



CITY OF CASTLE HILLS

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Press Release

The City of Castle Hills

For Immediate Release: December 12, 2001

Castle Hills, Texas – December 12, 2001, The City of Castle Hills is both saddened and disappointed in statements made by the Castle Hills First Baptist Church and the Becket Fund. The City has been charged with waging a “campaign against places of worship” and its residents have been characterized as “motivated solely by irrational prejudice.” George Harris, Pastor of the Castle Hills First Baptist Church has written: “Satan will do anything he can to block the progress of church growth, even if he has to use cities and municipalities. This is the same old enemy that we have always had to fight in the Christian arena.” A complaint filed by these two organizations further charges the City with attempting to force out and discourage religious institutions from locating in Castle Hills.

In fact, these inflammatory charges are untrue and unsubstantiated. The City of Castle Hills is a small city supported by the tax revenues of its 4,000 residents. Approximately one-third of the City’s taxable area is made up of religious and nonprofit institutions. These ever-growing institutions are provided with city services free of charge. In effect, the residents of Castle Hills subsidize every religious entity within the City through their property taxes. The Castle Hills First Baptist Church, with a membership totaling 17,000 (as stated by the Beckett Fund), is provided with city services by those citizens it characterizes as “irrationally prejudice.”

Castle Hills residents, many of whom have lived in the same location for over forty years have seen the Church grow into a large business operation over the past 20 years with one the largest Christian schools in south Texas, a sports facility periodically used by the San Antonio Spurs, and a professionally staffed graphic design studio, copywriting clearing house, marketing department, image-setting service bureau and print shop. The Church has purchased local residences, removed them from the property roles, and sought to change the residential character of the surrounding area by constructing parking lots where homes once stood. It is not unreasonable for residents to be concerned about this growth or its impact on the value of their homes, the quality of their lives, or the effect on their taxes.

The Castle Hills First Baptist Church, with an annual budget of over twice that of the City of Castle Hills, has been joined by a deep-pocket, religious fund, claiming that religious freedom is being challenged by the City’s effort to enforce existing residential zoning laws. Their challenge is fraught with inaccurate and misleading statements which will be proven to be false in court. The City of Castle Hills supports the constitutional right of freedom of worship and stands dismayed over these outrageous claims.

For more information, contact: **Mayor Dave Seyfarth, City of Castle Hills, Texas**