

August 14, 2017

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mayor Simmons, Vice Mayor McGovern and Councillors Carlone, Cheung, Devereux, Kelley, Maher, Mazen and Toomey:

On behalf of the concerned undersigned MIT graduate students and community members, we would like to submit the attached zoning amendment petition for your review. This amendment would modify the new proposed PUD-7 to add a requirement that graduate student housing be developed in conjunction with the parcel's commercial uses.

Today, only 36% of MIT graduate students are housed on campus, forcing a majority of students to compete with low-to-middle income families in Cambridge and surrounding housing markets. This extra demand for private market housing is contributing to the affordability crisis in Cambridge, which is making housing less affordable for the Cambridge community, including those graduate students who live off campus. According to a 2014 cost of living analysis by the MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC), the average MIT grad student spends 52% of his or her income on housing.

Numerous graduate students, along with other Cambridge community members, have voiced their concerns about the need for more graduate student housing at an affordable rate. This spring, 290 graduate students signed a petition calling for the provision of more graduate housing as part of the proposed PUD-7 redevelopment.

Building on these concerns, over 1500 graduate students (23% of our graduate student body), distributed across living situations and degree programs, participated in a GSC-administered survey about the need for on-campus housing last July. This survey showed that 37% of graduate students who preferred to live in on-campus single housing and 62% of graduate students who preferred to live in on-campus family housing had to live off campus instead during the 2016-2017 academic year. The combined results of this survey indicate that there exists demand for an additional 1100 on-campus dwelling units for single graduate students and an additional 700 on-campus dwelling units for students with families.

Key elements from the zoning amendment include:

- A requirement to build new graduate student housing units in conjunction with the development of commercial uses in the proposed PUD-7 district.
- A requirement to develop a phasing plan to implement the schedule for graduate housing development.

We view this petition as the beginning of a conversation to help solve this issue, and we hope that the Cambridge City Council and all other relevant stakeholders will join us in developing a responsible and neighborly solution for both graduate students and the larger Cambridge community.

Thank you for your consideration.