

WEST COLFAX LATELY

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From the Editors



Above, right photos Krista Watzel

This magazine has been my #1 priority over the last four months. I wake up to it, go to sleep with it, and focus on it each and every day. I love West Colfax and in a sense, this magazine represents my passion for the corridor, and my gift back to the street and community that I call home. I want to thank each and every contributor in the magazine, particularly the writers. Bill and I set out to create something that

honored this underrepresented and in many ways, dying art form—the journalistic feature story. It truly is an art, just as important as painting, sculpture, or graphic design. The stories within this magazine have length, time, and attention dedicated to them, and I hope you honor them with a slow, full read in a comfy chair against a sunlit window. Just like any art, a feature deserves to be pondered, questioned, and interpreted. When Bill and I first spoke about the vision for this magazine, I stressed the concepts of truth, authenticity, and reader captivation. We broke up one story about West Colfax into five smaller pieces, each with an individual flair. We recognized the growth and momentum of the West Corridor, while also appreciating the grit and color that mark America's most famous commercial street. I present *West Colfax Lately* to you, with the utmost humility and gratitude. Gratitude for how much I learned during this process. Gratitude for 40 West Arts District, the City of Lakewood, and in particular Bill Marino, who shared this incredible opportunity with me. And most importantly, gratitude for West Colfax Avenue, a street with history and style. A street that's surely taken you somewhere. And a street that's definitely going somewhere.

Liz Black, Managing Editor

What a joy to walk this path with Liz—a remarkable creative and a rare individual who can lead or follow with equal measures of grace and resourcefulness. I echo her appreciation to all those involved, but also want to extend a grateful nod to the forward-thinking folks at the City of Lakewood—amazing people who have been amazing partners all along the way.

For me the creative process of this magazine is a worthy pursuit in and of itself—developing the concept and nurturing it until the ink hits the page. The journey is the “juice.” So, by the time you read this, Liz and I will be marching toward the next issue.

Thank you for joining us for our Pilot Edition—and future issues, too—to find out more about what's happening along West Colfax . . . lately!

Bill Marino, Publisher / Editor-in-Chief

Comments, suggestions? Email us at: editors@westcolfaxlately.org

From the Mayor



For more than 30 years, I have lived and worked just off West Colfax, and through that time I have developed a passion for the rich history, character, fabric, and now, potential of “the ‘Fax.”

Colfax is a unique combination of a transcontinental highway (U.S. 40) and neighborhood main street. Time and freeways seemed to bypass us for a bit, but now, as a result of the hard work of the neighbors and businesses along Colfax, we are roaring back with renewed vigor.

This issue covers many of the keys to this resurgence—the opening of light rail, \$200M+ in public and private investment in the last year—with more to follow. But the most important investments have been those of time and love from the people and businesses who simply call this historic corridor home. The West Colfax Community Association, the Lakewood-West Colfax Business Improvement District, 40 West Arts District and the many strong neighborhood organizations have collaborated to produce a dynamic, new synergy, a new “vibe,” that is turning West Colfax into a must-see destination. Case in point: The Edge Theatre in 40 West Arts District is critically acclaimed for its powerful live productions, winning Season of the Year from *Westword*. And the studios and workshops of talented artists and artisans and the galleries that feature their work are opening all around us. To support this, the City is actively working to bring an Artspace project to 40W. This renowned developer of high-quality, permanently affordable live-work space for artists, would be a tremendous catalyst for Colfax.

Welcome to the Pilot Edition of *West Colfax Lately*, and welcome to West Colfax Avenue: the “Art and Soul of Lakewood!”

Mayor Bob Murphy



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WEST COLFAX LATELY

Lakewood's Perspective on Colorado's Most Famous Avenue

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Cover photo by Krista Watzel of Mayor Bob Murphy & Lonnie Hanzon at Lakewood-Wadsworth Light Rail Station

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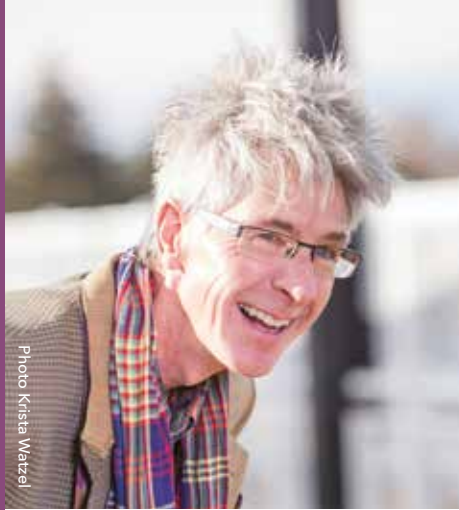


Photo Krista Watzel



Photo courtesy Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RM/CAD)



Photo Steven Haire



Illustration Julie Kitzes



Photo Steven Haire

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Each issue a local photographer gives us an image, and the story behind it.

Web Xtra *West Colfax - Open for Business* by Leah M. Charney

Go to westcolfaxlately.org for the web-only feature



Lonnie Hanzon reviews detailed plans for one of his sculptures

The Evolution of an Artist and an Arts District

by Allison Cohn

Lonnie Hanzon cut off all of his hair and moved to the Lakewood West Colfax neighborhood, The Glens, to escape the Denver art scene about eight years ago. Much to his dismay, 40 West Arts District popped up shortly thereafter, just around the corner from his new home and hiding spot.

After helping to pioneer Denver's Santa Fe Arts District, pouring tons of money and hours of creative labor into renovating the neighborhood, Lonnie hit a wall. In 2001, right around the 9/11 attacks, Lonnie went from owning a million dollar company to a zero dollar company overnight. He lost five contracts in one week, all for different reasons. He had to auction off everything, all of his art. When it rains, it pours.

Born and raised in Colorado (Lonnie graduated from Wheat Ridge High School), Hanzon, now 55, has contributed enormously to Denver's public art scene over the decades. Hanzon is famous for his outdoor urban art installations, including the *Evolution of the Ball* archway at Coors Field, and other colorful pieces at locations like 16th Street Pedestrian Mall, the Denver Botanic Gardens, and Union Station.

