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New Mapping Feature from the *Long Island Index* and CUNY Provides Fresh Perspective on Solving Regional Challenges

See Long Island Like You've Never Seen it Before at www.longislandindex.org

Garden City, NY (December 10, 2008) - The *Long Island Index*, in collaboration with the CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center, has developed a new feature at its website (www.longislandindex.org) that makes data about Long Island come alive using innovative mapping tools displaying local and regional trends in revealing ways.

The feature combines land use data across both counties that has never been mapped online before, Census demographics, downtown surveys, aerial photos, and much more to create detailed neighborhood maps and give users a bird's eye view on key housing, transportation, and development issues facing the region.

The screenshot displays the Long Island Index website interface. At the top left is the 'LONG ISLAND INDEX' logo with the tagline 'Good information, presented in a neutral manner, can move policy'. On the right, there are links for 'Problems? Feedback? Please email us!' and a 'Register for free map updates:' form. The main content area features a map of Port Washington North with various land use types color-coded. A 'Detailed View' window is open, showing an aerial photograph of a residential area with a circular road. The interface includes navigation controls like 'back', 'forward', 'in', and 'out', and a legend for land use types such as Agriculture, Commercial, Community Services, Industrial, Recreation & Open Space, Residential, Transportation, Utilities, Vacant, and Waste Handling & Management. Two pie charts show the percentage of each land use type by number of parcels and by acres.

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“The *Long Island Index* created this online resource to help foster a regional approach to addressing Long Island’s challenges, while giving all Long Islanders a new way of seeing and understanding their communities,” explained Ann Golob, Project Director of the *Long Island Index*. “The *Index* has been monitoring and measuring community indicators for several years, and this mapping technology will make it easier for the public to put that information to use, letting users zoom in on any community or the entire Island and map specific trends and patterns of interest to them.”

The *Index* site now provides interactive access via mapping tools that allow users to choose which data elements they want to see in relation to each other. This creative application of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology enables users to mix and match data to suit their individual needs and reveal complex relationships in easily understood ways. The visualization tools allow users to quickly find information without having to search multiple sites and resources.

The mapping tools were released in “beta” format in October 2008. Since then over 300 hundred local officials, community leaders, and industry representatives worldwide have used them. Access is free, and people can sign up for updates as the feature is expanded. Tutorials are available online for quick reference on how to navigate the maps and access the data.

Patricia Bourne, Executive Commissioner of the Nassau County Planning Commission, provided critical data and advice for the project. She said, “The *Long Island Index*’s new mapping program solves a major problem for Nassau County and all Long Island municipalities, nonprofit organizations, civic groups and residents: it provides access to important data about their communities in a visual, easy to understand format. In the past, maps were available, but the data was not connected to them. This should be a very valuable tool for planners, policy makers and anyone who wants to know more about Long Island.”

Thomas Isles, Director of Planning for Suffolk County, agrees. He noted that “the *Long Island Index* mapping feature is a great resource that provides an incredible amount of important community information in a convenient, user friendly format. The maps will undoubtedly be of significant assistance to community groups, government agencies, private businesses and anyone else interested in the demographics of Long Island’s communities.”

“The new *Long Island Index* online maps will provide powerful GIS tools to community groups that never before had access to this technology,” said Neal Lewis, Executive Director of the Farmingdale-based Neighborhood Network. “It will be an invaluable resource for the Neighborhood Network in our work advocating smart growth planning. As more data is incorporated, I’m sure many Long Island nonprofits will discover innovative uses for this new tool.”

The online maps provide:

- **Detailed property-level patterns** of residential, commercial, industrial, and other land use types within each village and across Long Island. This data – provided under license by the Nassau and Suffolk planning departments – has not been mapped online before. It provides a rich picture of each of Long Island’s neighborhoods.
- **Key population and housing characteristics** shown on the maps, plus statistics listed dynamically as users zoom in to each community.
- **Transportation & reference features** such as satellite photos (provided by the New York State GIS Clearinghouse), bus & LIRR routes, incorporated and unincorporated villages, special districts (such as fire, police, and sewer), and legislative districts.

- Bar charts comparing **Census statistics from 1990 through 2006**.
- **Regional views** showing villages that meet certain characteristics, such as all the villages across Long Island with more than 10% population growth from 1990 to 2000.
- **New mapping tools such as a “dynamic transparency slider”** to reveal land use patterns or aerial photos underneath Census maps and **Microsoft’s “bird’s eye view” photos** integrated directly into the maps (accessible with the click of a mouse).

The mapping feature already has been described as “a great way to visualize data” by its beta testers, who have ranged from local high school students to industry experts to government officials in New York City, San Francisco, Washington State, Oregon, Maryland, and Michigan. The maps have also attracted international attention. They have been accessed by mapping consultants and government representatives from Australia, France, Germany, Japan, as well as the “geographic information officer” for the United Nations.

Steven Romalewski, of the CUNY Mapping Service, said “This new mapping feature brings together some of the best aspects of other leading-edge mapping sites, customized for Long Island’s communities while also showing patterns across the region. It leverages the best of the Web with quick and easy navigation, dynamic tools like the transparencies, and map layers that seamlessly combine aerial photos with Census data and land use, transportation, and more.”

The *Index* plans to add more data in the coming months, including health, education, open space, and brownfields, and will also update current data when new information is available.

The *Long Island Index* mapping feature is accessible at www.longislandindex.org

Information about the organizations involved in the *Long Island Index* mapping project is provided on the following page.

About the Rauch Foundation: The *Long Island Index* is funded by the Rauch Foundation, a family foundation headquartered in Garden City, New York. In addition to funding the *Long Island Index* for five years the Rauch Foundation commissioned The Long Island Profile Report and a series of six polls on Long Island to determine how the region is faring compared to other suburbs in the NY Metro area. The polls, (1) “Long Islanders: Who Are We?”, (2) “Caring for Long Island’s Children”, (3) “Room for Growth: Long Island’s Changing Economy”, (4) “Where Do We Grow From Here? Land Use on Long Island”, (5) “Regional Attitudes on Taxation and Governance” ,and (6) Long Island Looks to the Future: Housing Alternatives and Downtown Development.” The *Long Island Index 2004*, *Long Island Index 2005*, *Long Island Index 2006*, *Long Island Index 2007* and *Long Island Index 2008* are all available for download at www.longislandindex.org.

About the Center for Urban Research: Working with CUNY Graduate Center faculty and students, the Center for Urban Research (CUR) organizes basic research on the critical issues that face New York and other large cities in the U.S. and abroad, collaborates on applied research with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other partners, and holds forums for the media, foundations, community organizations and others about urban research at the Graduate Center and the City University. The CUNY Mapping Service at CUR assists organizations in realizing the geographic and mapping dimensions of their activities. The Center’s website is www.urbanresearch.org.

About CUNY Graduate Center: The Graduate Center is the doctorate-granting institution of The City University of New York (CUNY). An internationally recognized center for advanced studies and a national model for public doctoral education, the school offers more than thirty doctoral programs, as well as a number of master’s programs. Many of its faculty members are among the world’s leading scholars in their respective fields, and its alumni hold major positions in industry and government, as well as in academia. The Graduate Center is also home to 28 interdisciplinary research centers and institutes focused on areas of compelling social, civic, cultural, and scientific concerns. Located in a landmark Fifth Avenue building, The Graduate Center has become a vital part of New York City’s intellectual and cultural life with its extensive array of public lectures, exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical events. Further information on The Graduate Center and its programs can be found at www.gc.cuny.edu.

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