MIT still trying to sell Northgate

By Eileen Manig

Acknowledging that the Northgate apartments have become a severe economic liability, MIT officials are currently trying to divest the Institute of these properties.

Northgate is a series of apartments in Cambridge which were originally purchased by MIT in an effort to help fill the need for off-campus housing for faculty and staff members.

However, these apartments were not of sufficiently high quality to attract faculty and teaching staff members, and never became a valuable housing resource for MIT, according to Kenneth R. Wadleigh '43, Vice President of the Graduate School and a member of the Board of Directors of Northgate.

The tenants now at Northgate are comprised of MIT students, personnel, and persons not affiliated with MIT.

The apartments have not been much of an alternative for students either, however, because they are too expensive. According to Wadleigh, "inflation increased at a much higher rate than the students' incomes." Student tenants are not eligible for the benefits of rent control, Wadleigh said, while persons not affiliated with MIT are eligible. Because of this, MIT was "forced into the role of landlord" and was not able to maintain operations without raising the students' rents, he added. Wadleigh recalls that this was not a popular measure and resulted in a number of lawsuits.

Northgate had been planned to eventually become a fairly extensive group of apartments, but these plans never really got off the ground, Wadleigh said. The only properties in the project purchased by MIT were older houses and houses already under construction. Plans were made for building some new apartments, but these were never carried out.

Wadleigh sees the project as a "good idea that went awry" due to a variety of reasons, the majority of which were beyond the Institute's control.

About 16 per cent of the properties have already been sold. Wadleigh could not say when the sales will be completed.

It did say that "inflation continues, rent control has not yet been repealed, and there is still no answer to the housing shortage for faculty, staff, and graduate students."

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