Boasting the title of a “maximalist,” Lonnie collages every material in his arsenal together to produce large-scale sculptures. “My art is for a multi-generational audience and my pieces definitely trigger emotional reactions,” Lonnie reflects. He adds that his internationally renowned window displays and holiday installations bring him “immeasurable joy through children’s nose prints on glass.” Lonnie maintains an underlying sense of practicality and skepticism. He just didn’t have faith in 40 West Arts District, at first.

West Colfax was in need of a renaissance though, and what better way to help residents celebrate a sense of history, heritage, and character in their neighborhood than through art?

Bob Murphy, seventh mayor of Lakewood, discusses the city’s artistic momentum. “I believe in art. I’m married to an artist. I believe in art and what it does to infuse the spirit of the community. Art has a phenomenal positive economic effect. We invested in that economic vitality.”

Murphy refers to national economic studies that reflect the impact of the arts, and assert that an average person spends \$17 when attending a cultural event in their own community, beyond the price of a ticket. Individuals attending an event outside their own community spend an average of \$40. Murphy hopes that the cultural tourism brought about through 40 West Arts District will continue to foster creativity and stimulate small business in Lakewood, bringing in more cafes, coffee shops, and galleries.

Murphy says, “40 West is showcasing the creativity of the area, all while building their own identity. Because of the pride that the artists have in their community and the pride that the community has in their art, this convergence of spirit is what galvanizes a city.”

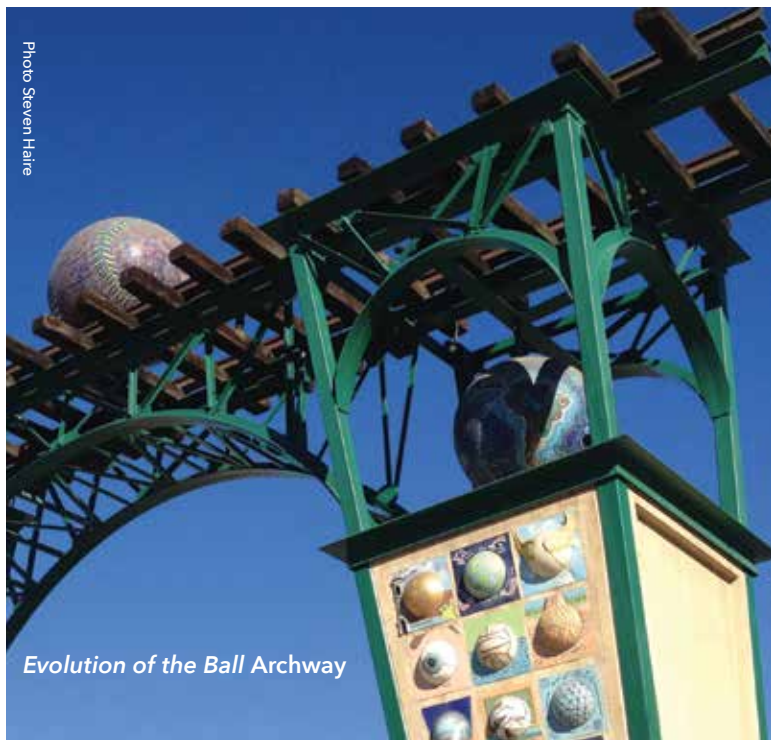
And 40 West Arts District has been doing just that since 2011. Bill Marino, 40 West Board Chair and Director of the West Colfax Business Improvement District, warmly describes 40 West as “a prolific catalyst, connecting the dots between local artists, businesses, creative enterprises, and the entrepreneurial roots of the corridor.” “Creativity and community,” Marino adds, “That’s what it’s all about. I don’t think it gets any better than that.”



Lakewood Mayor Bob Murphy and Hanzon-corridor residents and arts advocates



Hanzon finalizes the base of Lakewood Legacy Trees



Evolution of the Ball Archway

Photo Krista Metzler

Photo Richard Everstey

Photo Steven Haire



Photo courtesy/ RmCAD

Marino evangelizes the arts at a conference

By embracing the vision of arts, culture, and quality of life, Colorado Creative Industries recently certified 40 West Arts District as one of only twelve arts districts in the state.

"It's so exciting and fulfilling and heartwarming. The hard work of so many people is paying off with this remarkable center of energy," Murphy asserts.

Additionally 40 West has gained attention from Artspace, the nation's largest nonprofit developer of artist live-work spaces. "40 West is very entrepreneurial," says Artspace's Wendy Holmes. "They've figured out a way to work with and create a business improvement district to fund the arts. It means they're bringing in the whole business community. 40 West is a very active arts organization. All the right pieces are in place."



Background and below photos courtesy 40 West Arts

40 West Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

But when the concept of 40 West was first introduced to Lonnie, he scoffed, "Oh, come on. There can't be an arts district here." After attending an organizing event (one of many in the early days) in a small room with handmade decorations and a circle of folding chairs, he remained unconvinced. Then he received a call from a volunteer at 40 West asking to come and tour his studio, which he politely accepted. When a bus arrived with about thirty eager people, he was taken aback. Sure, he was there. But were there any other artists in the neighborhood?

The tenacious little arts district-that-could persisted. Lonnie connected with Johanna Parker and was moved by her paper mache folk art. Then there was a local artists marketplace. And then a handmade, custom furniture show, followed by a recycled art show, and then the Travelling Route 40 exhibit. Every time Lonnie went into 40 West or received a call from someone wanting his input, he would show up with a little bit of disbelief, and come away impressed with the quality of the art and the people involved.



Artist Anna Cash-Mitchell delivers a 40 West demo

40 West was about collaborations and community, which Lonnie came to adore. It was people getting to know each other and building things together. And bit-by-bit, 40 West kept its

programs going and expanding. "The community met us in this remarkable convergence of opportunity and he became a believer," Marino says, referring to Lonnie's transition.

