



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #2

IN CITY COUNCIL

April 12, 1999

COUNCILLOR DAVIS

ORDERED: That the Town Gown report include the Housing Impact statement with prospective planning information for five years, ten years and twenty years.

In City Council April 12, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

MIT people are occupied by MIT graduate students. There are one hundred eighty-six total units and MIT uses sixty-six of them.

Councillor Davis noted that future housing at University Park is exempt from inclusionary zoning and asked whether there is any way that MIT can persuade University Park to make some of those units affordable units. Mr. Simha stated that MIT would look into this. He stated that it would be good for some of those units to be affordable. He suggested taking inclusionary zoning one more step and providing incentives for the production of housing units.

Mr. Simha stated that a very real problem for MIT is that their graduate students have been priced out of Cambridge and are forced to live farther and farther away.

Councillor Born stated that she believes that there are areas currently zoned for other than housing where residents would probably prefer housing to commercial, industrial uses.

Councillor Davis then asked what additional population MIT foresees. Mr. Simha stated that MIT has had to accelerate production of undergraduate housing. Currently ninety-five percent of the undergraduates are housed in either dormitories or fraternity houses. About fifteen hundred live in independent living groups. MIT has committed to housing all freshman on campus in dorms. Undergraduate enrollment will remain the same. Approximately three hundred freshman will be moved to MIT dorms. Upper class undergraduates will take over the units in independent living space in Boston and Cambridge.

Eric Novack, MIT Planning Office, said that the number of students currently living in MIT campus housing will not change much, even with construction of new undergraduate housing. It will be used to reduce crowding

Councillor Born asked how many fraternities are in Cambridge. Mr. Simha said that there are four. The fraternities own the properties as independent corporations.

Councillor Born asked about the planned new undergraduate housing. Ms. Gallop stated that it is planned as a multi-generational community. Some faculty will be housed there. Freshmen are prohibited from having cars, and the occurrence of car ownership among undergraduates is very low.

Councillor Davis asked about the open space planned for the building. She is concerned that there may be some thought of Pacific Park as being that building's open space.

Mr. Simha stated that the undergraduate housing will be located on Vassar Street, between the railroad track and Vassar Street close to the Fort Washington

pedestrian railroad crossing. The FAR (floor area ratio) was set at 3.0 in that area to keep the high density away from the neighborhood in the 1992 zoning negotiations. The housing at the corner of Pacific and Sidney Streets will be graduate housing. It has not been funded yet. The hope is that it will accommodate 400-500 graduate students in dormitory housing. The height will be sixty feet, the FAR will be 1.75. The open space is inside the building. There will be a courtyard. Graduates don't need the kind of playing-field type open space that undergraduates need.

Councillor Davis said that she is also concerned about the project "putting its back to the community." She would like to see more open space that could be used by all. Mr. Simha agreed with the need for a sensitive treatment of that building and its relationship to the park. MIT has also pressed Forest City to make that part of its development more animated and congenial. Councillor Davis stated that she is concerned that there is no written description of the project; since there are obviously plans it would be more honest to provide a written description. Mr. Simha stated that a written description was presented to the Planning Board. Councillor Davis asked what are the opportunities to look at this design. The plans are still sketchy, because there is no funding for the building yet. Mr. Simha stated that this is an as-of-right project. No variance or special permits are needed.

Councillor Davis stated that Cambridgeport Commons is 1.75 FAR, and there is not a speck of land; actually that's all there is, several specks. Mr. Simha said that just up the street are University Park buildings that are much higher.

Councillor Born asked about the density of the Auburn Court. Mr. Simha replied that he did not know. In reply to a question about the FAR of the new Harvard housing on DeWolfe Street, Mr. Simha said he thinks it is about 3.0.

Councillor Davis asked whether MIT is building more housing in the Osborn Triangle. Mr. Simha answered in the negative. MIT would like to build more housing over by the Sloane School. MIT also would like to build housing at the California Paint site for faculty and staff and perhaps public uses. He cautioned that this deal is not yet completed.

Councillor Born asked what new buildings will be on the tax rolls. Ms. Gallop stated that the California Paint property may be taxable property, and the other properties will be subject to in lieu of tax payments. Mr. Simha and Ms. Gallop said that there will be an adjustment of the in lieu of tax payments on the exempt properties on account of new buildings.

Councillor Born asked if MIT has a facilities master plan. Mr. Simha said no; MIT does have a land use plan, consistent with the city's zoning.

Councillor Born asked if the plans have been adjusted due to the acquisition of Osborn Triangle and One Broadway. Mr. Simha said that One Broadway is strictly a real estate investment and will stay on the tax rolls.

Councillor Born asked if MIT had considered purchase of the recently-sold ComEnergy site and whether MIT would consider its purchase if it became available again. Mr. Simha stated that MIT has no interest in this parcel.

Councillor Davis asked how many units could be built at the California Paint site. Mr. Simha said he believes it would be fewer than fifty units. The base FAR is 1.25 and can go to 1.75 with the inclusion of affordable housing.

