

Public Testimony on Historic Preservation Issues Received by the Planning Board

Commenter (Testimony Type)	Plan Section Reference	Plan Page #	Comment Summary	Comment/Issue	Staff Response/Recommendation
Karen Burditt, HPC Chair (Written and Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7 & 3.G.8/9)	83-84	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery and Clarksburg Heights in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The HPC recommends that the PB affirm the draft plan's recommendations to designate the Community of Faith United Methodist Church and cemetery Master Plan Site and the Clarksburg Heights Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Geza Sereyi (Written)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84-85	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	I worked for 25 years at the COMSAT Labs in Clarksburg and am a current resident of Montgomery County. I am asking you to preserve the COMSAT building which has so much history associated with the development of satellite communications. The current owners of the land and the building deserve a chance to develop the extensive land around the building, but you have an obligation to set aside the building itself for preservation and reuse. I would like to see some of my yearly County property tax and income tax payments used for this purpose. Develop a plan that will extend the life of the building for another 25 or 50 years by doing the following: - Set aside a part of the building as a museum of satellite communications and a teaching facility that will encourage high school students to explore the latest trends in satellite communications. - Set aside a part of the building as a research laboratory, perhaps for biomedical research. - Set aside a part of the facility for recreational purposes. - Set aside a part of the building for retail purposes. (attachment provided from Maury Mechanick, President of the COMSAT Alumni and Retirees Assoc., documenting historic significance of the building)	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.

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Steve Robins and Bob Elliott, River Falls LLC (Written and Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Do not designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to not designate the COMSAT building or property as a historic site. Written testimony Exhibit AA includes a letter dated September 25, 2025, from Tommy Cleaver, CBRE, Executive Vice President, Mid- Atlantic Life Sciences Leader, addressed to Artie Harris, Chair, and Members of the Planning Board, commenting on CBRE's efforts to market the Comsat property and the key elements of the Sector Plan needed to unlock the site for a major opportunity in Montgomery County.	The Public Hearing Draft recommends against designation of COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Raju Chidambaram (Written)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The architecture and history both recommend this building as worthy of preservation. More than that, I think it is worthy of preserving as an active institution, such as a technical school, museum.	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.

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Karen Burditt, HPC Chair (Written and Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	On January 22, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend the designation of the COMSAT Laboratories to the Master Plan of Historic Sites as part of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. The Commission proposes a 33.47-acre environmental setting out of the 205-acre property. The HPC vote came after hearing the staff's report that COMSAT Laboratories meets 6 of the 9 designation criteria, after the testimony from local preservation groups, individuals and the property owner, and a lengthy discussion among the Commissioners. The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the COMSAT Laboratories be added to the Master Plan of Historic Preservation based on its singular historic significance to commercial satellite communications in the County and for the United States. Cautions the Planning Board against using existing real estate conditions as a basis for making decisions about historic properties and their potential for adaptive reuse, but envisioning the COMSAT building as a future adaptive reuse potential. Several examples of buildings once thought not adaptable that are now cherished buildings were cited during the Public Hearing. Additionally, the Main Entry/Lobby/Display Tower, and the south facing corridor to be preserved and the four original Laboratory wings be adaptively reused. If feasible the high bay satellite test building be adaptively reused to display satellite and telecommunication technology, past-present-future for the benefit of the community.	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.

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Maury Mechanick, President, COMSAT Alumni and Retiree Association (Written)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i>. If not, at least preserve the front lobby portion of the building as a public use space, such as a pavilion.	During the time period from 1969 through 2001, COMSAT Labs was one of the premier research and development facilities in the world, and the research and development performed there was instrumental in the development and growth the satellite industry, and that seminal research and development also laid the foundation for many of critical elements of today, including solar energy and the transmission of digital data, which is at the core of today's Internet. We were very pleased when the Historic Preservation Commission Preservation staff that COMSAT Labs satisfied six designation criteria for historic resources preservation in Montgomery County. Similarly we were quite alarmed and distressed when the Planning Staff chose to disregard this recommendation and instead indicated that such designation would not be appropriate, fundamentally on a rationale of convenience. It is for that reason that we are strongly re-advocating at this time that the COMSAT Labs building is definitely deserving of such historical preservation status. If for any reason the Planning Board declines to accept such a designation in full, at a minimum the measures taken to preserve the COMSAT Labs legacy must extend beyond a mural or two and a placard on the history of the site. It would at a minimum seem appropriate the front lobby portion of the building could be preserved in full as a pavilion for public access for whatever other use is made of the property.	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.
Eileen McGuckian, President of Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (Written and Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Dismayed that the draft plan does not acknowledge the significance of one of Montgomery County's most important historic sites nor provide for its contribution to the stated guiding principles of this Plan update. Urges the Planning Board to take this opportunity to take pride in COMSAT's place in scientific and communications history, in the work of an internationally acclaimed architect, and how this has impacted local surrounding communities over time. Recommends revising the draft plan to recognize COMSAT as a Historic [designation] Site and for its inclusion in the future development of Clarksburg Gateway.	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.

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Eileen McGuckian, President of Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (Written and Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7 & 3.G.8/9)	83-84	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery and Clarksburg Heights in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Concurs with HPC's recommendations to list Community of Faith Church & Cemetery and Clarksburg Heights subdivision in the Montgomery County <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Dan Seamens (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Recommends that the Planning Board recommend designation of the COMSAT Laboratories building due to its significance as a location for technological development in satellite and telecommunication advancements. It should be a substantial tourist attraction. The county should consider adaptive reuse of the building in collaboration with an economic development agency.	The Public Hearing Draft acknowledges the historic and architectural significance of COMSAT Laboratories. Montgomery Planning undertook both design and economic feasibility studies to explore potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the building. However, the findings of the economic analysis indicated that there is no viable path forward for the adaptive reuse of COMSAT Laboratories in the short or medium term while achieving other plan objectives. The Plan includes mitigation to honor the site's significance including the establishment of a grant program, documentation, interpretative elements, and opportunities for public art.
Beth Wolff. CAN (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.11)	84	Do not designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to not designate the COMSAT building or property as a historic site to enable greater mixed-use development.	The Public Hearing Draft recommends against designation of COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .

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Rev. Cheryl Gooden, Community of Faith United Methodist Church (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7)	83	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to list the Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery as an Historic Site in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Cecile Foreman (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7)	83	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to list the Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery as an Historic Site in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Karen Walker (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7)	83	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to list the Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery as an Historic Site in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Karen Walker (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.10/11)	84-85	Do not designate COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Support the draft plan's vision for new development on COMSAT Laboratories and its surroundings that does not include historic designation of the site or building.	The Public Hearing Draft recommends against designation of COMSAT Laboratories in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .
Joanne Snowden Woodsen (Public Hearing)	Historic Preservation (3.G.6/7)	83	Designate Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	Supports the draft plan's recommendation to list the Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery as an Historic Site in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .	The Public Hearing Draft recommends designating the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District in the <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i> .