Lonnie has now personally invested in West Colfax's public art scene through his installation at the Lamar Street light rail station, *Lakewood Legacy Trees*, which pays homage to West Colfax's rich history. And by using his "maximalism" techniques, Lonnie is contributing more than just art. He is creating a sense of endless discovery in people's everyday commutes. "I love hiding Easter Eggs," he affirms. "It's the idea of curious details and little jokes in the hopes that people will notice something different each and every time they pass by."

The *Lakewood Legacy Trees* hold a lot of symbolism and inspiration from the West Colfax neighborhood. The five trees each contain literal objects from the region's past, including cherries and apples to reflect the orchards that once covered the region, and sharp edged Monopoly houses as a tribute to the early bungalow style architecture of the neighborhood. At the base of the trees are engraved bricks, cracked and piled as if the tree's roots were bursting up through the ground itself.

In regard to *Lakewood Legacy Trees* and his appreciation for 40 West's support in making them, Lonnie says, "I don't make money on public art, that's not what it's about. You're given the trust and honor that this is supposedly going to be there for a very long time, even longer than you are. It's a gift to the community. 40 West supported me all the way through the unveiling and made it possible to do such a good job on that."

And so now Lonnie is on an artist committee with 40 West and has collaborated with them in other ways. He is a part of COLorFAX, a program that is dedicated to spreading public art through Lakewood in the form of outdoor murals. "They've got me," he admits. "And they're certainly in my long range plans."

"Now when they tell me they have more big ideas, I'm no longer skeptical. It's a real thing. And it's not a street or a place, but it is a district," Lonnie says. "Yes it's art, but it's also about the people involved. I know that so much has already been done and there's so much more to come. When I moved to Lakewood, I didn't think I'd be involved in anything like that."

West Colfax Lately has even more details about Lakewood Legacy Trees online at westcolfaxlately.org





Photo Barbara Gal

Lakewood Grill at Night



Rockley Music, 1946

Photo courtesy Rockley Music

Return of the Neon— The Resurgence of West Colfax

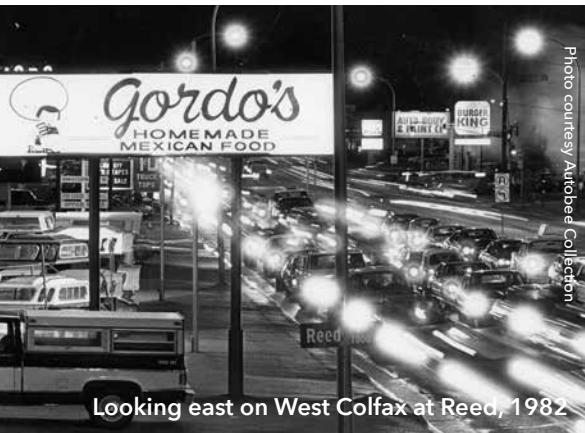
by M. Perry Williams

If you live in the metro area—whether a recent resident or an old-timer—you’ve heard of Colfax. Sure, it’s a major east-west thoroughfare, but that’s not why. Colfax Avenue has a brand—or perhaps better put—a personality . . . a neon personality.

Allegedly called the “longest, wickedest street in America,” by *Playboy Magazine’s* Hugh Hefner, Colfax earned its reputation as the nation’s longest continuous commercial thoroughfare—and the glitter and grit that comes with it. West Colfax, connected by history and geography to stretches of the avenue in Denver and Aurora, is a clearly delineated segment. And the Lakewood section of the historic avenue has a big story to tell that’s all its own.

West Colfax has been a player since it was a rutted, dirt path in the 1850s for some seeking a livelihood from the land and others in search of riches in the gold and silver mines. In 1865, this stretch of road—known then as Golden Road—was officially designated as Colfax Avenue, named after Schuyler Colfax, the sitting Speaker of the House of Representatives from Indiana, who would later serve one term as vice president under Ulysses S. Grant. Some historical accounts indicate the street-naming was his price for supporting statehood for Colorado.

Not long thereafter, newspaper magnate and railroad entrepreneur William A. H. Loveland, who masterminded the

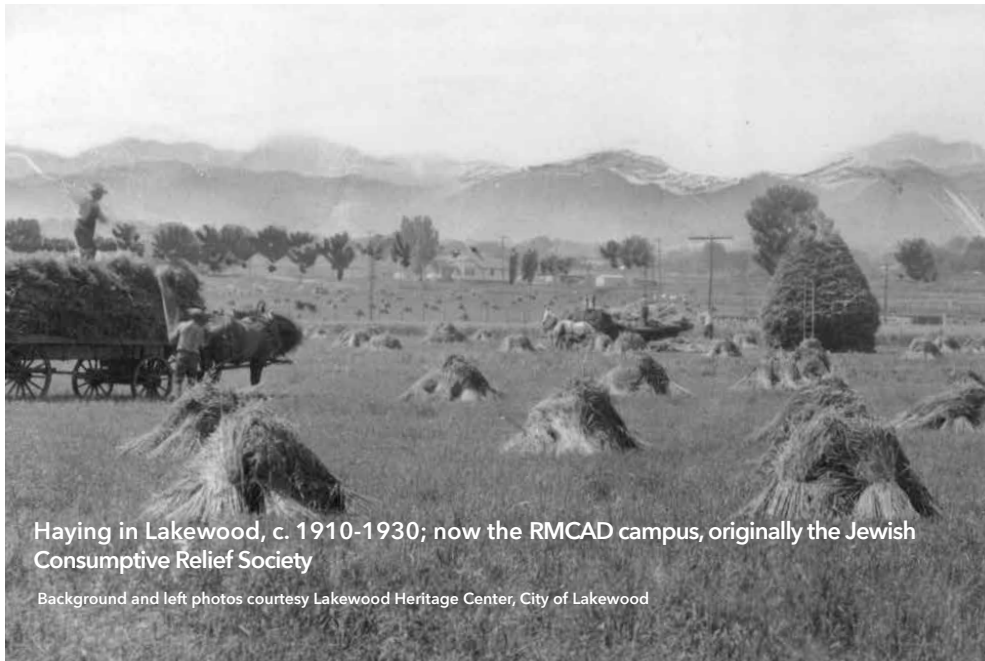


Looking east on West Colfax at Reed, 1982

Photo courtesy Autopeel Collection



Davies' Chuck Wagon Diner, 1990



Haying in Lakewood, c. 1910-1930; now the RMCAD campus, originally the Jewish Consumptive Relief Society

Background and left photos courtesy Lakewood Heritage Center, City of Lakewood

Some of the best examples of neon signs at two still-existing West Colfax motels.



