



THE NEW AND IMPROVED AMERICAN DREAM

Why (and how) the Front Range must avoid becoming another L.A.

Jill Locantore likes to use demographic software to poke a few holes in the American Dream. A planning communications specialist at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), she gives frequent presentations about Metro Vision 2035, the DRCOG proposals for intelligent metro-area growth. When Locantore asks audiences their vision of the future, most people choose suburban homes with plenty of lanes to the office and shopping.

But when Locantore plugs this data into her modeling software, the results aren't pretty: an increased urban footprint, longer commute times, more government spending, and a higher cost of living. In other words, Los Angeles.

Revelations like this help people warm to more compact growth, expanded transit systems, and alternative policies promoting bicycles and pedestrians. "It's up for people to decide what they want," says Locan-

ore. "We just want them to be informed."

Area governments have become believers: 44 cities and counties along the Front Range have signed on to support DRCOG's plan for smart growth. As light rail continues its reach into the 'burbs, expect transit-oriented developments clustered around more vibrant town centers, giving suburbanites new choices for housing, working, and playing in pursuit of their own American Dream.