



**Testimony of Steven A. Robins
Before the Montgomery County Council
Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan**

January 21, 2026

Good evening, Council President Fani Gonzalez and Members of the Council. My name is Steven Robins, and I am speaking today as an individual and resident of Montgomery County in support of the Planning Board's Public Hearing Draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. I support the comments made by River Falls Investments LLC, the long-time owner of the former COMSAT property. I am a lifelong resident of Montgomery County and care deeply about the outcome of this plan.

I commend the Planning Board and its Staff for transmitting an excellent plan. The focus of my testimony tonight is on historic preservation. I support the Board and the Technical Staff's recommendation not to designate the COMSAT property as historic. It is the correct decision, based on solid analysis, and finally puts this issue to rest.

Montgomery Planning hired reputable professionals to conduct planning, architectural, and economic feasibility studies to assess whether COMSAT could be adaptively reused. Staff, along with their expert consultants HR&A and Fu Wilmers, and River Falls specialists CBRE and RCLCO, all concluded that the Comsat property should not be designated as historic. The expert analysis clearly shows that there is no feasible short- or medium-term scenario in which the COMSAT building can be adaptively reused and that designation would completely undermine and frustrate the County's planning, economic, and environmental objectives. The building's size, specialized design, and deteriorated condition make reuse extraordinarily and prohibitively expensive.

The property has sat vacant for over 20 years, harming the property owner, Montgomery County, and Clarksburg, and any historic designation would impede planning and development efforts for the site. This vacancy is not due to a lack of effort in trying to repurpose the building. Present and past owners spent significant time and money attempting to adaptively reuse the building with no success. Montgomery County has missed out on 20 years of economic benefits such as increased commercial and residential real estate taxes, new residences, jobs, economic growth, and the development of more mixed-use areas in the upper part of the County. The economic loss to the County and region amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Planning Board and its Staff recognized that there is no viable path forward with such a designation and responsibly moved ahead as reflected in the Plan. I urge the Council to fully support the Planning Board's Draft Plan (with only minor changes as discussed by others), which includes the decision not to designate the COMSAT property as historic.

Thank you for your consideration.