

“... this previous feasibility study was halted because of lack of possibilities for housing location . . .”



“... MIT will make land available and maybe some infrastructure . . .”

Providing homes not for FSILGs (Fraternities, Sororities and Independent Living Groups)

FSILG Appeal

Since the establishment of the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi in 1882, MIT's fraternity, sorority, and independent living group (FSILG) system has played an important role in the MIT residence program. Like dormitories, FSILGs offer the social benefits of sharing accommodations with other students. However, they do so in a congregate, student-run structure that appeals to many undergraduates who do not want to live on campus, or in housing operated and controlled by MIT. FSILGs are currently located throughout Cambridge, as well as in Boston's Back Bay and Kenmore neighborhoods.

The Problem

The 36 houses that make up the FSILG system have the capacity to house over 1400 undergraduate students -- 35% of MIT's undergraduate population. Were every current FSILG filled to capacity, MIT would have excess undergraduate dormitory space. However, FSILGs have witnessed dramatically reduced enrollment in recent years, largely due to MIT's decision to house all freshmen on campus in dormitories and the subsequent opening of Simmons Hall in 2002.

The decline in FSILG population could have dramatic consequences for FSILGs, which require membership sufficient to cover the costs associated with their houses.

A Potential Solution: FSILGs on MIT land

One possibility that has received recent attention in local media would involve constructing new, and probably smaller, houses for FSILGs in Cambridge near the MIT campus. Under this program, an FSILG in dire economic condition could sell its current house, receive land donated by MIT near the campus, and construct a new, attractive house using the money collected on the sale of the old FSILG and its associated land.

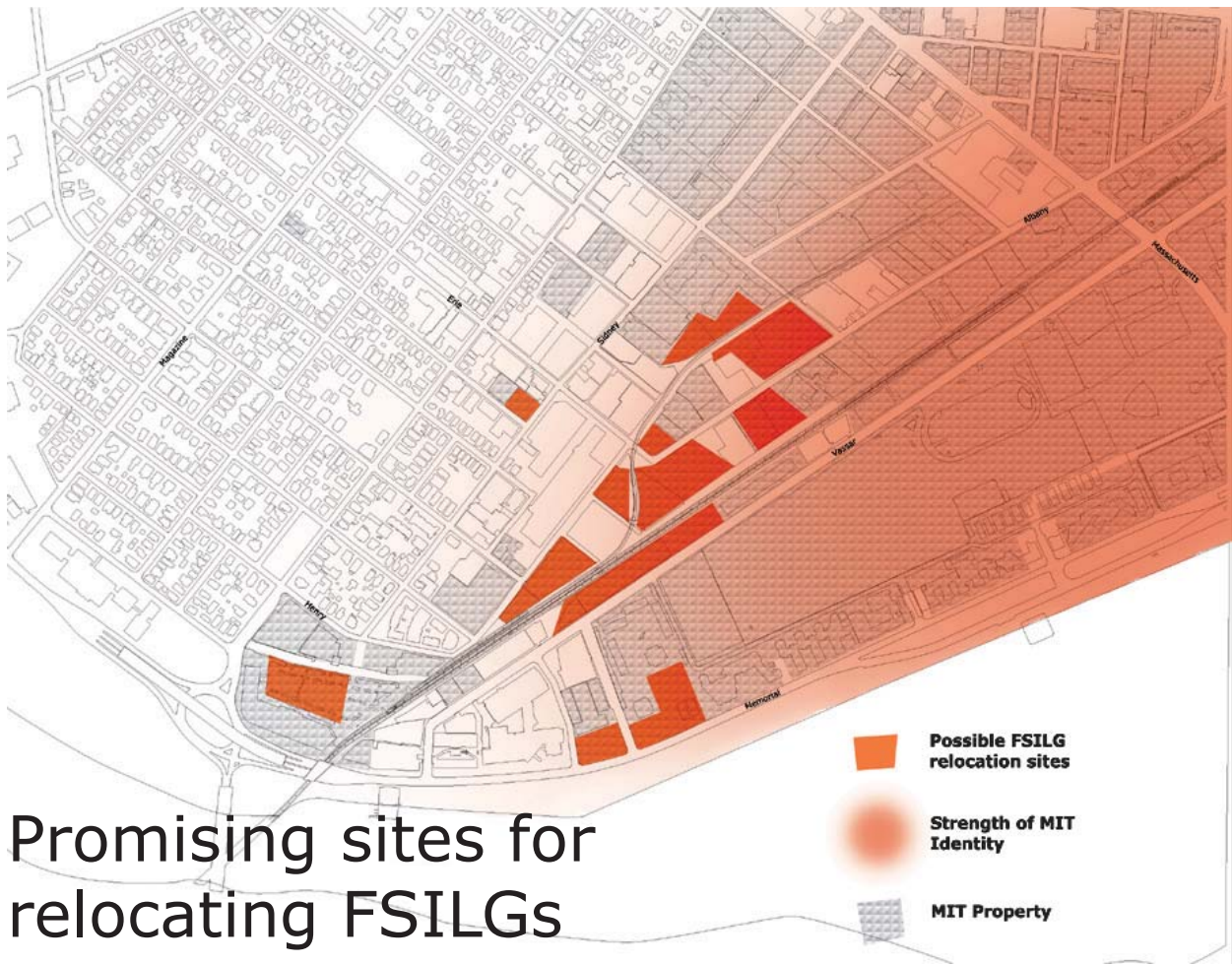
In 1999, a group of FSILGs united to form the FSILG Complex Feasibility Study Team. Together they examined the possibility of constructing a block of FSILGs on MIT property. They found it could make a great deal of sense financially (assuming MIT-donated land) because sale prices of the old houses would cover the majority of construction costs. Any excesses would likely have to be shared by the FSILGs and MIT.

