MIT chooses developer for Simplex site

Neighbors say plan lacks housing

By Bart S. Kelzki

MIT announced a final agreement with Forest City Enterprises Inc. of Cleveland last week to develop 15 acres of Cambridgeport known as the Simplex site.

Forest City's preliminary proposal includes several office buildings, retail stores and a convention center, and housing on the site's perimeter, according to Walter L. Miller, assistant to the president and the chairman of the MIT Corporation.

Bill Noble, a Cambridgeport resident and self-described neighborhood activist, claims the development plan does not provide sufficient housing affordable to city residents with low to medium incomes.

The agreement with Forest City follows the Institute's support of a petition submitted to the Cambridge City Council to suggest uses of the land. The Cambridge Ward 5 Democratic Committee had endorsed the petition for "preserving and redeveloping the old Simplex property."

The City Council is expected to vote on that recommendation, known as the Caragianes petition, at its Oct. 31 meeting. The council has not approved any of the 10 petitions previously submitted.

Representatives of Cambridgeport residents submitted three of those petitions, each requesting the developer to provide 350 to 400 housing units, 30 percent of which should be affordable for people with low to medium incomes, Noble said.

The Caragianes petition requests housing units per 1000 square feet of office space, up to 125 units. 10 percent of those units would be priced for low to medium income residents.

Forest City will not begin construction for at least two years, Miller said. The developer will first study the market for retail and office space and a hotel in Cambridgeport.

The project may also include a multi-unit apartment building on Massachusetts Avenue, he said. Construction would likely take a decade or more.

History of Simplex property

- 1970: MIT buys 19 acres of property owned by the Simplex Wire and Cable Company for $570,000 an acre, and begins to acquire adjoining lots.
- 1980: Neighborhood protest forces MIT to agree not to buy any more land in the area.
- March 1982: MIT calls for proposals to develop the Simplex site. Its primary objectives, the Institute says, are to generate property, create employment opportunities, and, where permitted, provide new housing.
- May 1982: Five real-estate developers submit preliminary proposals.
- November 1982: A group of residents near the Simplex area submits a petition to the Cambridge City Council to ensure that buildings within the Simplex area will be used only for non-academic purposes. The petition is not approved.

Student activities must pay MIT employee benefits fee

By Thomas Huang

All student activities which employ students must contribute an amount equal to 33.9 percent of their payroll to MIT's employee benefit program, according to John A. Currie, director of finance.

John Mark Johnston '84, chairman of the Student Center Committee, expressed reluctance to pay the surcharge at a meeting Sunday night, because none of the workers in the committee's 24-hour coffeehouse will receive any part of the benefits.

Annual ball is not held due to lack of interest

By Bart S. Kelzski

The MIT Social Council cancelled its annual Homecoming Ball scheduled for last Saturday night because it had sold only 20 tickets as of Thursday afternoon, according to Henri J. Meerman '84, Social Council chairman.

The council would have needed 260 tickets to the event in Memorial, at $7.50 each, to stay within the $2,000 budget appropriated by the Undergraduate Association Finance Board for the weekend, Meerman said.

The Social Council instead held a party in the mezzanine lounge of the Student Center with champagne and refreshments, featuring one of the two bands scheduled for the ball. The alternative event cost less than $200, he said.

Expenses for the Homecoming Ball would have included $1300 for refreshments, $1350 for decorations, and at least $500 for champagne.

Building 39 rebuilt as VLSI test lab

By John F. Pitrelli

The renovation of Building 39, the new Microsystems Technology Research Laboratories, should be completed on schedule by September 1984, according to Anthony Colozzi, administrative officer for the laboratory.