Photos this page Barbara Gal

The Big Bunny Motel, once called Bugs Bunny Motel until Warner Bros. threatened a lawsuit



Denver to Golden Railway, platted a proposed real estate venture along West Colfax in 1889 and called it "Lakewood"—80 years before that name would be officially chartered as a city. In 1904, the heroic Dr. Charles Spivak and the Jewish Consumptive Relief Society (JCRS) opened a sanatorium on 100+ acres, just north of Colfax between Pierce and Kendall Streets. The sanatorium cared for tuberculosis patients free of charge—and this service would continue for more than a half century.

At this stage, the region was dominated by its agricultural roots, but its entrepreneurial spirit was well evident: hay wagons, vegetable and fruit carts and other agricultural peddlers traversed West Colfax to sell to locals as well as the Denver city dwellers. Soon West Colfax was paved in 1918 . . . and the world

took notice. As the gateway to the Rocky Mountains became more accessible—it attracted those seeking to capitalize on its popularity.

As World War I ended and the early stages of the automobile culture caught on, motor inns began to open in the 1920s. Vacationers traveled to Colorado and funneled along West Colfax to visit the "purple mountain majesties," and the landscape and economy of West Colfax began to change. What had been primarily an agrarian culture, now had to co-exist with the coming commercial development for which Colfax would become known.

War swept the world again in 1939, and by 1941 West Colfax and its now plentiful motels housed the work force for the government's ordnance plant. This plant, operated by Remington Arms on the site that is now the Federal Center, handled three shifts and employed 20,000 people at its peak.

After WWII, the economic engine of West Colfax revved up. Faster-paced expansion came to the corridor as new neighborhoods began to take shape. Many of the larger landowners took profits from homebuilders as post-war throngs scampered to the idyllic suburbs for a house with a white picket fence and the pursuit of the American Dream. The region experienced a housing boom and population more than doubled in a decade, driving even more investment in commercial development.

The 1950-60s were the highpoint of the heyday for West Colfax. The world was coming to West Colfax—not just to pass through on the way to the mountains, but to stop, shop, eat, and play in the neon avenue's glow. The new City was born in 1969, first as "Jefferson City" and then changed within months to "Lakewood." Locals and visitors enjoyed Taylor's Supper Club, Jess & Lil's Barbecue, Davie's Chuck Wagon Diner, Lakewood Grill, Dino's Italian, Gordo's and many others added their brands to the unique West Colfax experience. During this era, West Colfax was the place to be.

Then came the 70s. Rockley Music celebrated 25 years on West Colfax (in 1971), and Casa Bonita opened (1974) . . . but with the disco decade comes a big change for West Colfax—the completion of Interstate 70, which re-routes traffic patterns and triggers the beginning of a downward spiral. Much like the

character Sal Paradise in Jack Kerouac's seminal Beat Generation novel, *On the Road* (in which Colfax is mentioned numerous times), the famous avenue fell on hard times. The glitter lost its luster—the neon signs flickered and went dark. Businesses big and small—mom & pops and department stores—failed, moved, or simply closed their doors.

The 80s and 90s were gloomy times. Even though a few seeds were sown to help the struggling avenue, the grit outpaced the glitter along West Colfax. But a new century brought new hope. The City was amid a new urbanism movement as a new downtown was born at Belmar. With that process well on its way, civic attention shifted to the City's historic heart, West Colfax, with the knowledge that light rail was coming to the corridor in 2013.

With the new millennium, many of the seeds planted prior begin to sprout—and the West Colfax community rose up to meet the opportunity the new century had to offer. While many had met their demise, a number of West Colfax's iconic businesses and stalwart entrepreneurs were still in place—Casa Bonita, Chicago Restaurant, Dino's Italian, Lakewood Grill, Davie's

Chuck Wagon, Pasternack's and Rockley Music, just to name a few. Some had changed ownership, but not business name—but most were run by the same well-known families—the Rockleys, the Di Paolos, the Clarks, and the Margottes—along with the next generation who joined in the family operations—and they were ready to roll-up their sleeves for West Colfax.

Put into motion by Mayor Steve Burkholder, a two-year effort involving 200+ citizens resulted in a plan to bring the avenue back. Began in late 2003, this blue-ribbon committee was chaired by Councilman Bob Murphy, a local businessman and West Colfax corridor resident, who would go on to be Lakewood's next mayor. He was joined by prominent West Colfax entrepreneurs and community leaders, including Nina Rockley, Doug Stiverson, Tom Murray, Joe Margotte, Greg Stevinson, and Bill Marino, then the current chair of the Lakewood Planning Commission. The goal of the committee was straightforward—build a framework not only to resuscitate the avenue, but allow it to thrive—or in the inimitable words of Nina Rockley: "Make it sparkle again!" Around this same time, a large part of the historic JCRS sanatorium was purchased by Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD), bringing



Photos courtesy RMCAD

RMCAD campus, originally the Jewish Consumptive Relief Society



Pop-up arts festival during the opening of the W Line

new creative energy to the corridor—a harbinger of good things to come.

The freshly minted *West Colfax Avenue Action Plan*, published in 2006, took a few years to gain traction. But in 2009, now Mayor Bob Murphy tapped Marino to build on the recommendations in the plan and devise a strategy to establish a business improvement district in the corridor. A two-year campaign began, supported by the West Colfax Community Association, its president Bunny Malm and many long-time West Colfax advocates. The new business improvement district (BID) was approved in a landslide special election in 2011, creating a spark that would contribute to the coming renaissance and provide a platform for a soon-to-be-born arts district.

