

# A Hub of Activity:

## The Places that Transform Us

By Kathryn Zeigler

Seven miles of Colfax Avenue runs through Colorado's fifth largest city, Lakewood. The evolution of those seven miles brings with it a long and storied history of pastoral oasis turned hoppin' supper clubs and motor inns; of a burgeoning working class moving into a suburban life and bringing with it arts and culture. The spaces and places that make up its history are as cemented into the tale and beauty of West Colfax Avenue as the road is to the ground itself.

One such storied space sits just off the corner of West Colfax and Pierce, on the north side of the street. Where once you may have blinked-and-missed it during the avenue's slow, decades-long economic decline of the last century, the same cannot be said of the building now. Pasternack's Art Hub, a building that has stayed standing throughout the corridor's peaks and valleys, shares a story of transformation and change that marks itself as a touchstone for the renaissance along this stretch of road heading west.



A crowd gathers to enjoy open mic poetry in Pasternack's Art Hub during the Colfax ArtFest VIP Party in 2019. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



Synonymous with pawnshops and book ending what the Colorado native family still affectionately calls the “Gateway to the Rockies,” the Pasternacks established three separate pawnshops that sat along both the Aurora and Lakewood side of Colorado’s Main Street. While the Pasternacks still own and operate both locations, there’s been a big change. Namely: the West Colfax location is no longer a pawnshop.

If you glance toward the sky next time you’re cruising along, you’ll notice that “pawn shop” has been scraped from the orange sign and instead, “Art Hub” has been painted along the building. Pasternack’s Art Hub now stands as a haven and home to no less than five art galleries – with future plans to bring even more art space to the heart of 40 West Arts – Lakewood’s only state-certified creative district. The future potential growth of the space and the district is nearly unmatched.

But, before we get there, let’s take a moment to tell the tale of the long-standing building and its special place along our avenue.

Before pawnshops dotted the landscape of West Colfax, lumber yards had their heyday. Distinct in their architecture and a vital part of the mid-century economic upswing of the street, the original footprint of Metz Lumber can still be seen on maps today.

These lumber yards were essential to the suburban growth coming to Lakewood during and after World War II. Metz Lumber, the lumber yard that occupied the Pasternack space on West Colfax, opened May 10, 1946, and sold many of the necessities for a burgeoning suburbia—including the world-famous Youngstown Kitchen Cabinets. The establishment of these lumber yards (of which there were once five along West Colfax) allowed new families in the area to settle down as the war came to an end. The neighborhoods along West Colfax began to attract families and grow. Mid-century entrepreneurs saw huge opportunities for development.

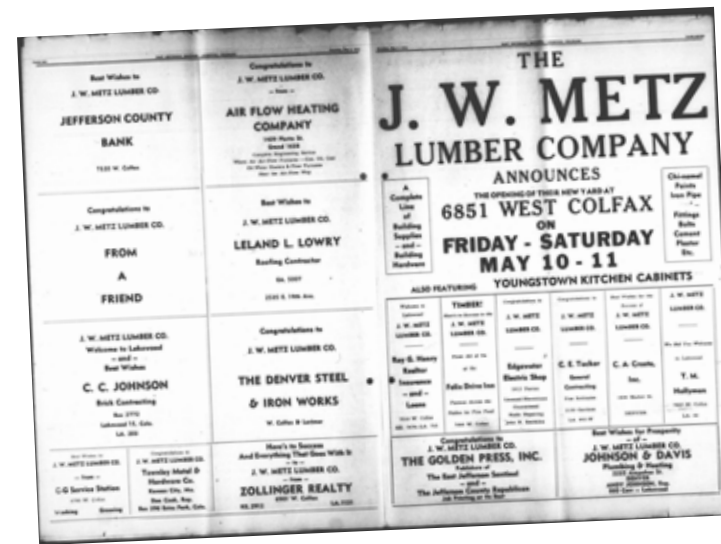
Following the closing of Metz Lumber in the early 1970s, the lot saw some changes—including housing the Drumstick Restaurant. (Yes, you know the one, with the shrimp boats, hamburger cars, and chicken trains.) It later moved to a standalone building at JCRS Shopping Center (what is now Lamar Station Plaza) before closing permanently later that decade. The lumberyard transformed to support new industries and provide spaces for travelers along the road—including a Kawasaki Motorcycle dealership, a plumbing company, and a metaphysical bookstore.



