WALK THIS WAY:

Art Meets Outdoors Along the New 40 West ArtLine

By Leah M. Charney

The next big thing in 40 West Arts District is here, four miles long, and . . . green?

Much like the Freedom Trail in Boston or Oz’s fabled Yellow Brick Road, the bright green line of the 40 West ArtLine invites those who happen upon it to follow along and discover something new. As the name implies, that something is a collection of over 70 artworks in the form of wall murals, ground murals, mixed media attached to fences, as well as standalone sculptural pieces.

The idea for this expansive project originated over seven years ago in 2011. Implementation
The route provides an opening to see both existing artworks and murals alongside those created especially for this project. Katy Casper, an artist and environmental designer, created the interactive ground games murals that pop up at several points along the ArtLine. “In deciding what to create for each location, I visited each place several times, observed what went on there and who uses the space, and took cues from the surrounding area,” Casper explains.

Creating an outdoor experience is a no-brainer in a place like Colorado, with our abundance of snow sports, hiking, camping, and other activities. But why go far to find excuses to get outside when an opportunity is right outside the door? “The community conversation around all of this has been “How do you get people out and about and walking and biking in the neighborhood?” reports Alexis Moore, 40 West Arts board member and principal planner for the City of Lakewood.

One of the ArtLine’s newest sculptures, Dermal Plate Gateway by PUNCH acts as a colorful backdrop to the official ribbon-cutting and launch of the 40 West Artline at Mountair Park on June 9, 2018.

has been in the works for more than a year and the effort is a shining example of collaboration. Partnerships among individual neighbors, community organizations, project drivers at the City of Lakewood and 40 West Arts District, and funding entities including an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, are all part of a long list of those who made the project possible. Now brought to life, residents and visitors alike can pick up the four-mile walkable and bikeable green line at points throughout northeast Lakewood and follow it for as long (or as short) as they like.

How do you get people out and about and walking and biking in the neighborhood?

– Alexis Moore

To help solve that question, the meandering trail makes a series of loop-de-loops to snake along city sidewalks and bike paths, through three parks, past business and residential corridors, and of course, to spot
The 2018 ArtLine map indicates the location of pre-existing art alongside more than 30 new ground murals, kiosk totems, fence art, sculpture art and interactive pieces.

A team of volunteers, led by artist Carlos Fresquez, celebrates the completion of a ‘kaleidoscope crossing’ ground mural painting at Colfax and Pierce Street.

One of three park sculpture installations, Unearthed Plates by PUNCH, settles into its new location at Aviation Park.
a variety of art installations, old and new. The design is no accident: the 40 West ArtLine is intended to give everyone an opportunity to access art. It’s fitting, then, that the ArtLine crisscrosses several points in the heart of 40 West Arts District, a Colorado certified creative district.

“It’s woven into their neighborhood, so as they wake up, ride their bike, walk their dog, or walk to the store, whatever, it’s integrated into their everyday. It’s not the gray sidewalk. It’s a pop of color that enlightens for that moment as they continue their walk,” says Carlos Fresquez, an artist, teacher, and Colorado native who oversaw the installation of wayfinding ground murals, known as kaleidoscope crossings. These murals, painted by crews of volunteer community members, are a repetitive pattern that act as guideposts in places where the green line breaks to cross a street or alleyway.

The route wanders up the middle of Mountair Park, past the community farm, hugging the light rail train tracks in the existing pedestrian and bike-only W Line Trail. The route then intersects with the Lamar Station light rail stop, where a number of previous art installations intermingle with new ground murals and wayfinding signs. Heading north, the ArtLine crosses West Colfax, branching to a little island through the southern part of Walker Branch Park. Part of the line wanders down Pierce, passing the historic campus of Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design. The path then jets along open space into the satellite that is Aviation Park, before heading south on Reed Street to a cluster of galleries and studios.

“The concept of biking through an artistic experience feels so fresh and unexpected to me,” remarks Liz Black, executive director of 40 West Arts. As pedestrians and cyclists #exploreartoutside (the official hashtag for the ArtLine), several legs provide the opportunity to explore art inside, too. For example, the path takes a jaunt past 40 West Studios (a multi-artist workspace), the fun Hyperspace Arcade, and is proximal

Lakewood Mayor Adam Paul stands at a microphone to officially launch the 40 West ArtLine and cut the green ribbon as residents and community members look on.

All photos on this spread by Will Strathmann.

ArtLine elements include vertical Story Totems that act as wayfinding signage and light up at night, and interactive ground murals like Aztec Maze by Katy Casper that beautify the route.
to multiple district core galleries including Edge, NEXT, Pirate, and 40 West Arts Gallery.

The route also pops into Lamar Station Plaza, where you can take a break at WestFax Brewing or check out the Gallery of Everything, Red Herring Art Supply or Lakewood Arts Gallery. Plus you can gape at the pink pantheon herself, Casa Bonita. One of Timothy Flood’s two ArtLine sculptures is installed in the plaza and was created with the urban space in mind.

Entitled Affirmation Station, … “it communicates with people at a distance through the written messages on its lighted signs,” says Flood. Flood explains that for a more personal experience, simply press the button on the sculpture’s pole to hear “uplifting and empowering messages” played through a speaker built into the sculpture.

Though a June launch party christened the official opening of the 40 West ArtLine, the ArtLine as it exists now won’t remain unchanged. Moore, the city planner, says, “June is not the end, it is just the beginning.” More ground murals will be added, sculptures will make way for new pop-up installations and permanent art, and the annual West Colfax MuralFest, the corridor’s largest festival, will provide additional opportunities to add other outdoor canvases. It might be easiest to think of it as a rotating outdoor gallery; each time you visit, you can discover new art while also enjoying our 300 days of sunshine. Liz Black adds, “The ArtLine isn’t static but a growing, vibrant piece of Lakewood’s West Colfax corridor. It will continue to evolve and expand with the corridor itself, but will always reflect the original concept and idea of exploring art outdoors.” While gallery shows and stage productions are fleeting, the 40 West ArtLine has the weight of permanence, anchoring 40 West Arts District and further tying it to the greater community.

“The remarkable renaissance here continues to gain momentum, and the ArtLine is an extraordinary example of community collaboration, demonstrating that great things can happen when neighbors, local creatives, business owners, and the city all work together,” adds Bill Marino, board chair of 40 West Arts.

Follow along with the ongoing journey of the 40 West Artline on its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/40WestArtLine. Plug into the entire creative district at www.facebook.com/40WestArts.

All photos in this story by Will Strathmann. @willstrath
Kids explore one of three fence art installations located along Lakewood Place between Pierce Street and Reed Street.

Attendees to the 40 West Arts district-wide art walk and ArtLine block party were treated to live music, food trucks, mural art and even Mr. Bones, a local Denver entertainer.

The vision for the 40 West ArtLine will include both new installations and events, like this glow-in-the-dark, family-friendly walk hosted by Walk2Connect.

Artist Yulia Augustinova completed the final touches on a ground mural located along the 40 West ArtLine at Mountair Park.

Walkers pause to enjoy a ground mural maze game before continuing along the green line.