

January 21, 2026

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RE: Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan/COMSAT Laboratories Adaptive Reuse

Members of the County Council,

I would like to start with some history: the Demolition of Penn Station in New York City.

An architectural masterpiece, Penn Station was demolished in 1963 to make way for Madison Square Gardens. The residents of New York City were so outraged that the protests galvanized the city to enact the Landmarks Law and create a Landmarks Preservation Commission 61 years ago. Because of that legal foundation there are now preservation laws across the nation at federal, state and local levels. It is why Montgomery County has a staffed Historic Preservation Division and a Historic Preservation Commission. What wasn't achieved in New York was the preservation and restoration of the architectural marvel that was Penn Station. Forever lost it can only be experienced now through photographs and cameos in few old movies.

COMSAT Laboratories is to Montgomery County what Penn Station was to New York City. COMSAT is a unique Architectural and Communications Landmark, a shining modern 'machine in the garden' designed by Master Architect Cesar Pelli. If it is demolished, there will be nothing to remember what COMSAT meant to the nation, the county, and to the future of commercial satellite technology, which we experience every day through our cellphones.

The rationale behind the loss of COMSAT is the same reason behind the loss of Penn Station, the owner wants the highest profit from their asset. But the County Council has the tools to define what that profit is and who will benefit. The Council can require adapting the Pelli COMSAT buildings to a new future that will serve the community as well as creating a long term profit center for the owner.

Seven Examples of Adaptive Reuse of industrial and laboratory buildings:

1. Bell Labs in NJ, is now Bell Works an office/retail/culture economic center [Bell Works - Work, Shop, Play | Inspired Real Estate](#)
2. Phillips Packing Company in Cambridge MD is now The Packing House, a work, retail, dining destination [The Packing House](#)

COMSAT: Adaptive Reuse Examples January 21, 2026

Bell Works, Holmdale NJ (Bell Laboratories)

[Bell Works | Holmdel | On The Block](#)



colab
at Bell Works

Goodbye commute, hello community!



BLDG 77, Brooklyn Navy Yard (former Military Equipment Factory)

[Homepage - Brooklyn Navy Yard](#)



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Torpedo Factory , Alexandria VA (*Former Munitions Factory*)

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