Community members celebrate the love of music at Pasternack’s Pawn Shop prior to the formation of 40 West Arts District. Photo Courtesy: Scott Pasternack



**BEFORE:** Pasternack’s Pawn Shop on W. Colfax Ave. prior to its revival as an Art Hub. Photo Courtesy: Scott Pasternack



Newspaper advertisement celebrating the opening of Metz Lumber: These announcements often came with opening specials and thanked the companies that helped the store open. Photo Courtesy: East Jefferson County Newspaper & Kris Autobee

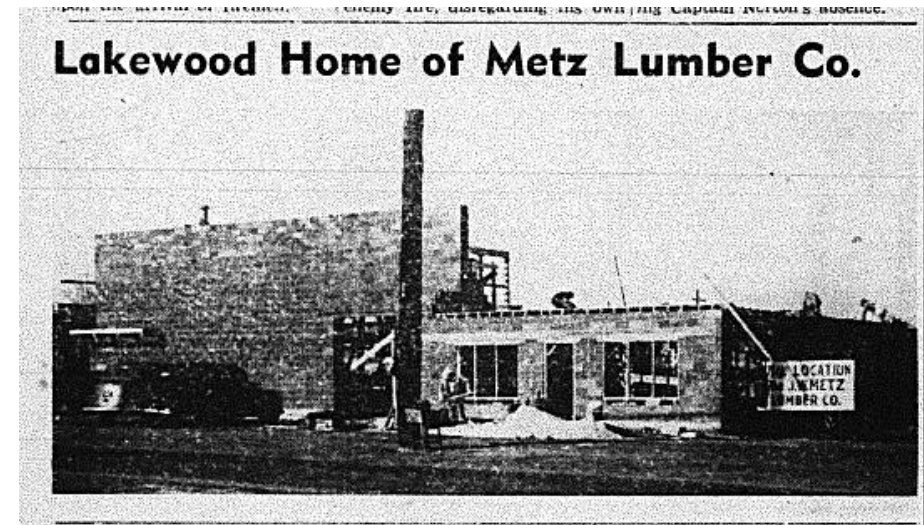


Photo of the Metz Lumber store front from W. Colfax Ave. Photo Courtesy: East Jefferson County Newspaper & Kris Autobee



This Youngstown Kitchen Cabinet ad appeared in many newspapers and magazines in the 1950s. Photo Courtesy: East Jefferson County Newspaper & Kris Autobee



**AFTER:** Pasternack’s Art Hub on W. Colfax as it appears in February 2020. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



The Lakewood Dance Academy performs a pop-up routine during Colfax ArtFest 2019. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



# MAP KEY

## VANCE ST. HUB

- a. Solstice Ink
- b. Mint & Serif Coffee House
- c. All Its Own

## TELLER ST. HUB

- d. 40 West Gallery & Benchmark Theatre
- e. Landt Creative Space
- f. Arts Carrie MaKenna
- g. R Design LLC
- f. Handsome Little Devils
- g. Pirate: Contemporary Art
- h. THIS Design
- i. Craven Metal
- j. Liquid Metal Coatings Gallery
- k. 40 West Studios
- l. Sweet Bloom Coffee

## PASTERNAK'S ART HUB

- m. NEXT Gallery
- n. Core New Art Space
- o. Kanon Collective
- p. EDGE Gallery
- q. Flourish Gallery

