



# MIT

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MIT

## Group says MIT should double amount of graduate student housing it plans to build

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 5, 2014 02:21 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

An MIT working group recommended this week that the school build new housing for between 500 and 600 graduate students, about double the amount the institute includes in its long-term development plans.

“We believe that if these beds were available today, new students and current off-campus students would occupy them,” said the draft report released Tuesday by MIT’s Graduate Student Housing Working Group.

The report also calls on MIT to improve existing housing facilities and to create 400 additional beds to accommodate “swing-space” needs over the next decade while the renovation projects are ongoing. Those 400 beds should then be converted into graduate housing once the renovations are complete, the report said.

For years, residents and some professors have urged the institute to house more – ideally all – of its students, whether through new construction, converting existing residential buildings into student housing or other means. Doing so, they have said, would help reduce the heavy demand and high prices for rental housing in the neighborhood.

In 1960, an MIT committee recommended that the institute try to house half of its graduate students, according to the working group’s draft report.

But today, only about 38 percent of the 6,500-plus graduates students at MIT are housed by the institute. The rest live off campus, and the majority off the off-campus graduate students reside in Cambridge.


The draft report released this week said the working group found there is “significant demand for on-campus graduate housing.”

And, “In the Cambridge housing market, rents have been increasing steeply, condo conversions have been reducing the supply of affordable housing, and new housing construction consists mostly of luxury units,” the report said. “The 62 percent of MIT graduate students living off campus will likely be squeezed further by these trends. MIT cannot rely on the market to provide affordable housing as it has in the past.”

The group said that about 30 percent of students choose to live off campus “because of price, and that students are already paying about half of their income for housing.”

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“Our charge does not include attention to postdoctoral fellows, and we did not assess their needs, but we do note that this staff population has grown dramatically, and that they rent in the same off-campus market as our graduate students,” the report added.

In a [letter](#) to the campus Tuesday, MIT provost Martin Schmidt said the he, Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart and executive vice president and treasurer Israel Ruiz will provide a formal response to the working group’s recommendations after the group issues its final report later this year.

“Many dynamic factors and pressures influence the topic of graduate student housing and serve to make this a complex matter,” Schmidt said. “I greatly appreciate the thoroughness that is evident in this analysis and would like to express my gratitude to each individual who served on, or supported, the working group.”

The working group [formed](#) last spring, shortly after MIT [announced changes](#) to its proposal – which was first introduced in 2011 – to redevelop 26-acres of its property in Kendall Square.

In April, the Cambridge City Council [approved](#) those changes, which altered zoning rules to allow buildings in parts of Kendall Square to be more than twice as tall more than double the maximum height for buildings in parts of Kendall Square and on MIT’s east campus.

MIT has said that the zoning changes will allow it to build more than 2 million square feet of office, lab, retail, housing, and academic space on land now used as parking lots.

The [massive redevelopment plan](#), which calls for up to 300 housing units, has come under fire by neighbors who say the plan does not include enough new graduate student housing.

The institute recently [selected an urban-design team](#) to help it complete the planning process for the development.

In the draft report released this week, the working group said that the number of graduate students at MIT is “not likely to increase or decrease significantly in the next decade. Reliance on postdoctoral staff has grown in recent years, a trend that may continue.”

The report suggests MIT build housing for between 500 and 600 students.

“Rather than building a traditional dorm, we recommend that MIT construct buildings that could house student families as well as single students,” the report said.

“Apartments could include “micro units,” studios, and multiple-bedroom suites. A two-bedroom apartment, for example, could house a family one year and two unmarried roommates the next.”

The group also recommends that MIT renovate or otherwise improve existing housing facilities.

And, the group called on MIT to build 400 more beds to be used as “swing-space” over the next decade while other facilities are renovated. After the renovations are completed, MIT should then convert those 400 beds into graduate student housing, the report said.

The group offered a number of options to create the “swing-space” housing – partnering with developers; securing long-term leases on new housing; including the space in already-planned capital renewal in graduate housing; and incorporating the space into nonresidential buildings on campus.

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