Councillor Davis noted that the current listing price for a townhouse at Cambridgeport Commons is \$279,000.

Mr. Simha stated that MIT tries to keep its rents for graduate housing at 10% less than market, one year behind. The cost of housing is a big competitive issue when students are selecting graduate programs.

Councillor Davis asked about Henry Street. Mr. Simha said that the long-term plan is for housing. She then asked if MIT knew of any Boston University plans for student housing in Cambridgeport. Mr. Simha said that he does not, and that any such plans would be a matter of concern for MIT. Councillor Davis stated that Boston University students are currently housed at the Howard Johnson Hotel.

Councillor Born suggested that in future years the housing impact data be included in the Town Gown report produced annually in late spring. Mr. Simha and Ms. Gallop agreed.

Councillor Davis moved that the Town Gown report include the Housing Impact statement with prospective planning information for five years, ten years and twenty years. The motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Born thanked those present for their attendance.
The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

For the Committee,

Kathleen Leahy Born ^{DMD}

Councillor Kathleen Leahy Born
Chair



MIT NEW UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENCE—PROJECT FACT SHEET

The new undergraduate residence is the product of an extensive process involving members of the MIT community, the Cambridgeport neighborhood, business leaders, and staff and elected officials of City of Cambridge. The development will reflect and is being designed to meet the requirements of the 1992 amendment to the Zoning Ordinance affecting Cambridgeport and the 1993 Cambridge Growth Policy Document. The residence also furthers the recommendations of the MIT Presidential Task Force on Student Life and Learning, an extensive two-year examination of undergraduate education and residential life at MIT. Finally, the plan for the new undergraduate residence was the subject of a broad-based community planning effort last summer and fall that included large group presentations, small group planning sessions, and extensive web coverage including an electronic forum.

New Capacity	Will allow MIT to reduce crowding in current residence halls as well as provide housing on campus for all freshmen in the fall of 2001
Multi-Generational Community	Residence will include dwellings for undergraduates from each class, graduate student advisors, faculty, and visiting scholars. Programs and spaces will promote faculty/student interaction and participation in a shared enterprise
Commitment to Quality	Residence is being designed by the architectural firm of Steven Holl Architects, whose recent works include the Chapel of St. Ignatius at Seattle University and the Makuhari housing development in Chiba, Japan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Location	On MIT property located at 243 - 271 Vassar Street, across from MIT's playing fields and adjacent to the Fort Washington Historic District	
Approx. Size	~160,000 GSF	
Facilities	~350 beds in student suites and 17 faculty, advisor, and guest units; social and educational facilities for residents, including a dining hall, lounges, music rooms, and group computing center; on-site parking; designated open space	
Schedule	Predesign Planning	June 1998 - March 1999
	Design	January 1999 - January 2000
	Construction	November 1999 - July 2001
	Occupancy	August 2001

ZONING REQUIREMENTS

- **Project compatible with the 1992 amendment to the Zoning Ordinance affecting Cambridgeport, which resulted in a reduction in the development capacity of the site, and the requirements of Special District 6**
 - permitted uses include residential and dormitory development
 - FAR 3.0 (reduced in 1992 from 4.0)
 - Height limits, the product of extensive discussions with the Cambridgeport neighborhood and the City: 100' maximum height as-of-right; 180' height by special permit; 60' height in vicinity of Fort Washington Historic District (changed in 1992 from no height limit)

GROWTH POLICY GUIDELINES

- **Project consistent with 1993 Growth Policy Document, and specifically Policy 52**

"The city's major educational institutions should be encouraged to provide housing for their respective faculties, students, and staff through additions to the city's inventory of housing units" (Policy 52, page 119)

 - The new undergraduate residence will provide housing for MIT's faculty, students, and staff and relieve pressure on the city's inventory

"Effective use of existing land holdings should be a tool in meeting this objective, where it does not result in excessive density in the core campus" (Policy 52, page 119)

 - The new undergraduate residence will be located on MIT-owned land within its existing campus. Its density and height are consistent with the requirements of the 1992 amendment to the Zoning Ordinance affecting Cambridgeport

MIT's Contributions to Housing in Cambridge

Over the years, MIT has made substantial contributions to the housing stock in Cambridge. The following is a brief summary of major housing initiatives that MIT has advanced since the 1970's.

1970's: Elderly Housing

MIT was responsible for building 684 elderly housing units in the 1970's. The first project, Miller's River Housing, was in East Cambridge. These low-income elderly units, now managed by the Cambridge Housing Authority, were built by MIT under a federal turn-key program. They were followed by two other projects, the Daniel F. Burns apartments in North Cambridge and the L.B. Johnson apartments in Cambridgeport.

Together, these 684 elderly housing units represent the single largest contribution to the City's overall housing stock in the 1970's and an even larger contribution to its low-income stock. These MIT developments comprise 29 percent of the 2,327 affordable units built in Cambridge in the 1970's.