Simultaneously, City planning staff parlayed an EPA grant into a community effort to rally behind the formation of an arts district (also an objective in the Action Plan) and passed the torch over to the newly formed business improvement district to nurture with an eager and able “champions group,” a steering committee of locals charged with moving the fledgling arts district forward. Regaled with a name and bold brand, “40 West Arts” (courtesy of design students at RMCAD—a name that paid tribute to Colfax Avenue as part of U.S. 40), the new arts district was ready to become part of West Colfax glitterati.

The fuse was now lit, and the City and the West Colfax community forged a productive partnership that

would fan the flames of change—and help usher in a burst of new economic activity at a level not seen in decades. More new businesses opened (and stayed open) in the subsequent two years than had done so in the previous decade—numerous new eateries, a coffee roaster, and the avenue’s first Gold LEED® certified building, designed and built by Weston Solutions, as part of its development of 4+ acres on the corner of Garrison and West Colfax.

And amid all this, the long-awaited opening of light rail arrived April 25, 2013, triggering young families and millennials to notice the area—because of light rail, because of the arts district, because it was still affordable . . . and because it was as an active and engaged community.

Mayor Murphy added to the momentum with comments following the opening of RTD’s W Line: “With new, more flexible zoning, the catalytic impact of light rail, fresh creative energy from 40 West Arts and RMCAD, and the quirky history that makes Colfax cool, West Colfax is poised to be the next big thing in metro area real estate.”

Clearly, some agreed with the Mayor, as 2014 marked a year filled with announcements and milestones: As 2014 drew to a close, the local BID estimated more than \$220 million of public and private investment in various stages in the corridor—the 1st Bank’s headquarters expansion and TerumoBCT’s new headquarters building, together totaling \$100M+, are two examples of projects bringing new energy and new jobs to the corridor. And The Village at Oak Street project of 255 multi-family residences is just one of a number of developments bringing more than 1500 new residential units, either in the ground or in the planning stages, to the West corridor. Three long-time West Colfax businesses deepened their investment: Colorado Frame & Art built a striking new building across from its old location, Don Jelniker restored the “Hidden Victorian” connected to his Grow Store, and Veldkamp’s completed an expansion for its florist, garden and gift center. Add to this the opening of Metro West Housing Solution’s awarding-winning Lamar Station Crossing multi-family community, the first TOD project on the W Line, the millions of dollars in public improvements along Wadsworth, Lamar, West Colfax, and Pierce—either complete, in progress, or in planning—and 40 West Arts earning its designation as a state certified

creative district, one of only 12 in Colorado—and the corridor was clearly on the move.

Broad Street Realty also entered the market in 2014 with a high-impact and high-profile transaction. The Bethesda-based real estate investment and development firm purchased the old JCRC Shopping Center for more than \$8M in May of 2014 and immediately announced new plans for the retail center, which included a new name—Lamar Station Plaza, a direct reference to Lamar Station on RTD's new W Line, located just two blocks south of the plaza. "We have a clear vision for Lamar Station Plaza," said Broad Street CEO Michael Jacoby. "We want to create something unique—something that fits the character of the corridor and becomes an attractive destination where people can shop and socialize." Following this announcement, current tenant Casa Bonita, the iconic Mexican-themed restaurant and entertainment destination; and new tenant Planet Fitness, the popular, community-focused health club franchise signed long-term leases.

"I believe in a few years, we'll all look back and say '2014 was the tipping point for West Colfax,'" said Marino, who heads up the local BID and chairs the 40 West Arts board. "Not everything is coming out of the ground just yet, but if you look closely there's a lot happening in the corridor and plenty more ready to pop!"

Artists and creative enterprises are often the vanguard that revitalizes an area, so it is no surprise they are part of the West Colfax rally. Faye Crowe, artist, sculpture, and architect, moved her office and studio into the district: "I wanted to get in early and be a part of the transformation!" Rick Yaconis relocated The EDGE Theater and has seen his audience numbers nearly double. Partners Ron Abo and Kevin Yoshida of the Abo Group, an urban

design and sustainable architecture firm, bought the historic Lakewood Lanes building and moved their business to West Colfax: "The evolution of the corridor is happening before our eyes. We not only want to be part of it—we want to help shape it," added Yoshida, now a member of the local BID board of directors and co-chair of the new West Colfax Vision Group. Wendy Scheck of Liquid Metal Coatings, located in the corridor for almost 15 years, sums it up: "It feels like we creatives now have a home in 40 West Arts District." To further catalyze this momentum and help accommodate the influx of creatives, the City and a number of community partners are in the final stages of discussions with Artspace—an award-winning national developer of affordable live/work space for artists—to bring a new artist enclave to the corridor.

So what's next for West Colfax? The consensus is more—more creative businesses, more creative placemaking, more investment, more residents, and more visitors. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? "Whether you look at this as history repeating itself or a natural real estate evolution," added Marino, the Mayor is spot on—West Colfax is back! With such a deep commitment from the City and the momentum created by the local community, West Colfax is in the beginning stages of a transformation. Just as investment and development transformed West Colfax in the 1920s and again in the 1950s—it is in the process of being transformed again."

Jack Kerouac's Beat Generation cronies would not be surprised about the resurgence along West Colfax. A poet's eye can capture the spectacle—the neon and neighborhoods, the motor inns and motels, the diners and dance halls, the people, places, and history—all part of the ever-changing character of Main Street Colorado and a community rising up to celebrate the glory of the past and the glitter still to come.

