

FSILG Task Force Draft Recommendations

Executive Summary

This task force has been assembled as a result of the focus groups/survey conducted in the Fall of 2015 on the interest in a west campus FSILG village. Given changes in the Boston housing environment (regulatory and economic), societal pressures and shift of skills of incoming students, and the demographic changes within MIT over the past 20 years, it is the view of this group that a new additional on campus options for FSILG living needs to be developed. Given the value that alumni and students have placed on the set of leadership development experience they obtained as a result of their living experiences in a FSILG, the goal of this task force was to develop a plan to preserve the essential elements of those experiences should the physical locations be transferred to the west campus. In the survey, a small number of houses expressed a strong interest, with most houses taking a wait and see approach voicing the need for more specificity. This created a bit of a chicken and egg dilemma where both MIT and the FSILG leadership found it difficult to decide without a more comprehensive plan. Our goal through this task force effort was to begin developing this more detailed plan. In essence we want this plan to preserve for future generations of MIT students the leadership, personal development, and real life problem solving experiences that FSILG living provides.

This taskforce tried its best to “put itself in the institutes shoes” when developing tradeoff decisions in its recommendations. In essence we thought long and hard that the new plan needed to: 1) Work for MIT, 2) Work for the FSILG system, and then also work for 3) many of our respective individual houses. While this is far from a finished set of recommendations, it is a thoughtful starting point for a set of more detailed discussions. Our hope was to put forward a balanced set of recommendations to be refined as opposed to a “starting point in a negotiation”. As you can see on the accompanying chart the group represented alumni from several generations from the houses that expressed interest in the Fall. A strong effort was made to include a sorority, the current 6 chapters seem happy with their situations. We will attempt to reach out again to Delta Phi Epsilon, a new sorority that will begin recruiting this Fall and doesn't yet have a housing solution.

In general our approach was to retain the critical elements of the experience that we believe was critical to the leadership development experience. These elements include self-governance, responsibility, and shared social experiences. We also tried to be practical to seek opportunities to reduce the housing maintenance burden on the future generation of MIT FSILG dwellers and to fully embrace the new opportunity of being on campus.

We believe an ILG Village is addresses many important issues as it relates to MIT housing stock. From the Institute's perspective, the Village would be under the jurisdiction of MIT Police and would remove the risk of MIT housing stock being regulated by Boston Inspectional Services, Boston Police, etc. which may have other motivations. Further, there is a view that MIT would be in a better position from a risk management position to ensure compliance with Institute standards for housing. From the ILG perspective the Boston limitations on social gatherings would be removed. The location (for some) would be more geographically convenient, and the ILGs would operate in a neighborhood that is trying to foster them rather than get rid of them. Finally there would be an opportunity to move into facility that has all the modern conveniences and amenities, which would likely be a more competitive offering. Our view is that not all ILGs would move to campus and they would only do so of their own free will. However our view is also that MIT will be in a much better off position long term if it has an ILG village.

Our draft recommendations are as follows:

Facilities:

- Semi-detached vertical structures with a central quadrangle for green space
- Separate entrances to individual living groups
- Mix within the village of fraternities, sororities, and ILGs
- Anticipate pods of 4 adjoining houses to be built out to 8 or more as interest demands
- 5 to 6 story structures designed for 40 to 50 member occupancy
- Meet all requirements for freshmen to live within the village
- Living space on upper floors with 10-13 beds/floor, some ability to reconfigure singles, doubles, and quads to meet individual house needs
- Common room and bathrooms on each floor
- Roof decks, elevators
- Some ability to flex occupancy to ensure house is always near capacity, possibly by egress to adjacent houses or by isolating a single floor
- Shared utilities including HVAC, IT, security, hot water maintained by MIT or a co-op
- MIT to maintain all grounds, landscaping, snow removal, etc.
- Build space within village for faculty housemaster
- Build accommodations within each individual units for graduate tutor
- Large shared central kitchen for village to have MIT food catering services or a shared FSILG catering staff
- Individual house dining rooms in each unit
- Build small, occasional use individual kitchens in each unit that allows for individual off hour or small group meal prep
- Shared underground facilities for parking and laundry that all units can access (try to recruit Zip Cars into facility for shared limited car use)
- Build shared social/meeting/study space within the village that can be utilized for large events and meetings for MIT community as needed

Governance:

- MIT should own land and enter into long term lease with individual alumni housing corporations
- Alumni housing corporations will work with the undergraduates to budget, manage, and lead their individual houses similar to todays structure with support from DSL, the AILG, and the various student organizations and councils that provide training, oversight, and support
- These units should be built with all the specifications that allow for freshman occupancy. By including this in the campus design we feel the FSILG will be more integrated into the campus experience and also allow for more years of apprenticeship to develop future student leaders in this community
- MIT should pull together resources in DSL and MITIMCO to provide a single point of contact to efficiently manage the relationships with the alumni house corporations and the individual house student leaders
- The proximity of the Village to MIT will, in and of itself, strengthen MIT's risk management position for those houses moving into the Village - as well as enable more interaction with faculty and a stronger integration of the FSILG system with campus life

Social:

- Currently there are good (and recently revised) guidelines for FSILG social events which were benchmarked against Bucknell and Middlebury that form a strong foundation for social events in the village
- The creation of the village also gives a greater opportunity to weave the social functions of the FSILGs more fully into the broader MIT community.
- Plans should be put in place to encourage FSILGs to cooperate to sponsor joint events in larger community spaces that could have positive impact on community inclusion and decrease the overall risk management of having these events under campus jurisdiction.

Finance:

- An assessment of real estate trends in Boston indicate that houses are likely to be sold as a “shell” that would be heavily renovated and converted into multiunit condos
- Given this alternate use, and the current real estate market in Boston, it was estimated that the existing housing stock could be sold at prices between \$750 and \$1000 per sq ft. The higher prices would be likely for riverside beacon properties east of Massachusetts Avenue with substantial capacity for parking. The lower numbers would be more likely for houses without river views and with less parking capacity.
- These estimates imply that existing houses are worth between \$4 and \$11 million. Each individual house has a mortgage, but for the vast majority these loans are only a fraction of this value.
- This analysis indicates there exists substantial equity in the system to fund the construction of the units in the FSILG, although given these recommendations a better cost/bed estimate needs to be developed.
- MIT in conjunction with the IRDF should put together a path to accommodate houses without enough equity value to fund the move and make up the gap with alumni donations (through a fundraising campaign) and loans. The most difficult cases will be young houses (e.g. new sororities) that would like to participate but neither have the alumni base for fundraising or an existing house with equity.
- Operating costs would need to be budgeted to ensure the FSILG village was cost competitive with other MIT housing choices.

This task force will continue to meet to refine these recommendations. It recommends a joint effort with the Institute to evaluate design proposals, build momentum in the alumni/student community, and manage the overall implementation for success. We welcome your input.