MIT unveiled major housing plans
Proposes 1600 new units for Cambridge residents

By Bob Dennis and Steve Kalman

In a move of major initiative aimed at alleviating the city's housing crisis, MIT today announced a proposed housing program of 1600 new housing units in Cambridge plus new accommodations on campus for about 800 students.

It is hoped that opportunities for student involvement in the program will be utilized, but the exact nature of opportunities for students not yet been determined. Any student participation, like all phases of the proposed program, will be subject to approval by the residents of the organization in which the development will take place.

Of the 1600 units of off-campus housing in the community, about 750 would be available for low-to-moderate income persons. These would be subsidized under various federal and state programs. The other 850 units would serve other Cambridge residents and MIT personnel at the lowest feasible market rate. If federal, state, and private funding sources provide the appropriate support, the units could be constructed within the next six to eight years.

Most of the land being considered for housing sites is currently lying vacant or is underdeveloped industrially and/or commercially.

For purposes of the 1600 units, the residential buildings would be either eight- or 12-story structures, with MIT retaining an interest in the financial or other control of the properties.

The tentative housing plan for the use of the sites which MIT has either already acquired or has leased includes a five-story parcel of land located in various areas of the city of Cambridge:

1. The North Cambridge site located near Cambridge Avenue was originally announced by MIT on Sept. 13, 1968, as the site of a new building for liberal arts programs. This development includes five parcels of land located in various areas of the city of Cambridge.

2. The Portland Street site, in East Cambridge near the railroad tracks, will provide low-income families with 200 units for low-income families.

3. The MIT research and development at the U.S. Army Ordinance Center (Southeast Cambridge) will allow for 200 units for low-income families and elderly and would be financed and planned in a manner consistent with the General Site stipulation.

4. The Massachusetts Avenue development, near the old East Theater, will provide for 200 units for families, students, staff, and others at market rents, because land costs in this area are too high to permit rent subsidies. A combination of commercial facilities and 210 dwelling units are contemplated.

5. The Porter Street site, in East Cambridge near the railroad tracks, will provide such facilities as a three-story building with 150 units for low-rent occupants, and a mixed-income apartment.

The program is particularly novel in that it will involve the direct cooperation of the Redundancy Authority, at least three citizens' groups, and the MIT program planners.

Among the various innovative federal programs which will hopefully be utilized in the development of the five Cambridge sites, the "Turnkey" program will be used for the East St. and Gees St. sites. Under this program, a private developer would independently plan and construct the buildings and then convey them to the Cambridge Housing Authority with financing provided by HUD through the Housing Assistance Administration. The program is designed to cut red tape, encourage private enterprise, and speed up the overall process.

With the possible exception of the Danforth and Portland St. sites, the new housing sites are expected to contain either public housing facilities or co-operative structures, in which occupants would be share-holders in a cooperative that would own the property and who would gradually transfer the benefits of owner-occupied housing to their residents.

As an immediate step to aid families suffering from the rent/financing crisis, MIT has set a goal of having 50 units of off-campus housing inventory of 206 units accepted into the Leased Housing Program, a federal program which effectively provides rent supplements to eligible families and the elderly.

Some novel concepts in the overall program include the direct contact and involvement of neighborhood, OEO-funded planning teams of citizens; working with the local Housing and Redevelopment Authorities to plan and develop specific sites; original implementation of innovative or large-scale use of federal supplement or loan programs; and the encouragement of students to work on various action groups, and who described himself as being basically in sympathy with the MIT position, added that he and Albert would work together as equals. He closed with a call for "cooperation from the governor and management to the student body." Miss Wattel detailed some

General Assembly opens for business

The first General Assembly meeting opened on Monday night to the spirit that the letter of the new student government constitution, but completed its business relatively promptly and succeeded in promoting a number of amendments to the constitution, and the active initiation of several projects.

Three additional candidates were elected to the Executive Committee, which currently consists of UAW Mit Alston, UAW Mit Alston, and Secretary-General Karen Wartel. The new members are: Steve Ehmann, who has been active in student government reform and took what might be called a "moderate" stance in his address to the body; Stan Pantela, who has worked on various action groups and who described himself as being basically in sympathy with the MIT position, added that he and Albert would work together as equals. He closed with a call for "cooperation from the governor and management to the student body."