LAND USE AND THE MEGACHURCH PHENOMENON

April 15, 2011
Katherine Nelson
Urban Environmental Planner
Montgomery County
A Megachurch is a Church facility with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2000 persons or more in its worship services.

The over 1400 megachurches in the United States share many other traits, such as multiple contemporary services.
Church Social Ministry Programs

- cash or vouchers given to people in need 91%
- programs for youth and teens 99%
- counseling services or support groups 95%
- hospitals & nursing homes 80%
- prison ministries 91%
- thrift store or thrift store donations 78%
- temporary or permanent housing/shelter 78%
- senior citizen programs 84%
- substance abuse & 12 step programs 85%
Using 54 value categories, attempted to calculate the economic "halo effect" of congregations in Philadelphia - 10 Protestant, a Catholic parish, and a synagogue.

Added up the money generated by weddings and funerals, festivals, counseling programs, preschools, elder care. Tallied staff salaries and the wages of roofers, plumbers, and other maintenance. Also included were intangibles such as employment service and teaching social responsibility to children.

For the 12 congregations $50,577,098 in annual economic benefits were generated - 20 to 30 times bigger than expected – "they are engines driving the neighborhood economy."
63% are located in or around cities of 250,000 or more, 23% in cities between 50,000 and 250,000.
The numbers of megachurches continues to grow. Many of the fastest growing, newest megachurches are full of people under 35 years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>US Population in millions</th>
<th>Approx. # of megas</th>
<th>Megas per million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1210</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Land Use Policies

- Places of Worship are allowed by right in every zone.
- Private Institutional Facilities are allowed to access public sewer and water service outside planned envelope.
- Private Institutional Facilities are often allowed to exceed impervious surface limitation policies that are imposed on new developments within sensitive watersheds.
Bigbox Edge on Rural Areas
Convergence of the Germantown, Clarksburg, and Rural Open Space Master Plans

Location of the Northern Germantown Greenbelt
RLUIPA “does not provide religious institutions with immunity from land use regulation....In many cases, real property is used by religious institutions for purposes that are comparable to those carried out by other institutions...this alone does not automatically bring these activities within [RLUIPA“s] definition of „religious exercise.„”

Joint Statement of Senators Hatch and Kennedy
146 Cong. Rec. S7776
“RLUIPA levels the playing filed. It does not give religious uses a trump card over local zoning laws . . When I litigate these cases, I know I am fighting an uphill battle. I know by reading the case law that more cases are lost under RLUIPA than are won. RLUIPA is not a trump card.”

Daniel Dalton
Dalton, Tomich & Pensler, PLC
What’s Ahead?

Expect Continued Demand for Megachurches

Growth In Numbers Of Mega Churches

Scott Thumma
Hartford Institute For Religion Research
What Can We Do?

Embrace an Expanded Definition of “Place of Worship” in the Zoning Code
What Can We Do?

- Allow Places of Worship *by right* only in zones where other big institutions are allowed by right.
- Allow Places of Worship *by Special Exception only* in areas where low intensity zones are in place to meet other land use goals.
What Can We Do?

- Provide an outreach coordinator for religious institutions
  - Provide guidance in property location and the development process
  - Reveal hidden development costs in the suburbs
    - Road Improvements
    - Traffic and Parking Management
    - Infrastructure Extension
Encourage development in areas with easy access, existing infrastructure and plenty of weekend parking

- Mall spaces
- School spaces
- Existing Churches
- Hotels
- Businesses
- Stadiums
- Movie theaters
- Industrial Spaces

National Community Church meets in the Regal Theaters located on the 4th floor at Ballston Common Mall.

National Community Church meets in the movie theaters at Union Station.
SCOTT THUMMA, PhD
Hartford Institute For Religion Research
Hartford, CT
sthumma@hartsem.edu
www.hartfordinstitute.org

DANIEL P. DALTON
Dalton, Tomich & Pensler, PLC
Bloomfield Hills, MI
www.attorneysforlanduse.com
DDALTON@DTPLAWFIRM.COM

Katherine.Nelson@mncppc-mc.org
www.Montgomeryplanning.org
Silver Spring, MD