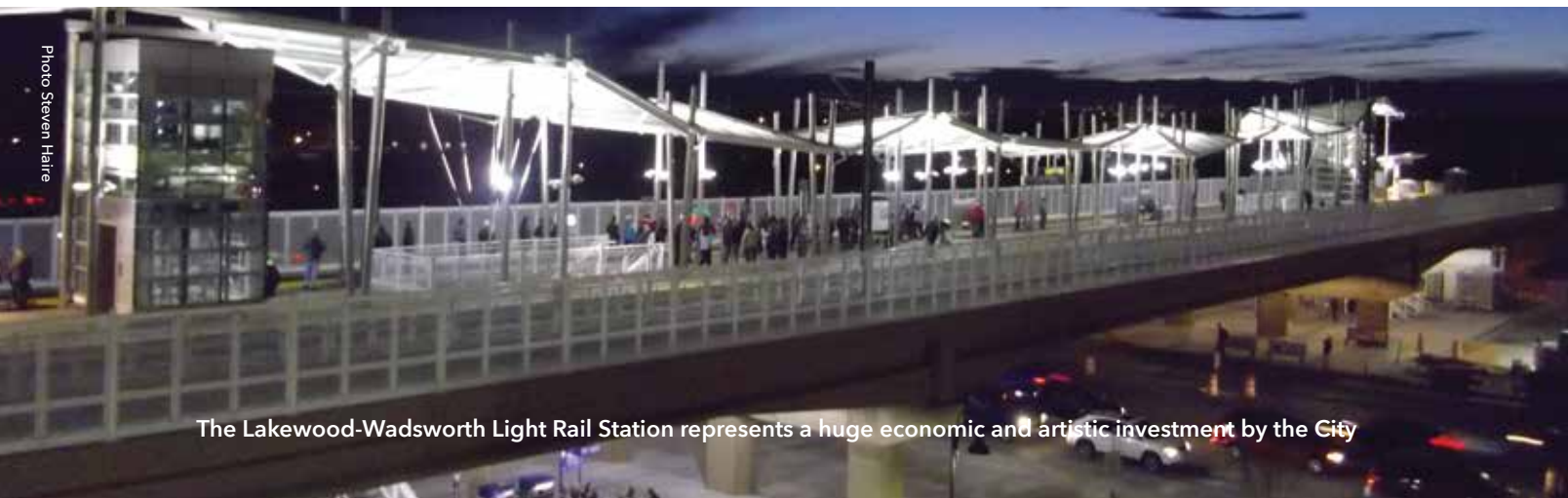


Photo Steven Haire

The Lakewood-Wadsworth Light Rail Station represents a huge economic and artistic investment by the City



Lamar Street Station Mural, *Hear the Train a Humming* by Bobby MaGee Lopez

What We're Loving Lately

Have you seen West Colfax lately? From the opening of light rail to the beginnings of business expansion and development, there's a lot of new things taking shape in this old neighborhood. I asked a few locals to give me their insights about West Colfax. It turns out, there's a lot here to love.

by Karen Hemmerle



Liz & Quentin Hartman

High on everyone's list is the arts. The Hartmans are quick to point out their favorites—the mural by Johanna Parker on the side of King's Rest Motel, and the light rail electrical box wraps. More than just disguises for boring tin boxes, the colorful, whimsical designs are delightful in their own right. Liz says, "The electrical box wraps make walking or driving next to the tracks so much more enjoyable and make the space feel more welcoming." Quentin also loves the arts and is a huge fan of 40 West Arts District. "Oh 40 West, how do I love thee? I think that the arts district is playing such an important role in bringing this area to life. I really think the work done by 40 West is making the neighborhood so much more than it would be otherwise."

Living near the W Line light rail was on their "must have" list when buying a home. Quentin is able to take the train to work in Denver, enabling them to be a one-car family. Liz says, "Walkability in the neighborhood is improving and as a young family, we appreciate it. Looking at the long term strategic plans, it's only going to get better."



Photo Steven Haire

A Cappuccino at Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters

Liz and Quentin are loving The Postman breakfast at Lakewood Grill. Liz says, "The Postman is rellenos and eggs, smothered in cheese and green chile. They're really good rellenos and green chile and a place where both of those things are wonderful is quite a find." "I know Lakewood Grill has been around forever," Quentin says. "My Dad got very nostalgic talking about the times he went there when he and my mom lived in this part of town before I was born." And, Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters is making coffee drinker Quentin very happy. "If you want a really, really good coffee, Sweet Bloom can't be beat. I might even say they have the best coffee I've tasted in all of Denver. When I really want to treat myself, that's where I go to get the freshest beans too."



Cindy Baroway

Lakewood City Councilor Cindy Baroway (who wraps up service in 2015) is loving The Edge Theatre Company, which she calls "one of the most exciting things to hit our area. The first production I saw was Neil LaBute's *Some Girls*. I was blown away with how powerful the actors were, and continue to be delighted with the levels of professionalism, artistry, and beauty that I see each and every time I attend a show." She's also a fan of public art along the corridor, especially the *Hear the Train a Humming* mural by artist Bobby MaGee Lopez.

“The public art all along light rail is great. Thank you to RTD and the City of Lakewood.” She adds, “My favorite sculpture is *Lakewood Legacy Trees* [by artist Lonnie Hanzon]. The wraps on the electrical boxes are also beautiful!” (Both *Hear the Train a Humming* and *Lakewood Legacy Trees* can be viewed at the Lamar Street light rail station).

Susie’s Sweets’ macaroons are also getting some love from Cindy and her husband. In fact, according to Baroway, he received them as a special treat for his birthday this year.

Finally, Cindy is thrilled about the new light rail line. “The W Line changed the corridor and brought in new people. We are seeing young people move into the area because they want to be close to public transportation. Staff from St. Anthony Hospital are purchasing new homes so that they can use light rail to travel to and from work.”



Ryan Mathews

Ryan Mathews, first ever Artist in Residence at 40 West Arts is loving the Lamar Station Crossing apartments on 13th Avenue, just steps from the Lamar Street light

rail station. As part of her residency, Ryan resides in a live-work space free of charge. “I love the natural light that comes through the floor to ceiling windows every day. I also adore the look and feel of the entire place, sliding barn doors, cool modern window treatments and fixtures, it just feels like home.”

She’s also thrilled about the bike path that runs along the light rail line from Lakewood into downtown Denver. “I’m a distance runner and the path is convenient, scenic, and very safe.” Ryan also mirrors Quentin Hartman in giving a shout out to Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters. “Amazing coffee! Very natural and well-rounded flavor. It’s easily one of the best cups of coffee I’ve ever had.”

