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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GROW!

Roughly 8,300 Acres of Unbuilt Land in Downtown Areas Are Identified

The Long Island Index 2010 Report, Places to Grow: An Analysis of the Potential for Transit-Accessible Housing and Jobs in Long Island's Downtown and Station Areas

Garden City, NY (January 21, 2010)- The *Long Island Index 2010* report, *Places to Grow, An Analysis of the Potential for Transit-Accessible Housing and Jobs in Long Island's Downtown and Station Areas*, prepared by the Regional Plan Association (RPA), shows there is enormous potential for development and growth in existing downtown and railroad station areas – roughly 8,300 acres of unbuilt land in over 150 village downtowns and rail station areas. As Long Islanders discuss the future for the region, the question being confronted is how much and what type of new development is both desirable and achievable. Several other suburban regions have found ways to grow their economic base by building their downtowns. Our goal is to maintain the suburban character of Long Island while keeping housing costs and taxes affordable. “The region must find a way to achieve this balance,” asserts Rauch Foundation President Nancy Douzinas. “Managed growth in the downtowns has been a revenue generator in other parts of the country with greater job growth, lower property taxes, fewer cars and better environmental outcomes. Long Island could certainly use all of that!”

The new *Long Island Index 2010* report demonstrates that the potential is there for Long Island to pursue a similar path. Comparing our options, the report finds that if we build low-density single-family homes on every single acre of unprotected open space, we could build another 90,000 new homes. By contrast, that same number, 90,000 units, could be achieved by building a mixture of townhouses, garden apartments and apartment buildings on about half of the 8,300 acres of unbuilt land in downtown areas. “It is a stark comparison,” noted report lead researcher, Christopher Jones, Vice President of Research at Regional Plan Association, “and the choices made now will have profound consequences for the future of the region.”

The Rauch Foundation will formally release Long Island's seventh report, on **Thursday, January 21, 2010, from 8 am to 9:30 am at Adelphi University Performing Arts Center, 1 South Avenue, Garden City, New York.**

Speakers at the press event include:

Robert Scott, President of Adelphi

Nancy Rauch Douzinas, President of Rauch Foundation

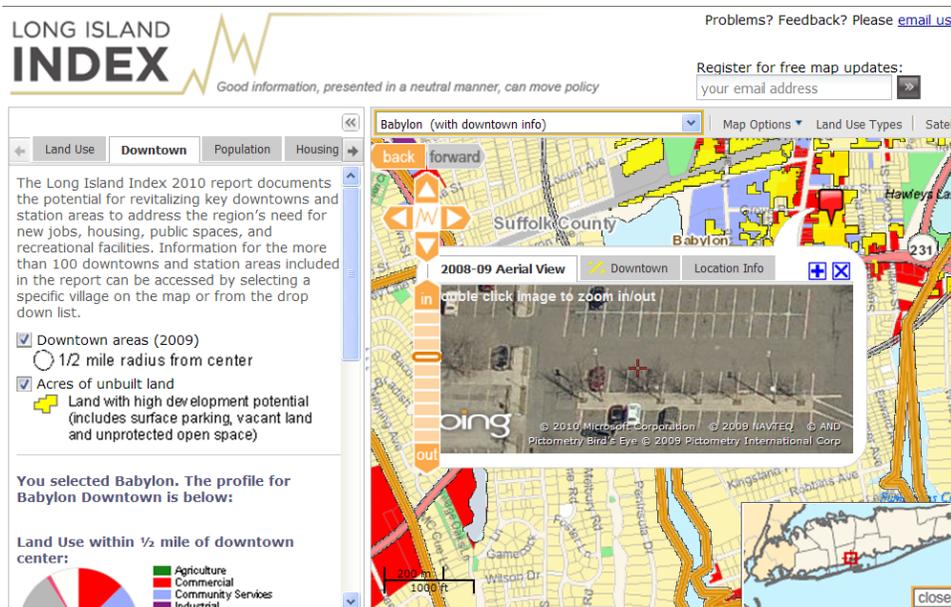
Keynote Speaker, Galina Tachieva, Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company, Architects and Town Planners

Ann Golob, Director of the *Long Island Index*

RPA analyzed 156 locations of which 111 are downtowns with a central commercial or mixed-use district and 45 are Long Island Rail Road stations located outside of core downtown areas. For each, they identified and measured any areas within a half mile of a rail station or a downtown center that are classified as either vacant or open space as well as additional areas being used to park cars, trucks or other vehicles. Any protected open space or other property where development is prohibited by government regulations or easements was excluded. Of the total 8,300 acreage, 52% is surface parking, 22% is unprotected open space and 26% is other vacant land. It is important to note that many of these properties may be publicly or privately owned and many may already be serving an important function or may not be suitable for development.