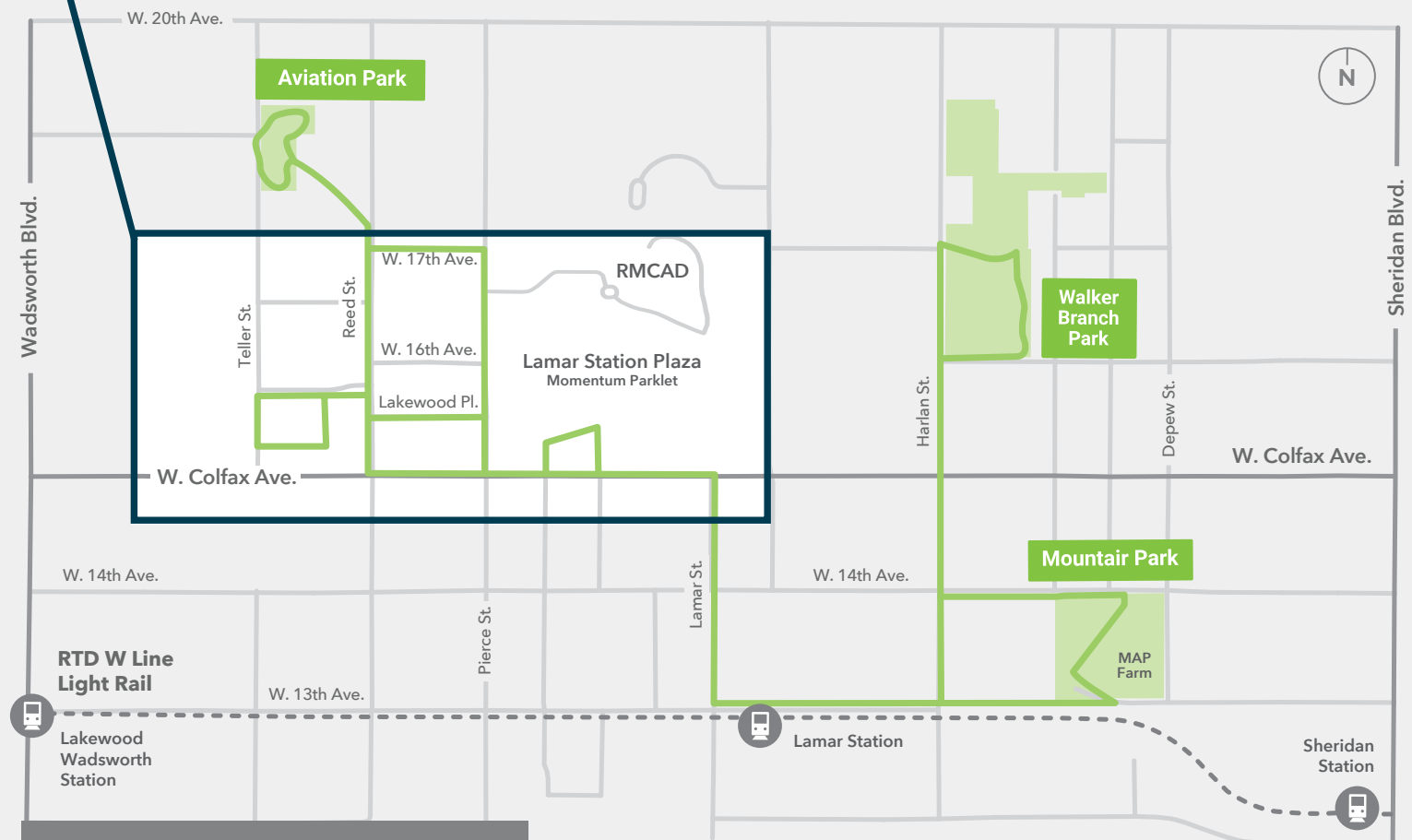
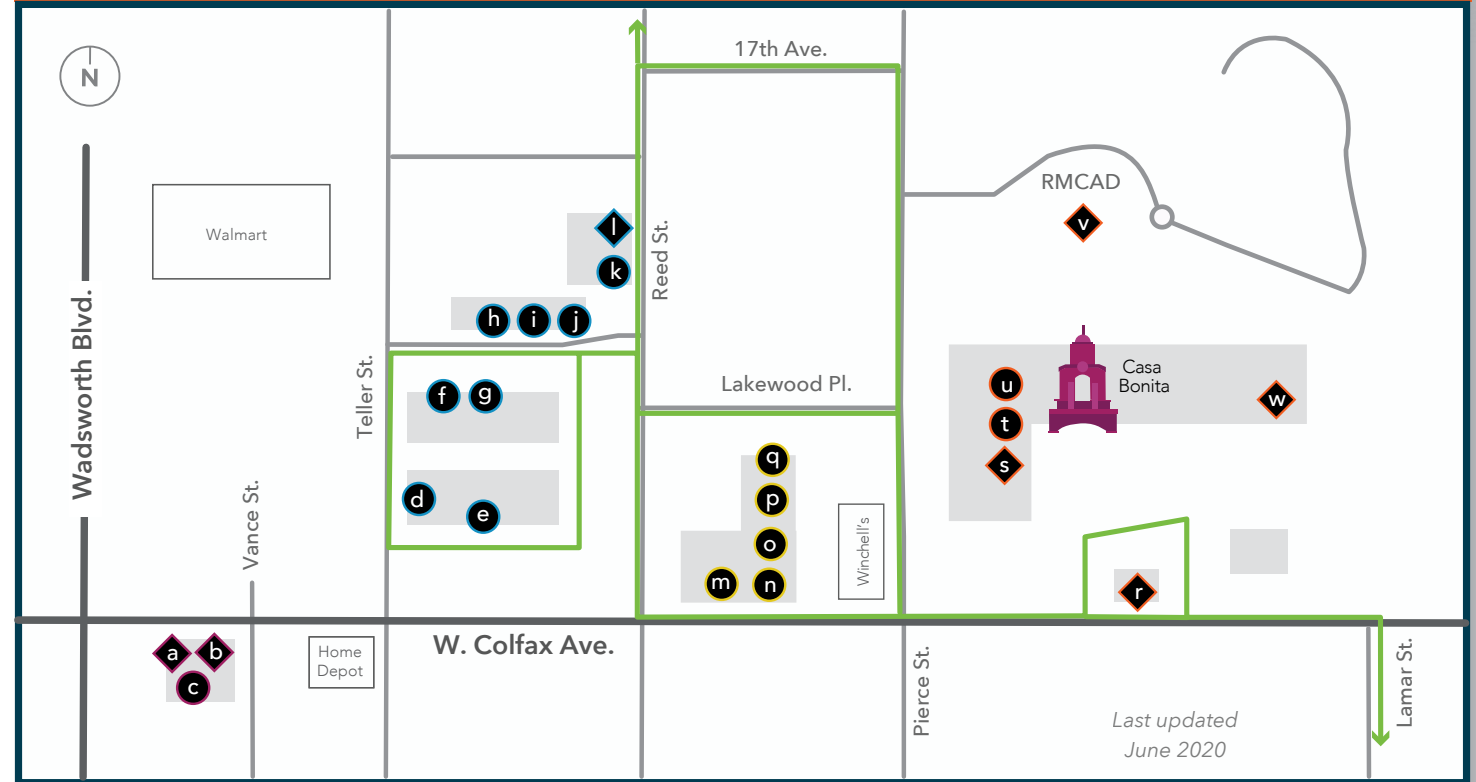
## LAMAR STATION PLAZA HUB