1980's - 1990's: University Park at MIT

Pursuant to agreements between the City, MIT and Forest City Development, University Park is required to contain at least 400 units of housing at full build out. Of these 400 units, 150 must house low and moderate income families (100 low- and 50 moderate-income units).

Currently, Kennedy Biscuit Lofts contain 142 units. Of these, 36 units are occupied by low-income families and 29 units are occupied by moderate-income families. Auburn Court Phase I contains 77 units. Of these, 39 units are occupied by low-income families and 7 units are occupied by moderate-income families. Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI) is currently planning for Auburn Court Phase II. This project will contain approximately 60 units. Of these, at least 25 units will be reserved for low-income families and at least 14 units will be reserved for moderate-income families.

Current plans for Phase IV of University Park include residential developments at 91 Sidney Street and 100 Landsdowne Street (135 units at 91 Sidney Street and 226 units at 100 Landsdowne Street). It is expected that these will be market rate units, and, like all housing in University Park, they will be rental units.

Upon completion, there will be a total of 640 units of rental housing in University Park. Of these, 150 units will be occupied by low- and moderate-income families, making the affordable component at University Park 23 percent. The City's recently adopted Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance requires that new projects of greater than 10 units must

contain a 15 percent affordable component and provides for a density bonus to achieve the affordable units. University Park affordable component exceeds that established by City Ordinance. It is important to note that University Park is specifically excluded from the City's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance.

University Park's 150 affordable units represent approximately 17 percent of the affordable housing units created in Cambridge during the 1990's.

1990's: Shelter for Homeless Substance Abusers

From 1979 to 1993, MIT provided a site for a shelter for homeless individuals combating substance abuse on its campus. The shelter was housed in 3 temporary trailers and administered by the Cambridge and Somerville Program for Drug Abuse and Alcoholism Rehabilitation (CASPAR).

In 1993, with the backing of the Cambridgeport residential and business community, a partnership between MIT, CASPAR, and the City of Cambridge resulted in a unique tripartite agreement providing a new building and secure site for CASPAR's homeless shelter. As a result, MIT funded and constructed on its campus an emergency service shelter for CASPAR to house and provide services to 72 guests. In exchange, MIT received from the City property rights on 3 streets and ownership of one street within its campus. The 40 year lease arrangement allows for the provision of improved and stable shelter and services to homeless individuals in Cambridge.

1980's - 1990's: Innovative Partnerships to Create Housing

In the last two decades, MIT has engaged in efforts to increase the City's housing stock by working in partnership with private residential developers. Through unique financial arrangements, MIT helped to the create a total of 295 housing units at Worthington Place on Binney Street, Fort Washington Place on Putnam Avenue, Thorndike Place Condominiums on Thorndike Street, and Spring Condominiums on Fulkerson Street.

Since the 1970's, the total number of housing units developed by MIT, or in conjunction with MIT, is 1691. Of these, over 900 are affordable.

March 30, 1999

City of Cambridge

In City Council April 12, 1999

The Housing and Community Development Committee held a public meeting on March 30, 1999, beginning at 5:12 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing MIT's housing impact report.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Kathleen Leahy Born, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Henrietta Davis, and City Clerk, D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Cliff Cook, Community Development Department, and MIT staff, as set forth below.

Councillor Born convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She invited MIT to make a presentation. Sarah Gallop, Co-Director of Government and Community Relations for MIT, introduced Robert Simha, MIT Director of Planning and Michael Owu, Planning Office.

Mr. Simha discussed the planned new MIT undergraduate residence. See **Attachment A**. He began with a brief summary of MIT's contributions to housing in Cambridge (**Attachment B**). He noted that MIT built six hundred eighty-four elderly housing units in the 1970's.

Councillor Born asked Mr. Simha why MIT decided to build the elderly housing. Mr. Simha stated that Jim Killian, former president of MIT, deserves a good deal of credit for being willing to work with and for the city in an unusual and creative way in an area in which MIT had special competencies. It was seen financially as a no-gain, no-loss situation, although MIT did lose a million dollars ultimately. MIT was the developer.

Mr. Simha then noted the housing agreed upon for University Park, the new CASPAR building constructed by MIT, and MIT's financing assistance to private developers as an investment that helps to stabilize the local housing markets and provide moderate income housing for the public and the MIT community, such as the Worthington Place housing. Mr. Simha said that MIT has 7,000 employees, 3900 are faculty members, only half of the faculty make above the median income. MIT is not a high income community; the income mirrors that of the Cambridge community as a whole.

Henrietta Davis asked whether Mr. Simha knows whether Boston University has a similar program to help with financing in exchange for some housing units for its community. Mr. Simha said that he is not aware of any such efforts by Boston University. He said that most of the units at Worthington Place that are occupied by

Committee Report #2

2825

A report from Councillor Born, Chair
of the Housing and Community Development
Committee for a meeting held on
March 30, 1999 for the purpose of
discussing MIT's housing impact
report.

In City Council April 12, 1999

Report Accepted

PLACED ON FILE

ORDER ADOPTED