



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 19, 2008 CONTACT: Anthony Flint, 617-661-3016 x116

**LAND INFORMATION SYSTEMS ARE TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, NEW LINCOLN INSTITUTE REPORT SAYS**

*Greater use of geographical information systems (GIS) and Internet-based parcel data inventories help target revitalization and affordable housing efforts, curb foreclosures*

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Land information systems and Internet-based databases have the power to transform community development, making it possible to harness technology to revitalize urban areas and create affordable housing where it is most needed, according to a new report by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

[Transforming Community Development with Land Information Systems](#), by Sarah Treuhaft and G. Thomas Kingsley, is the latest Policy Focus Report published by the [Lincoln Institute](#), a think tank in Cambridge, Mass., that includes a focus on economic and community development.

“There is vast potential in the use of technology in community development,” said Rosalind Greenstein, senior fellow and chair of the Department of Economic and Community Development at the Lincoln Institute. “Using geographic information systems and Web services truly facilitates the work of planning, developing, and nurturing vibrant neighborhoods that meet the needs of today’s residents.”

Many cities now make some or all of their parcel data available on the Web. Fulfilling the promise of parcel data systems in the creation of sustainable and equitable communities requires support from government at all levels, institutions, and foundations to bring emerging solutions to scale, disseminate best practices, and foster continued innovation, the report says.

The report includes a synopsis of the evolution of parcel data systems and recent advanced applications, as well as five case studies from Chicago, Cleveland, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., that illustrate the use of new technology in facilitating revitalization, improving vacant lots, building on affordable housing initiatives, heading off foreclosures, or integrating neighborhood efforts into a larger regional framework.

A task force in Cleveland used data on loan transactions to take action against property flippers, for example. Community groups in Chicago used Web-based GIS tools to support planning for transit-oriented development and to target resources with parcel data so low-income families could better maintain and improve their homes. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society used a parcel data system to rehabilitate 150 acres of vacant lots into parks and urban greenspace.

“To make the right choices for their neighborhoods, people need the right information,” said Treuhaft, a senior associate at [PolicyLink](#) in Oakland, Calif., and report co-author. “Detailed, accessible information is critical, whether in the current national foreclosure crisis or ongoing gentrification struggles. With more and better data, we can develop more effective strategies to solve many of the biggest challenges facing America’s neighborhoods.”

Kingsley, principal research associate and expert on housing, urban policy, and governance issues at the [Urban Institute](#) in Washington, D.C., and report co-author, said he was “surprised to see how having the same concrete information in front of all the players – whether city officials or various advocacy groups – led to collaboration and creativity.”

The case study on Washington, D.C., for example, focused on the use of an enhanced parcel data system in the management of affordable housing and preservation of Section 8 housing.

“Instead of just having conversations about how bad they thought the problem was in the abstract, they were able to see which specific properties were affected and examine relevant characteristics of those properties in comparison to each other,” Kingsley said. “This stimulated those who knew about specific cases to provide additional information and make suggestions about preservation actions that would never have emerged if they had not all been working together directly with the data.”

The full report, *Transforming Community Development with Land Information Systems*, can be downloaded [here](#).

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, a think-tank based in Cambridge, Mass., sponsors research, training, conferences, and demonstration projects on land use, community development, planning, and tax policy as it relates to land.

Sarah Treuhaft conducts research and writes on a variety of equitable development topics including the use of data and mapping for community-building. PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity, seeking to ensure that everyone, including low-income communities of color, can contribute to and benefit from local and regional growth and development.

G. Thomas Kingsley is director of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, an initiative to further the development of advanced data systems for policy analysis and community-building in U.S. cities. The Urban Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research and educational organization that examines the social, economic, and governance challenges facing the nation.

To interview the authors and Rosalind Greenstein, please contact Anthony Flint, director of public affairs at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, at 617-661-3016 x116.

# # #

If you would rather not receive future email messages from Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, let us know by clicking [here](#).  
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 113 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 United States