- r. Dutch Bros Coffee
- s. WestFax Brewing
- t. Lakewood Arts Gallery
- u. Gallery of Everything & Red Herring Art Supply
- v. Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design Galleries
- w. Pho 2 Love

- = Gallery or Studio
- ◆ = Creative Business
- = 40 West ArtLine Route
- - - = W Line Light Rail
- 🚊 = W Line Light Rail Station



# 40 West Arts District Core Venue Map



## 40 West ArtLine Map





Patrons explore art at Kanon Art Collective inside Pasternack's Art Hub on First Friday. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



A panoramic view of the Colfax ArtFest VIP Party features murals created by local artists in the original lumber yard space at Pasternack's Art Hub. Photo: Miranda Samon



Art lovers mingle during the 2019 Colfax ArtFest VIP Party held in Pasternack Art Hub's courtyard. Photo: Miranda Samon

Before buying the old Metz Lumber building in 1993, the Pasternack family, who had owned and operated two other locations in Aurora and Denver, purchased their first location in Lakewood in 1991 in a former Ferrari dealership next to the Lakewood Grill. One of the oldest families in the pawn shop business in Colorado, the Pasternacks helped the City of Lakewood write the first laws for pawnshop guidance and established themselves as a center point for finding oddities and curiosities along the corridor.

Pawnshop history is as deeply rooted in Colfax history as anything else. At Pasternack's Pawn Shop, you can find just about everything you've never thought of. This includes a Super Bowl ring, a replica of the famous leg lamp from *A Christmas Carol*, more sets of teeth than you can imagine, a real glass eyeball, an airplane hangar (yes you read that right) and even

a coffin. The coffin is still in the Aurora location, by the way, sitting right there in the right-hand corner at the front of the shop as you walk in.

