



Press Release For Immediate Release

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Azavea and the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia Launch CommonSpace Web Application Making Social Fun Easier While Promoting Walking, Biking, and Public Transit

Application draws from a large database of Philly cultural events and business information to enable users to make social plans based on their location and mode of transportation

Philadelphia, PA, September 2, 2010 – Today, Azavea, an award-winning geospatial analysis (GIS) software development company, and the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, announced the launch of the CommonSpace web application (<http://commonspace.us>). Borrowing from the urban planning concept of a “walkshed,” the area that is accessible to pedestrians within a given time period, CommonSpace, in a pilot program currently exclusive to Philadelphia which will run through mid-October, enables users to calculate their personal “transit-shed” and find local activities and events within that area, while encouraging walking, biking and public transit.

The application enables users to enter their location, their mode of transportation, the time they are willing to travel, and preferred entertainment like restaurants, shows, cultural events or shopping. Adding additional users at different starting locations, their modes of transportation and travel times prompts the application to automatically calculate the common space for all of the people in a given group. The application generates an interactive map displaying what social activities are available in the users’ common space. Users can then add destinations to a plan, which they can share with others via a hyperlink or generate a walking, biking or public transit route in Google Maps.

The platform is built on a combination of OpenStreetMap data and transit data from SEPTA, the Philadelphia regional transit agency, recently released in the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) format. To calculate the “transit-sheds”, the system uses the open source GraphServer framework, which correlates

routes and the time that a user is willing to travel. Azavea also used an experimental, next-generation version of its [DecisionTree](#) technology, code-named Trellis, for distributing the geographic data processing across many servers. Developed using Scala and leveraging the open source Akka framework, the new technology enables the web site to respond quickly and support large numbers of visitors. Once a user selects a starting address and mode of transit, tens of thousands of possible routes are mapped behind-the-scenes using transit and street data. Then the application renders the possible area that someone can reach in the amount of time they have chosen. The results appear on-the-fly on a Google Maps base map.

As an increasing number of communities promote more healthy lifestyles and sustainable environments, web tools like CommonSpace demonstrate how geographic technologies can help people make the most of the amenities around them while also making better transportation decisions. CommonSpace redefines what “local” means, and in the process can help all of us make our communities healthier, as well as more socially and environmentally responsible.

“While the application enables users to make social plans and have fun, we see CommonSpace as a new generation of applications that leverage publicly available geographic data in new ways to promote more accessible communities and help city dwellers discover local treasures that they might not otherwise have been aware of,” said Robert Cheetham, Azavea’s President and CEO.

The website is the result of a partnership with the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, NPower Pennsylvania and the William Penn Foundation. Data providers include the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe Festival; Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance’s Phillyfunguide.com; Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation’s Uwishunu.com; Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia; and Yelp.com.

“We are excited about CommonSpace because it will help shoppers find new local businesses in their own backyards and plan their trips in a more sustainable way,” said Leanne Krueger-Braneky, the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia’s Executive Director.

Azavea hopes to expand the application to more locations, add additional data that impacts walkability, and create a smart-phone version. CommonSpace relies on data populators to make the site useful and relevant. The project will continue to seek unique local attractions and venues to incorporate into the offerings, such as Philly Beer Week and neighborhood festivals, as well as solicit feedback and input from Philadelphians using the site to impact its future.

About Azavea

[Azavea](http://www.azavea.com) is an award-winning geospatial analysis (GIS) software development firm specializing in the creation of location-based web and mobile solutions, as well as geospatial analysis services to enhance decision-making. Azavea is committed to working on projects with a strong social value component in order to promote the emergence of more dynamic, vibrant, and sustainable communities. Each of Azavea's projects, products and pro bono engagements showcases this commitment. Azavea is a certified B Corporation. For more information, visit www.azavea.com

About The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) of Greater Philadelphia is a nonprofit network of local triple-bottom-line businesses and social entrepreneurs. SBN is made of local business people, professionals, social entrepreneurs, investors, not-for-profit leaders, and government representatives who are committed to building a more socially, environmentally, and financially sustainable local economy. For more information, visit www.sbnphiladelphia.org/

About NPower Pennsylvania

[NPower](http://www.npower.org) is a charitable organization that provides technology services and support to other charitable organizations. NPower's mission is to ensure all nonprofits can use technology to better serve our community. NPower PA was founded in 2002 with support from Microsoft and a matching grant from the William Penn Foundation. Starting with 30 member organizations our first year, we are now providing affordable, high -quality technology services to over 375 member organizations in the greater Philadelphia community.

About the William Penn Foundation

[The William Penn Foundation](http://www.william-penn-foundation.org), founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that foster rich cultural expression, strengthen children's futures, and deepen connections to nature and community. In partnership with others, we work to advance a vital, just, and caring community.

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