

Cover sheet

Dan Seamans Testimony to Planning, Housing and Parks Committee, Mont.
Co. Council, for Hearings of Feb. 2 and Feb. 11, 2026
COMSAT Labs – Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan
Jan., 26, 2026

Please note:

I submitted testimony yesterday (1/25/26) and received your acknowledgement of its receipt via email. Please disregard that testimony and replace it with this revised testimony attached. My previous testimony had errors, including the date it was written.

Montgomery County Council
Planning, Housing and Parks Committee
Hearings of Feb. 2 and Feb. 11, 2026
Testimony - COMSAT Labs - Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan
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I am Dan Seamans a resident of Boyds, MD since 1960. I attended 4th grade at Clarksburg Elem. School in the 1960-61 school year.

The appearance of the Comsat Labs building in the late 1960's was startling to people who lived here and to those travelling on I-70S (now I-270). At the time the greater area was largely a landscape of farms. Many of us saw the building under construction so we knew it had not just landed. Other viewers at first look were not so sure it had not landed there. A striking feature in a bucolic, rural setting.

World renowned architect Cesar Pelli thoughtfully incorporated references to aircraft with its rounded aluminum skin and windows similar to jet planes. These brought in light from multiple sides to each modular lab space. The lab spaces were needed to fulfill the directive of the Communication Satellite Act of 1962 that followed Pres. Kennedy's 1961 speech requesting an American effort "of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth". In the same speech he requested "an additional \$50M [to] make the most of our present leadership, by accelerating the use of space satellites for worldwide communications."

Over the span of the Lab's operation there from 1969 through 1997 many advancements were achieved in diverse technologies. Satellite operational problems occurred that required new solutions. The Research and Development work done there produced the vast amounts of technological advances needed to allow satellite communications, underdeveloped before. Solutions and new inventions discovered allowed affordability without sacrificing operational quality. In collaboration with Intelsat, these advancements were acquired around the world by rich and poor countries alike. They provided nearly instantaneous communications around the

planet. Anyone with passing understanding of the World Wide Web or the Global Positioning System will understand the significance of the advanced technology developed there. Along with the Moon Missions, America got this one right.

There is a long list of problems solved and new technologies developed at Comsat. Rather than repeat them here please see the testimony of Maury Mechanick, president of Comsat Alumni and Retirees Association (Comara) dated Sept., 2024 and his spoken comments for the Jan., 2026 County Council Hearing. His terrific review reveals the incredible work done at Comsat. It is required reading for anyone seeking what was accomplished in this building where it happened. Comara also has many written commentaries from its members about their individual work there (see comara.org.)

The building is a striking example of mid-century modern architecture, especially considering that it was a laboratory. When understanding what was achieved there, it becomes an example of what an American entity can do in cooperation with and benefit of others throughout the world. I therefore consider the building to be monumental in stature. Its structure should be retained to recall its historical significance. With proper renovation, a sense of American pride can be imbued. It could be a substantial tourist attraction. The Planning Board and County Council should designate it for protection under MC's Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Montgomery County might consider the reuse of old buildings similar to those illustrated in the Clarksburg-Adaptive-Reuse-Case-Studies-Final 10/16/24 for Bell Works, Chappaqua Crossing and Judson Mills. It might also utilize the Economic Development Office to seek tenants to add to needed employment in this region. Planning and Parks may have creative ideas for utilization of the building spaces and grounds.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Dan Seamans