

Benchmarking Report Highlights - West Campus Village

Notes from Walt Colby '62, principal author of the [Benchmarking Report](#).

At the West Campus Village Concept Review meeting on March 5th our Breakout Group 4 - Amenities briefly discussed the extensive list in the Benchmarking Report. I've excerpted the pertinent material, attached below for further distribution. Reading the material in context in the full Report will provide a good framework for continued discussion.

Also included is a list of spaces that students particularly liked that participants came up with in the second Student Design Workshop on January 21, 2017. This process yielded great results. I would like to see it continued with more spaces identified along with photos and commentary to incorporate in the West Campus Village ongoing design conversation. I've attached that list after the Benchmarking Report amenities material immediately following.

From the Benchmarking Report:

Aspects Recommended for Inclusion in the West Campus Village

- The notable organizing principle observed is that of a somewhat self-contained village with all aspects present: outdoor amenities, academic space, offices, retail, recreational, and multipurpose residential. A major objective is that the West Campus Village be a destination in itself. Hence it will need to offer many of the features of other parts of the MIT campus and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Include space for conventional student union or campus center facilities, mirroring Walker Memorial and Stratton. The space need not be a standalone building and its functions might well be distributed throughout the Village.
- Consider multipurpose residential structures resembling the classic Back Bay form, desirable for its density and flexibility, with welcoming building facades and multiple entrances to what can be boutique hotels, B&Bs, service flats, offices, retail, classrooms, meeting spaces, apartments, and multiple sizes of FSILG residences.
- Other forms of equivalent density are semi-detached buildings in quadrangles or in single sided or double sided rows, with walk street or promenades with limited vehicle access.
- Parking can serve the entire village with the row house format providing the flexibility for three-deep parking in the style of the Back Bay.
- Encourage diversity in the Village with housing for graduate students with a branch of the Thirsty Ear. Provide apartments, studio and larger, for faculty in residence, visiting scholars and dignitaries, and summer programs. Apartments with four single bedrooms appear to be a design center in new construction. Think four season use with FSILG residents present in the summer, housing for high school students in summer programs, and residential executive and continuing education programs. Hotel type facilities and design enable conferences, higher end

dining, overnight accommodation for faculty in our blizzards, and flexible meeting spaces. FSILG spaces need not be restricted to one style or size. The MIT community is distinguished by variety and innovation and all that can be here. Houses elsewhere vary in size from four beds upward and flexibility in capacity is managed by a variety of techniques, some resembling our own annex practice.

- Unhoused groups elsewhere typically have small suites for meetings and study, sometimes with a small number of beds. Private spaces for remote FSILGs can serve as an on-campus presence and smaller bed counts can serve nascent colonies, affinity groups, and as annexes. Equivalents to small village cottages can be had with separate entrances to a larger building with pooled flexible space. Reconfigurable spaces can serve one larger group or two smaller groups with a division of beds by floor.
- Outdoor space can aim to defy the weather with picnic tables, three-season outdoor cafés, glass structures, water features like programmable fountains, outdoor movie viewing, basketball, volleyball, badminton, bocce, and any other court. Whatever is done originally will be redone over the years as the Village takes on the preferences of its inhabitants. Aim for a neighborhood walkable for pleasure, rife with front porches.
- The pleasant aspect of Greek housing is the home-like feeling with small parlors and no institutional lounges resembling those at airports. Many houses started as large private homes at the upper end of the scale with higher ceilings, brick, wood, fireplaces, and a variety of room shapes and sizes. These attributes are in the best new construction, with the student resident experience firmly in mind.
- Greek Village projects elsewhere engaged design consultants early and throughout the process. Experts are out there and should be found and engaged. On a number of points we felt we needed architectural or other expert advice to assess examples we found, whether for feasibility, expense, ADA requirements, or guidelines on sizing spaces. Example: we were advised to use standard rather than custom components for future maintainability. Our interviewee gave a case of a repair necessitating a repeat of a custom fixture by the original manufacturer. A discussion among ourselves noted that Cambridge may be dictating on matters of bicycle parking.
- Communication and conversation should be frequent, transparent, and ongoing as we proceed, engaging more and more of the community.

Summary of important points:

- Row houses in the Back Bay arrangement for groups preferring them.
- Smaller residential units with separate entrances in a larger structure.
- Shared elevators, mechanical systems, and dining facilities when appropriate
- Graduate student housing aimed at FSILG alumni who remain engaged.

- Boutique hotel or inn for visiting alumni, dignitaries, or guests of the community.
- Housing for faculty, visiting or otherwise, wishing to be active in our community.
- Larger FSILG houses with commercial kitchens and full in-house dining.
- Community dining facility of notable quality suitable for campus wide events.
- Dedicated lounge and study areas for unhoused and off-campus FSILGs.
- Larger residential facility for pooled FSILG use for overflow or colonies.
- Provision for colonies, affinity groups, living-learning groups, theme groups, etc.
- Flexibility in facility size and mobility among them.
- Classrooms, seminar rooms, study rooms, meeting rooms, social rooms.
- Retail: convenience store, late-night dining, entertainment, Thirsty Ear, more.
- Offices for student organizations and MIT faculty, staff, and support services.
- Athletic and recreation space: gym, steam, sauna, billiards, media room.
- Flexible space for uses of which we are not yet aware.
- Design for flexibility, maintainability, reconfigurability, and repurposing.

Topics for Discussion and Incorporation in the Planning and Design Process

Neighborhood:

Streetscape

Mixed Use

Sidewalk café, Late night food, Pub, Food Trucks, Entertainment

Retail, Convenience store,

Parking, Bicycles, Shuttle

Movies-indoor/outdoor

Promenade, Water feature, Floodable skating place

Toast to Tech venue

Village:

Residents: faculty, staff, graduate students, FSILG, affinity, de novo, learning

Buildings:

Multipurpose

Greek Housing

Flexible Housing

Media rooms

Front porches, Roof decks, Patios, Balconies

Apartments, studio and larger

Student organization offices

Classrooms

Group study rooms

Recreation

Storage Space

Meeting Space

Room Features:

Reconfigurability

Multiple room sizes

High quality finish

Moveable Furniture

Soundproof, windows that open, thermostats, decoratable, high ceilings, flexible

From the Student Design Workshop: Jan 21, 2017

Tom Stohlman asked the participants what spaces they liked and a diverse and creative list emerged:

Zesiger Center

Central lounge in Baker House

Maker space in Theta Delta Chi basement

Living lounges at Simmons

Margaret Cheney Room, MIT's Women's Community Center 3-310

Kitchens adjoining lounges on East Campus

Harold W. Pierce Boathouse

Big common room, Zeta Beta Tau

Stratton Center, lounge, couches and view

Café under atrium

Sol LeWitt floor in building 6C atrium

Large rooms for 4-6, Alpha Epsilon Pi

Glass walls in Math Department

New House kitchen areas, whole first floor

Study rooms, new Sloan building E52, second floor

McGovern BCS building 46 atrium

Sloan cafeteria and dining room

Ocean Engineering Lounge

New music practice rooms, building 14, Hayden

Front stoop, Delta Tau Delta, 416 Beacon Street

Course VI Lounge

Cypress Engineering Design Studio, windows, building 38

Hayden Library, couches with river view

Fifth floor, Stratton Student Center

McCormick Hall Penthouse

Lobby couches, first floor, Stratton Student Center