MIT to build 684 units for elderly

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units will constitute a building on Hamilton Street in the Cambridge Extension, with two other units in the neighborhood, which will be open to all residents of MIT.

In addition to these units for the elderly, MIT had hoped to build 14 townhouses for families across the street from its Hamilton Street site. This proposal had to be abandoned during the negotiations with the Housing Authority.

MIT has undertaken the development on a non-profit and non-loss basis, and the agreement calls for the Institute to be reimbursed for $17,092,423, which is the sum it expects to advance for site acquisition, improvements, construction, and other development expenses on the three sites.

Housing analysis

By Bob Dennis

On November 5, 1968, in an issue in which The Tech endorses John F. Kennedy for President as the “least objectionable” of the candidates, this reporter began a four-part series in this newspaper on “The Cambridge Housing Crisis.”

Six months later, while the news scene was being dominated by the “bomb” at Harvard, I co-authored a special edition housing article which was the core of a “Major Housing Plans.” Today, the country is still in a rather skewed perspective, and the Cambridge housing crisis is far from solved, but I can leave MIT and the Tech — with the satisfaction of being able to report that MIT is progressing admirably on its ambitious housing program in Cambridge.

In its April, 1969, press conference that announced its housing program, MIT stressed that its proposal of 1600 units on five sites in Cambridge was not a definitive commitment but “an offer.” Co-operation and approval would have to be obtained from the city government and from the neighborhood groups that were involved, even before the problem of obtaining financial commitments from the federal government.

Many were cynical and suspicious of the program at the outset, and one of the Institute’s most difficult tasks has been to work within an environment that was initially hostile to due to a long-standing and inherent distrust of the large universities.

Nevertheless, MIT — led by President Killian, by Antony Hersey and his staff in the Institute Real Estate Office — has worked diligently over the past two years to overcome the difficult and sensitive problems that had to be confronted, and it is now apparent that at least a substantial portion of the original plans will be coming to fruition in the foreseeable future.

MIT is certainly to be commended for the successes achieved to date in its courageous departure from its ivory tower and its determined effort to become a major constructive force in the Cambridge community.

Construction in full

Construction is expected to begin this fall on the three sites, with completion of the development anticipated about the end of 1972. This would result in a delay of only a few months out of MIT’s original timetable, with the short lag largely due to matters beyond MIT’s control in the process of getting the necessary approvals.

Architectural plans for the sites are being completed by Benjamin Thompson and Associates of Cambridge. Neighborhood meetings are still going on to examine these plans, and the Institute Real Estate Office reports that there have been no major disagreements to date.

Under the Turnkey Program, rents for the completed units will not exceed 25% of the inhabitants’ incomes, and the maximum income permitted for those elderly who apply will be $4400.

Of the other two sites in MIT’s housing program, 500 units of non-subsidized housing (with a substantial number of these expected to go to MIT staff and faculty) are being developed in Lowell Street and Massachusetts Avenue, and MIT has just begun planning meetings with neighborhood groups relative to the Portland Street site, which may be the largest of all of MIT’s developments.

Purpose

In announcing the program more than two years ago, Chairman Killian had noted its unprecedented nature: “The proposal we make represents an effort to find ways for an educational institution, without diverting its central academic function, to take initiative in assisting the community in meeting critical housing needs.”

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