

## What's Next?

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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.



### The Lakewood-West Colfax BID

Executive Director Bill Marino



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 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, this arts and culture nonprofit is really spreading its wings, and with its partner venues throughout the district, 40 West continues to make a difference by providing free arts experiences that whole family can enjoy. While the BID provides dependable funding to 40 West, supporting its ongoing positive impact within the community, it is noteworthy to report that 40 West has become an SCD-funded Tier III nonprofit—a significant milestone for any nonprofit in the seven-county service area. Liz Black, in the 40 West Arts section below, will highlight 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 and to revitalize West Colfax's oldest community association. The BID provides predictable funding to 40 West, so it can provide 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 (every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 7:30am!) and provide a consistent drumbeat of news and updates about the corridor (that's also reflected through social media and newsletters). In addition, the funding 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, which since its 2020-2021 updates includes initiatives around the award-winning 40 West ArtLine and efforts to revitalize the west end of the corridor around Oak Street Station area and to influence the redevelopment of the Westland town center. Conversations are in process with the Westland ownership group and RTD, which owns a tract of land adjacent to Oak Street, that is a potential site for redevelopment that could include the type of retail and entertainment amenities desired by the local communities.

**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 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 its long-term sustainability as a Creative District—a building that they own and call home. After the planned yearlong 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, and 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. 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 4 years and is proposed to include: an evaluation of the best use of 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 new good news in the works, and clearly so much work to still do, we wouldn't have any other way!

(This is 800 words . . . you can be shorter but not longer, please.)