Benefits for MIT

By reducing the need for additional undergraduate dormitories, MIT would benefit from the consolidation of FSILGs onto MIT-donated land. The cost of such an approach would also be minimal, as MIT would need to pay for neither the construction nor the management of FSILG houses. Finally, this approach would help to achieve MIT's goal of providing its students with housing at rates more affordable than those within the broader Boston-area housing market.

Benefits for FSILGs

For FSILGs, this proposal represents the lesser of two evils. One of the central themes of the FSILG experience is the opportunity to live off-campus and free of MIT oversight. Consequently, FSILGs may initially be slow to embrace the idea of living on MIT land. However, given economic realities, some FSILGs may soon be forced to choose one of two alternatives: moving into a brand new structure in Cambridge (with no net financial loss) or ceasing to operate. Given this choice, the former seems far more appealing than the latter.



Promising sites for relocating FSILGs

near MIT (Independent Living Groups)

The question of location

Issues to consider

There are a number of issues to consider in selecting locations for new FSILGs. A new location or set of locations for FSILGs should not cause residents of the houses to feel as though they live directly on the MIT campus. They should also not significantly affect the makeup and feel of the adjacent Cambridgeport neighborhood. This is not to suggest that FSILG houses can not be moved to the neighborhood, but that it would be inappropriate to relocate 36 FSILGs in Cambridgeport in one fell swoop. In keeping with the idea that FSILGs should provide an alternative to dormitory style housing, they should not be collected in dormitory-like structures. Finally, the housing should also be designed to provide for and encourage social interaction.

Site Choice Criteria

In recognition of these issues, the following criteria should be considered in selecting sites for new FSILGs:

> **Maintain FSILG identity.** FSILG residents have consciously chosen to live off-campus. Consequently, any relocation of FSILGs should take place in locations that are not strongly identified as part of the MIT campus.

> **Minimize intrusion on the neighborhood.** Surrounding neighborhood residents could well be resentful of the "intrusion" of fraternities and other independent living groups into their midst. To minimize these concerns, MIT should use its own land, rather than purchasing additional neighborhood property. After some time, and with successful integration of FSILGs on MIT land working as a reference model, more aggressive real estate moves could be acceptable to the neighborhood, and FSILGs could be welcomed. This type of program could also be viewed in a positive light by Cambridgeport residents after successfully instituting the shared housing plan described in the previous section.

> **Select sites that allow for rowhouse configurations.** There are a number of benefits that can be gained through the use of a rowhouse configuration in constructing new FSILG houses. Rowhouse construction offers economies of scale in the construction process and material purchases, while allowing each house to have its own separate physical identity. A rowhouse configuration can also provide opportunities for social integration through the use of shared semi-public spaces for chance meetings and informal interactions. To harness these benefits, MIT should limit its site candidates to those that can accommodate rowhouses.

> **Consider the Urban Ring.** When the urban ring is finally in place in Cambridgeport, the Fort Washington area will experience dramatic real estate value increases. Since housing is difficult to convert to other uses, these prime target sites are probably only useful for housing in the long term as mixed use configurations.

FSILG capacity

Residence	Type	Capacity
Alpha Chi Omega	Sorority	24
Alpha Delta Phi	Fraternity	58
Alpha Epsilon Pi	Fraternity	48
Alpha Phi	Sorority	63
Alpha Tau Omega	Fraternity	49
Beta Theta Pi	Fraternity	45
Chi Phi	Fraternity	42
Delta Kappa Epsilon	Fraternity	37
Delta Tau Delta	Fraternity	43
Delta Upsilon	Fraternity	42
Epsilon Theta	Fraternity	33
Fenway House	Coop	24
Kappa Sigma	Fraternity	49
Lambda Chi Alpha	Fraternity	50
Nu Delta	Fraternity	28
Delta Psi	Fraternity	50
Phi Beta Epsilon	Fraternity	48
Phi Delta Theta	Fraternity	38
Phi Kappa Sigma	Fraternity	23
Phi Kappa Theta	Fraternity	34
Phi Sigma Kappa	Fraternity	52
Phi Lambda Pi	Fraternity	42
pika	Fraternity	33
Sigma Chi	Fraternity	32
Sigma Kappa	Sorority	24
Sigma Nu	Fraternity	22
Sigma Phi Epsilon	Fraternity	65
Student House	Coop	30
Tau Epsilon Phi	Fraternity	36
Theta Chi	Fraternity	36
Theta Delta Chi	Fraternity	45
Theta Xi	Fraternity	40
W.I.L.G.	Coop	48
Zeta Beta Tau	Fraternity	52
Zeta Psi	Fraternity	50
Total		1435

The total number of MIT undergraduate students in 2003/04 is **4178**

The total capacity of MIT undergraduate dorms plus FSILGs without crowding is roughly **4368**

The FSILG system can hold over **1400** students

Most houses accommodate **30 to 50** students

With FSILGs filled to capacity, MIT's undergraduate dormitories would have **190 vacancies**.

However, if MIT does decide to house all undergraduates in MIT affiliated housing, supporting and expanding the FSILG system through the program explained here could be a cost-effective way to meet this goal

With FSILGs filled to capacity, MIT's undergraduate dormitories would incur **190 vacancies**.

MIT Dormitory capacity

Residence	Type	Capacity
Baker	Dormitory	336
Bexley	Dormitory	120
Burton-Conner	Dormitory	344
East Campus	Dormitory	362
Macgregor	Dormitory	326
McCormick	Dormitory	244
New House	Dormitory	290
Random Hall	Dormitory	93
Senior House	Dormitory	146
500 Memorial	Dormitory	352
Simmons	Dormitory	320
Totals		2933