How big is 8,300 acres? It is equivalent to 13 square miles or 1.1% of Long Island’s land mass. In sports terms, it is equal to 7,580 football fields. In comparison to New York City, it is roughly equivalent to Manhattan below 50th Street. When seen from these perspectives, 8,300 acres represents a lot of possibilities. Says Ann Golob, Director of the *Long Island Index*, “The benefits of creating compact, mixed-use development would be enormous because downtowns tend to attract young adults, a wider range of household incomes, a more racially and ethnically diverse population, which leads to better integrated schools and better education for our young people. Strong downtowns develop a sense of culture and community, and in so doing, thrive.”

The report also categorizes each downtown location into those with high, medium, or low potential for redevelopment. Readers can visit the *Long Island Index* interactive maps and visually inspect each of the parcels that make up the 8,300 acres, and collect information about their own downtowns.



“Our hope is to democratize access to the information,” said Steven Romalewski, director of the CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center that developed the *LI Index* interactive maps and the

new interactive features from the 2010 Report. “This is data that has been available only to professional planning departments and developers but not to the average citizen. Now anyone can focus in on the details of their own community and consider what might be possible for the future, and just as easily zoom out to see the development potential throughout the Long Island region.”

“When you see the data laid out this way, it makes you ask different questions,” said Ann Golob, Director of the *Long Island Index*. “I looked at the possible parcels in my own community and at first said to myself, oh, you couldn’t build there – it’s an excess parking lot for the high school. And then I thought, well, with the right design, why can’t you build there?”

Design is fundamental to any redevelopment efforts of the downtowns. Keynote Speaker Galina Tachieva, director of town planning for Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company, Architects and Town Planners (DPZ) will focus on how other communities have successfully rebuilt their downtowns. DPZ is a leader in the New Urbanism movement to end suburban sprawl and urban disinvestment. In addition, a video presentation will feature Dave Kappel, the former Mayor of Greenport; Paul V. Pontieri Jr., Mayor of Patchogue; Steve Bellone, Supervisor of the Town of Babylon; and Jean A. Celender, Mayor of the Village of Great Neck Plaza describing the transformation of their downtowns.

A design competition for re-imagining Long Island’s downtowns will be announced at the launch. The competition, open to everyone from professionals to children, is meant to stimulate ideas and creative possibilities. There will be multiple prizes with a top prize of \$10,000; final details will be announced in March 2010.

“The level of citizen education and involvement are major factors in determining how well Long Island assesses and develops the latent potential of its downtowns and transit systems,” adds Golob. “It is hoped that this report will trigger curiosity and interest to looking deeper into the possibilities for individual places, and to explore new options to realize their full potential.”

The report also includes three case studies of transit-oriented development for lessons that can be learned as Long Island embraces this type of redevelopment. They are:

1. Mineola, NY: Transforming a Regional Employment and Transportation Hub into a Mixed-Use Center

Mineola is an aging suburb with hospital and offices in the downtown area generating traffic during the daytime. There was little pedestrian traffic in the downtown section or much activity after the business day. After a Mineola Community Planning Committee was formed in 2002, a master plan was created to identify opportunities for mixed use and residential development and established an overlay district. As a result, four major residential development proposals within walking distance to the rail station have been fast-tracked to approval and include negotiated compensations that directly benefit the downtown.

2. South Orange, NJ: Revitalizing a Downtown by Improving Public Transportation and Rebuilding a Station Area

Early development of this area led to a business district around the rail system and growth of single-family homes in the surrounding neighborhood. However, as the Township's Main Street became more oriented to automobiles and suffered increased retail and service vacancies, it also suffered a significant decline. So in the early 1990s local civic groups began to work with Village officials to bring life back to the downtown and to focus on diversity and integration. The Township commissioned a study in 1994 to propose a redevelopment strategy. They ultimately created a redevelopment zone, encouraging use of flexible zoning, public-private partnerships and tax incentives. In addition, the introduction of a Midtown Direct service eliminated the need for commuters to switch trains for New York City service, which cut thirty minutes off their commute. This effort led to increased ridership, residential development and net tax revenues.

3. Fairfax, VA: Comprehensive Planning at the Regional Level

In Fairfax, there was poor management of growth in the postwar years and in the 1970s, a lack of foresight in planning for the metro system led to struggles with gridlocked roads and a rapidly dwindling supply of developable land. Since then, however, the County has re-envisioned its growth plan for the next thirty years, developed largely around new and existing transit. With a county-level planning and zoning process, the region can more easily plan for the long-term while protecting the key essential ingredients of a suburban region.

Long Island has the "bones" in its downtowns to be a success story. The level of citizen education and involvement are major factors in determining how well Long Island assesses and develops the latent potential of its downtowns and transit system.

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 seven 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*, *Long Island Index 2008* and *Long Island Index 2009* are all available for download at www.longislandindex.org. The *Long Island Index* interactive maps, an online resource with detailed demographic, residential, transportation and educational information, is also accessible from the Index's website.

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