

I wanted to provide you with an update on the ongoing saga of whether or not the COMSAT Labs building might be accorded a Historic Site designation by Montgomery County in connection with consideration of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Master Plan.

Consideration of this issue is now before the full Montgomery County Council, which conducted a public hearing in late January regarding the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Master Plan as proposed by the Montgomery County Planning Board. Previously, the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission had recommended to the Planning Board that the COMSAT Labs building be designated as Historic Site, thereby preventing its demolition and possible repurposing of the building for ongoing use. Unfortunately, the recommendation was not accepted by the Planning Board, which while acknowledging the architectural and historical significance of the building, opposed the Historic Site designation based on its belief that no repurposing would be possible. Thus, the Clarksburg Master Plan submitted for consideration by the Montgomery County Council does not contain a recommendation for historic site designation.

ON January 21, 2026, the Montgomery County Council conducted a public hearing on the Master Plan. At that hearing, speaking on behalf of COMARA -- along with a number of other individuals including a representative of the Germantown Historical Society -- I provided oral testimony supporting a Historic Site designation. In my oral testimony as well as separately submitted written testimony, I also expressed support for other measures to help preserve the COMSAT Labs legacy in the event that the building is not designated as a Historic Site and therefor subject to possible partial or complete demolition in the future.

Since then, a subcommittee of the Montgomery County Council held a number of sessions reviewing the proposed Master Plan, culminating in the Plan's formal consideration on March 3 by the full Montgomery County Council. In regard to that, COMARA submitted supplemental written testimony reiterating the key points in prior testimony, including stressing the need for a public process for determining appropriate measures in what is now referred to as a "mitigation plan" to preserve COMSAT Labs legacy in the event that the building is partially or wholly demolished, and also suggesting that the Labs building portico and possibly lobby area could be preserved as part of a public meeting space, even if the rest of the building were demolished.

I am pleased to report that when the portion of the Master Plan dealing specifically with the COMSAT Labs site was addressed, Council Member Jawando made specific reference to the COMARA submission, and strongly supported the recommendation for a public process, while also encouraging further consideration of the proposal regarding the portico and lobby area. His views were also supported by Council President Fani-Gonzalez. I have since communicated to Council Member Jawando's staff COMARA's great appreciation for his endorsement of the COMARA position in our supplemental testimony.

In terms of where things stand now, it is clear that the Labs Building will not be given a Historic Site designation, which would have preserved it from destruction, but there is at least increased awareness of its historical significance and a willingness to have that legacy preserved in a meaningful fashion if the building were to be demolished. As to our specific recommendations, it does not appear possible for them to be formally included in the Master Plan text itself, but the mechanism by which it is

formally adopted includes a resolution to be taken up later this month by the County Council, and I hope that at least the commitment to a public process could be incorporated more directly into that resolution.

Copies of the COMARA original and supplemental testimony as well as remarks submitted by other COMARA members can be found on the COMARA website.