Inside the Pasternack family, however, you also can find a deeply rooted love of art. Mona Pasternack, mother to current owner Scott Pasternack and widow of founder Fred Pasternack, owned an art gallery for some time. That coffin mentioned earlier? It's often loaned out by Pasternack's Pawn Shop to local theaters in need of props. These connections to community and an upbringing around the world of art are part of the reason Scott Pasternack made the decision to pivot to something new.

With the changing market in the Denver Metro Area in the early 2000s and 2010s—one that put heavy financial pressure on both the world of pawnshops and the world of art—the need for something

new came to the Pasternack family. In 2017, Bill Marino, who was leading the local business improvement district (BID) and cheerleading the new arts district, approached Scott Pasternack about turning the tide of the then vacant building and igniting a new dream along the economically challenged avenue. He encouraged Pasternack to join the emerging arts district, 40 West Arts, that found its roots in 2011 and was working to continue its momentum and catalyze the renaissance occurring along the West Colfax corridor. The BID, along with community stakeholders, the City of Lakewood, and a number of Denver's oldest co-op galleries were converging—working together to re-energize the West Colfax community in Lakewood.

**“Following Scott’s “yes” to take a risk to adapt the building and activate it into a vibrant arts venue, changes came quickly.”**

Following Scott’s “yes” to take a risk to adapt the building and activate it into a vibrant arts venue, changes came quickly. NEXT Gallery moved into the space at the front, adjacent to the former pawn shop, and plans were made to open the pawnshop in the back. The opening of NEXT spurred Pirate: Contemporary Art and EDGE Gallery, all former Navajo Street galleries in Denver, to move to 40 West Arts District about a block away—and this

propelled the newly named Pasternack's Art Hub and the arts district forward. The plans to re-open a pawnshop in the back





quickly changed and instead, more artists and art collectives poured in. Pasternack's Art Hub launched initiatives to improve the building and revitalize the space, including inviting artists and creatives to paint murals along its walls. These murals, easily seen by any passerby along the avenue, stand for a year before they are refreshed and repainted, creating a perpetual outdoor art experience on the building—all part of the four-mile long 40 West ArtLine.



The journey hasn't been all positives, however. In the summer of 2019, The Colfax Museum attempted to relocate to the building alongside Kanon Art Collective and CORE New Art Space. But notorious flash flooding along West Colfax caused a substantial amount of damage to the building, some of the museum's pieces, and the art. Yet, the Pasternacks and the troupe of creatives forged on. New galleries moved in through the travails anyway. New murals went up on the Art Hub's walls, and a VIP party was held to kick off the Colfax ArtFest a week following the flooding. By year's end, EDGE Gallery moved from the first location at Reed and West Colfax to join the collection of the galleries at the Art Hub.

Above Photos: Changing murals on the east side of Pasternack's Art Hub feature iconic imagery on a rotating basis by local artists. Photos: Kathryn Zeigler

Below: Patrons discuss their favorite pieces at Core New Art Space during an opening reception. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



The front room of Pasternack's Art Hub is home to Core New Art Space, who moved to the district in 2019. Photo: Kathryn Zeigler



Today, there's an ever-growing list of plans to expand. "The view is to make it a major art haven, and right now we're only 50% there," explained Scott Pasternack, who has already debuted the new logo for Pasternack's Art Hub and is getting ready to hang its new sign on the building. Studio spaces for artists are in the works, the Elevation Room (a community showroom in the middle of the building) has opened, and rumor has it there are plans to build a new stage for musical performances in the back.

West Colfax tells a story of an ever-changing America. It tells the story of those who have traveled up and down its street and those who have settled alongside it. It's a story of transformation. Buildings like Metz Lumber tell of an America growing up and into suburban life. The Kawasaki Motorcycle shop speaks to America's love of the open road. A bookstore reminds us of those who found a home to settle down here. Pasternack's Pawn Shop stands as a staple of an established main street that is not only a gateway, but a destination.

As the Art Hub evolves, 40 West Arts District has tapped into this momentum of arts happenings along West Colfax to reintroducing its district map, now showcasing four art venue clusters—or hubs, including Pasternack's and spanning from Vance Street to Lamar Station Plaza along the avenue. All four have become hubs for creative businesses, galleries, and individual artists alike to make the mark along historic West Colfax Avenue.

Now, this long-standing building showcases exactly what it is named for—art. It's home for a growing number of artists and creatives making their way in Lakewood. They are helping to rebuild and revitalize an historic avenue in a way that speaks to their passion and the culture and community that embraces them.