



# Hampton Gardens Community Association

Towson, MD 21286

## Providence Road Community Coalition Mobilizes Against Possible Mega Church

*2,500-plus Member Church Considers Relocating to Small Towson Neighborhood*

**Towson, MD (5/16/11)** – Neighborhoods along the north Providence Road corridor have come together and are mobilizing against the possibility that a mega church will relocate to a 12-acre tract of land located in the middle of the Hampton Gardens Neighborhood.

The neighborhood, a small Towson community adjacent to the protected, critical forest preservation areas of Loch Raven Reservoir and Cromwell Valley Park, is located just north of beltway, and is made up of 150 homes with only one road in and out. Already, our community has long established and positive relationships with the two existing and appropriately sized houses of worship inside our neighborhood.

First Mt. Olive Freewill Baptist Church, purportedly 2,500 to 3,000 members strong, currently meets at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation after their church was destroyed by fire in 2007.

The message to elected officials and other taxpayers in Baltimore County by the Hampton Gardens Community Association - backed by the surrounding neighborhood coalition - is simple: NO MEGA CHURCH!! With only one way in and one way out of the targeted 12-acre tract of land, our community and this neighborhood of 150 families is not the appropriate place for a mega church. Although there are many, the critical issues negatively impacting our community are:

Massively increased traffic driven by 2,000-plus cars and/or dozens of huge commercial motor coach buses which will likely require widening of two residential streets.

Undoubted violation of homeowner property rights along Hart and Cheverly Roads to support the traffic caused by a church which adds nothing to the county's tax base and brings no jobs.

Negative environmental and watershed impact created by septic, storm water management issues in an area already over-stressed by septic issues. Also noise and light pollution that don't exist now.

Driving home this message to area elected officials, Hampton Gardens held a community meeting last week which was attended by Delegate Susan Aumann (MD-42), Baltimore County Councilman Todd Huff (3<sup>rd</sup> Dist), County Executive Kevin Kamenetz's staff, as well as staff from Senator Jim Brochin's (MD-42) office.

The community has also launched a website – [www.preserveprovidence.org](http://www.preserveprovidence.org) and Facebook page – <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Preserve-Providence/196479220396376> publicizing our strong opposition to the possible development of any mega church, or similarly large organization interested in locating in this neighborhood. A petition drive has begun and yard signs are being distributed.

Hampton Gardens has long welcomed houses of worship to their community and has positive relationships with the two existing churches in the neighborhood – Christ the King Church and Belvedere Christian Church. Both have congregations fewer than 200 members and are the appropriate size for a community this small.

Issues created by a church of this size are multiple and varied. However, chief among them is the traffic reality of a constant flow of at least 2,000 additional cars – or dozens of huge, noisy and polluting commercial buses – traveling in and out of the neighborhood. Currently there is only one way in and out of the 12-acre tract of land being targeted by First Mt Olive Freewill Baptist. Our quiet, serene, and taxpayer-funded streets are a constant gathering place for neighbors, who range from strolling senior citizens to children riding their bikes to families walking their dogs. Any plan to build a mega church likely requires creating two entrances to this property, and would mean the widening of these streets. Either would force numerous taxpaying families into shrinking front yards.

Other issues are related to the local environment here, and a major portion of the Baltimore area's watershed, include the impact of a septic system large enough to handle the massive amount wastewater created by huge church congregations. Also, the potentially negative storm water runoff impact that a 50,000-plus square foot facility and necessary supporting parking lot surfaces would have on a major portion of Baltimore's water supply further illustrates that the Providence Road corridor is clearly not the appropriate place for a 2,500 to 3,000 member mega church.

Our neighborhood, and the surrounding community coalition, will do whatever it takes to stop ANY mega church from building here. We urge the public to visit our website and Facebook page for more information on how to help and which elected officials to contact in support of our cause.

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