Not surprisingly, Ryan is also a huge fan of Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design, where she is a student majoring in Art Education with a specialty in painting. “The buildings are so historic, with old red brick and beautiful front lawns.” (RMCAD was originally part of the Jewish Consumptive Relief Society, founded in 1904). Additionally Ryan finds a sense of creativity and inspiration through her instructors, which she calls “some of the best around.”

Every resident I spoke to is thrilled about the continued growth and momentum happening in this historic corridor. Quentin Hartman said it best. “I’m really excited about all the rebuilding that we’re seeing. Mountair Park Community Farm,

the big plans that the new owners of the JCRS shopping center (now Lamar Station Plaza) have for Casa Bonita and the rest of the complex, it’s all so exciting! It really feels like we’re at the beginning of a great revitalization. It feels like the area just keeps building energy.”

So what am I loving about West Colfax?

I love that it’s being reborn with a sense of community. Young families, retirees, all ethnicities, business people, workers and artists, all lending their voices to create the harmony of a thriving Lakewood community. I love that the rebirth of West Colfax isn’t just about business, but includes the arts. Good things last through years of ups and downs, and that’s something to love.

For more Loving Lately recommendations check out West Colfax Lately online at westcolfaxlately.org



RMCAD Campus

Photo courtesy RMCAD

Surviving Casa Bonita ... Challenge Accepted

by Leah M. Charney

Those not in the know are often surprised that Casa Bonita isn't just something made up by those wacky South Park guys. Ask someone who grew up in Colorado though, and you might see a glimmer of the child inside. Since Casa Bonita first opened in 1974, multiple generations have come through the ornately-carved front doors.

The rumor is that Casa Bonita is a place that children love—and adults love to avoid. Let's prove that rumor wrong. The first step to enjoying (yes, enjoying) yourself in this iconic pink adobe building is to get into the proper mindset. Casa Bonita is best for those still in touch with his or her inner child.

What's the best way to relish an evening at Casa Bonita? Easy. Take a 6-year-old with you. Don't have a child handy? We've got you covered with one or more of the tips below.

All illustrations the work of students at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD)



Casa Bonita,
Megan Stack



Sopapillas,
Brittany David

How to make the most of Casa Bonita as an adult:

- 1** Take a newbie who's never been before. Actually, come to think of it, this one is pretty much required. Short of that, bring your most "up-for-anything" friend. Together you can embrace the rules of improv. Just leave the cliff diving to the professionals. Joining the cast spontaneously is a big no-no and frowned upon by Casa Bonita's management.
- 2** Embrace the retro-kitsch. Everything old is new again, yes? Get nostalgic for simpler times, when food came from a mysterious hole in the wall on primary-colored cafeteria trays. It's the all-American, yet Mexico City-themed adventure. View the food with this same nostalgic lens. In the 1970s the color of the cheese on your enchiladas might even have been found in nature, for all you know.
- 3** Do your best to re-enact the South Park Casa Bonita episode. At the very least, get the entire table (good on ya if you can get your entire section) to sing a spirited rendition of "Casa Bonita! Casa Bonita! Food and fun in a festive atmosphere!" Again, don't try to dive. The only people who should be leaping from the 30-foot waterfall are the highly trained 17-to-24-year-old employees.

4 Dress up in your finest ball gown or tux with tails. Speak in a fake accent, preferably your best "rich" accent (be that British high-society or Southern belle) all night long. Wear napkins like a bib to keep from ruining your finery. Eat your weight in sopapillas.

5 Invent a drinking game: How many times will you hear "Happy Birthday" played by the mariachi band during your visit? Our guess is a minimum of 12-14 during a two-hour stay.

6 As additional items or service are requested by flag, imagine your table is an island nation. Determine what the monarch of a small country would do with this power and answer the burning question of how one runs a country where the only currency is fried dough. Buy a sheriff badge in the gift shop to round out your experience of benevolent authority. Eat your weight in sopapillas.

7 Enjoy or imagine the awkward teen tension that sometimes creeps up between performers. Create elaborate backstories for these characters, including made-up names, soap opera (or better still, telenovela) style. Imagine that Marguerite left Tony for his brother Horace, and that's why Tony, the fire juggler, ran away from the circus but he's being chased by his bookie for bad gambling debts so he has to dive off that cliff. Seriously, what more do you need in life?

8 Two words: sopapilla-eating contest. Wait is that three? Do hyphens count? They do. Okay, THREE words: sopapilla-eating contest. You may have already noticed a theme here: eat your weight in sopapillas.

9 Only the bravest souls will wish to wander into Black Bart's cave and toward the sound of squealing children. If you aren't a big fan of kids you can pretend they're being eaten by the monster guarding Black Bart's treasure. If you like kiddos, you can think of the cacophony of their screams as a new, weird symphony, best enjoyed in total darkness under black lights.

10 Buy two bags of 20 tokens so you can hit the arcade. Can you play and win at Spider Stompin' after eating your weight in sopapillas? CAN YOU? (Answer: No, you cannot.) Besides, when was the last time you played Tekken 2, which is housed in the semi-secret downstairs arcade?

BONUS TIP

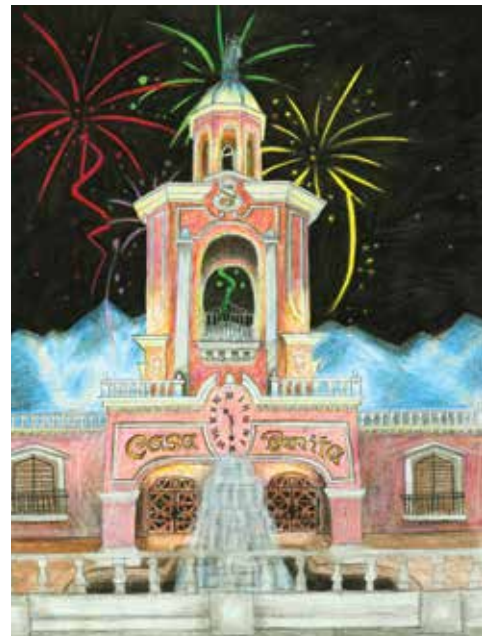
Take a six-year-old. It really is the easy way. Some say it's the cheaters way, but the best way to see Casa Bonita really IS through the eyes of a child.

