunities, the BID was able to purchase a building at 6501 W. Colfax in the core of 40 West Arts District. This long-term goal was a major milestone. The Lakewood-West Colfax BID teamed up with 40 West Arts and other partners to acquire the building (the old Drumstick Restaurant). While it needs much work, it signals that 40 West Arts and its creative partners have achieved a goal for long-term sustainability as a Creative District—a building that they own and call home. After the planned 10-month construction effort for the adaptive reuse to reactivate the building, the renovated facility is slated to serve as the headquarters of 40 West Arts District (and its gallery), the West Colfax Community Association, and the eventual new location of its monthly community meetings, and the main office for the Lakewood-West Colfax BID. And that's not all: Once improvements are completed, the building will house several district galleries that are also looking for a more sustainable location, a number of other local nonprofits, civic groups, and neighborhood organizations, and potentially additional creative retail and food uses as well.

### **Multi-million dollars Improvements coming**

**to West Colfax:** And finally—not the least which—is supporting the implementation of the scheduled \$12.5 million of improvement planned for West Colfax between Sheridan and Wadsworth on West Colfax. As the Mayor stated, the overarching goal for the improvements is to make this area of West Colfax Avenue a safer and more beautiful experience for residents, business patrons, pedestrians, and all users and to assist the city in managing the process with the least amount of disruption to local businesses and

their patrons. This project, funded in large part by a major CDOT grant, will be completed in less than 3.5 years and is proposed to include: an evaluation of the best use of the third travel lane, wide-ranging transportation infrastructure and technology to improve safety, more lighting, landscaping, art, and other placemaking elements to buffer sidewalks from vehicles, improvements to sidewalks and accessibility ramps, and enhancements to bus stops with pull-outs

for safer and faster unloading, and brighter, more attractive waiting areas; more directional and informational signs for pedestrians and motorists.

As always, our three West Colfax-based organizations have many balls in the air—but with so much good news in the works (such as the potential for the creators of South Park to invest in our community and revitalize Casa Bonita!), and clearly so much work to still do, we wouldn't have any other way.

The genesis of the transformation that is underway along West Colfax is a tribute to all the citizens who supported

the vision more than 10 years ago and all along the way. Not only did they support the vision, but also they rolled up their sleeves and volunteered to help—whether that was showing up to paint a storefront, planting flower to add color to Colfax, helping with an art installation on the ArtLine, showing up early to set up tents for a festival, or just helping to pick up trash before the Colfax marathon to put our best foot forward for a special event—they did the work! Without a supportive community, none of this happens. We need more to continue the journey and achieve the next stage of the vision. There is more to do. Let's all work together on What's Next for West Colfax!



The purchase and renovation of this noteworthy building gives us so much more control of our own destiny. Having this facility will help us better serve our community and help other local nonprofits as well... Our goal is to make this building a must-see arts and culture destination and a vibrant community hub on West Colfax!

- BILL MARINO