



NORTHEAST PRESERVATION NEWS

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ME Preservation, NH Preservation
Alliance, Preservation NJ, Preservation
League of NY, Preservation PA,
Preserve RI, Preservation Trust of VT

Statewide Main Street Programs

CT: Connecticut Main Street Center
DE: Delaware Main Street Program
MA (Boston): Boston Main Streets
ME: Maine Downtown Center
NH: New Hampshire Main Street
Center
NJ: Main Street New Jersey
PA: Office of Community Development,
Pennsylvania Downtown Center
VT: Vermont Downtown Program

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Calling All Advocates

The cell phone may be regarded as one of the great technological inventions of our time but the place where it all happened may soon face a disconnection notice. New development threatens the massive 472-acre Bell Laboratories complex in Holmdel, NJ. In response, the National Trust, Preservation New Jersey, DOCOMOMO, the Recent Past Preservation Network and other local, state and national organizations are coming together to help find a win-win solution.

Bell Labs is particularly extraordinary as it helped spur advancements such as the transistor, radio astronomy and the cell phone, not to mention six Nobel Prize laureates. As a largely unknown commission by internationally renowned architect Eero Saarinen, it is architecturally significant too. If that is not enough, it's also an important historic cultural landscape, representing the Modern Movement at its best through the work of noted landscape architect Hideo Sasaki.

When it was first built in 1959-62, the mirrored glass Bell Labs was called "The Biggest Mirror Ever," designed to allow 25 percent of the available sunlight to pass through the building, while blocking 70 percent of the sun's heat. These advances are just some of the site's unique aspects that are at risk.

In September, this one-of-a-kind Mid-Century landmark is set to transfer hands to a private developer who has yet to fully announce future plans for the site, although new development is clearly anticipated. Recently Preservation New Jersey placed Bell Labs on its list of *10 Most Endangered Historic Sites*.

This is not the first time the National Trust



Interior space. Photo courtesy of Preservation New Jersey.

has been involved in efforts to preserve a Mid-Century office and technology complex like Bell Labs. For more than six years, the Trust has been working to save the 1957 Wilde Building as part of the CIGNA complex in Bloomfield, CT. While initially tagged for demolition, the Wilde Building is now set for a full rehabilitation. Another is the 1969, Cesar Pelli-designed Comsat Laboratories Building in Clarksburg, MD. Also originally planned for demolition, advocates for Comsat are working through details about its re-use and new development on the site.

For now, the fate of Bell Labs is unclear. However, the Trust and its many partners will continue to advocate for a re-use that protects this significant site.



An aerial view of the Bell Labs site, showing the integration of landscape and buildings. Courtesy of www.engadget.com.