Go for the margaritas, sopapillas, and the awesomely melodramatic high school acting/cliff diving. (We like to think of it as community theatre.) It's not Chuck E. Cheese with Mexican food, because Chuck E. Cheese is an animatronic giant rat. There are no robotic rats at Casa Bonita (that we know of). This is live entertainment, people. Let's face it, Casa Bonita hasn't won any notable culinary awards lately, so order the cheapest thing on the menu and you won't feel guilty. And remember, it's a unique experience. After all, in the immortal words of South Park's Eric Cartman, "It's the Disneyland of Mexican restaurants." Put on your friendly face, strap on your big kid boots, and go full force into the music-filled air.

**For more information go to casabonitadenver.com
6715 West Colfax Avenue**



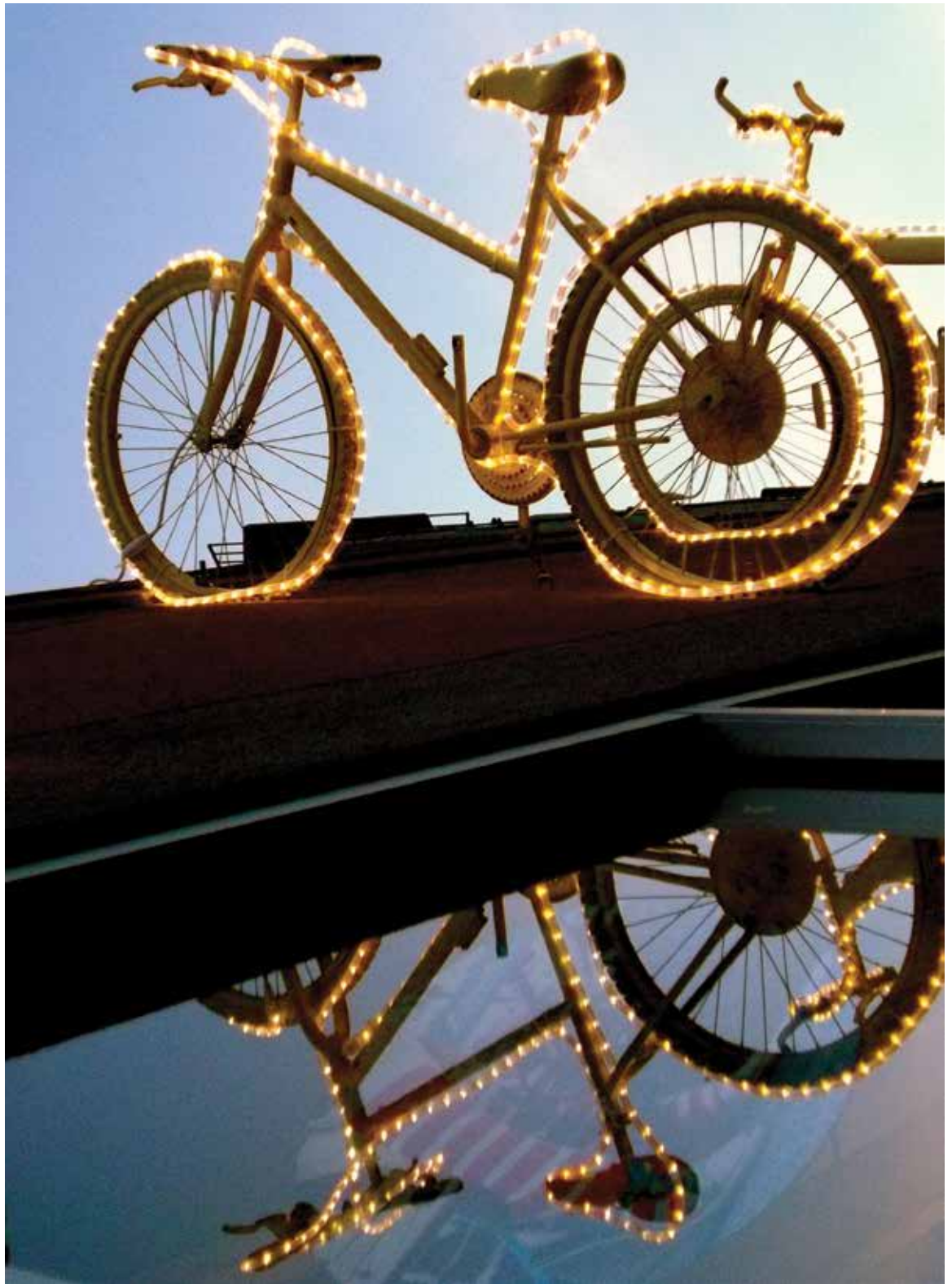
▲ Mariachi Musician, Steven Espinoza



▲ Casa Bonita, Julie Kitzes



▲ Cliff Diver, Thea Hunt



When my wife and I bought our house in this neighborhood in March of 2011, we were both really excited about the light rail. But in truth, I was almost more excited about the bike path that ran alongside light rail, the access to downtown via pedals, the pedalers. It's a gorgeous ride, lots of ducks and geese, I even saw a pelican once. This particular image was taken in winter, when I wasn't riding much, just

daydreaming about riding. I decided to stop into Campus Cycles, which is only a few blocks from my house, to wander around and look. The sun had set, but there was still a little light in the sky. I noticed the reflection of the bicycles off of the window, and the reflection of the lights off of everything around them. It just seemed right.
— Steven Haire



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40
W

FREE ARTS festival



**MURAL
FEST**



Photograph by Richard Eversley - ellipteo | Mural by Bobby Magee Lopez

Join us in 40 West Arts District for the West Colfax MuralFest!

This free arts festival will feature juried artists from across the country creating an outdoor art gallery of seven murals—all painted during one week—culminating in a one-day celebration of art, music, food, and creative activities for the whole family. Come and be inspired by the creativity and character of historic West Colfax.

Mark Your Calendar: **August 8th, 2015** | More Info: **WestColfaxMuralFest.org**