

Office of Campus Planning

Reporting within the Office of the Executive Vice President and Treasurer, the [Office of Campus Planning \(OCP\)](#) is MIT's physical campus planning resource. OCP's team (planners, architects, landscape architects, and information specialists) leads planning and design initiatives that support the Institute's mission and advance the physical evolution of the campus. In planning the campus, OCP collaborates extensively with offices and departments across the Institute, including the Office of the Associate Provost, the [Department of Facilities](#), the [Office of Sustainability](#), and MIT's Investment Management Company, among others.

Led by Jon Alvarez, who joined MIT in July 2017 as the director of campus planning, OCP made a formative organizational change this year. OCP incorporated the Facility Information Systems (FIS) group, which is responsible for managing the information associated with MIT's physical environment, including space, building, archival, and geographical data. The integration of FIS with OCP brings together a full spectrum of information and knowledge about the physical campus within one organization, positioning OCP to support strategic planning efforts across the campus. OCP now has the past captured in its archives, present data and studies collected in its data systems, and future opportunities envisioned through planning activities.

Architecture and Capital Projects

Campus Planning is responsible for managing the architect selection process for MIT's major capital projects and for leading the concept development phase for these projects. This year marked active progress in the advancement of the Institute's capital plan, with the initiation of architect selection for the Metropolitan Warehouse project, the music building, the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing, and an addition to Building 54. The architect selection process for these projects underpins MIT's tradition of bringing the world's foremost architectural designers to the campus.

As of the end of this reporting cycle, the architect selection processes for the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing and the addition to Building 54 are continuing. Working with Campus Construction, OCP staff are in the process of guiding the Metropolitan Warehouse project and music building through the development of their initial designs.

OCP staff also guided the designer selection and initial project phases for the renovations of Hayden Library (Building 14), Pierce Boathouse (Building W8), Burton-Conner House (Building W51) and the Newman Laboratory in Building 3. The Burton-Conner House is scheduled for completion in 2022; the other projects are scheduled for completion in 2020.

Campus Planning

In 2018, OCP worked with the Institute's Planning Committee for Renovation and Space Planning and its subcommittees to investigate near-term parking needs and the future evolution of the west and northwest campus. Consideration of replacement parking central to campus as part of the music building project emerged from this evaluation.

Alternative use scenarios for the western edge of campus, the West Vertex, received preliminary review from leadership. Building on the evaluation of this western edge, OCP is initiating an urban design study to generate guiding principles that will inform the campus character of this area as it is developed over time.

Housing Planning

Housing has been a major focus of OCP this past year. Office staff have worked closely with the Office of the Chancellor, the Division of Student Life, and the Department of Facilities on projects involving undergraduate residences, graduate housing, and houses for MIT's fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups (FSILGs).

For undergraduate residences, the focus has been on the sequencing of renovations, considering renovation scale, bed count, and cost implications. For graduate housing, OCP's primary focus has been on planning for a new 500-bed graduate student residence to which MIT committed as part of the successful rezoning proposal for the John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center site. To advance this project, OCP conducted siting and massing analyses, developed program scenarios, and investigated project costs as well as alternative development models.

In support of a Division of Student Life (DSL) and alumni initiative, with involvement from the MIT Investment Management Company, the Associate Provost's Office, and others, OCP evaluated the potential for a "village" of FSILG communities on the site currently occupied by West Lot. The analysis included development capacity, massing, and approximate bed counts. In spring 2019, it was decided not to pursue the development of the FSILG west campus village at this time.

Campus Wayfinding and Identity Signage

The Office of Campus Planning is leading the development of the Institute's campus-wide wayfinding signage program, initiated to identify and brand MIT at the new Kendall Square gateway as well as to orient and guide visitors and members of the MIT community around the campus. The process has engaged with faculty, students, staff, and alumni to develop content and technical criteria. Five signage components will make up the overall wayfinding system, identifying campus gateways and buildings, providing information about the campus, orienting pedestrians within a district, and guiding them through building interiors. The final design of these components is in process, with initial signage installation scheduled for 2020–2021.

Campus Bicycle Infrastructure

In summer 2018, OCP applied to the national Bicycle Friendly University program; MIT was awarded a Silver Level designation. The program is sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists and nearly 200 schools are recognized as bicycle friendly, including Harvard University, Boston University, and Tufts University. The program assesses all aspects of a campus's bicycle infrastructure and policies. To complete the application, OCP staff conducted a campus survey and collected data from several areas of the Institute, including Parking and Transportation (in the Department of Facilities), student cycling clubs, MIT's Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DAPER), and MIT Police.

Landscape Architecture

OCP staff members continued their work on campus site systems and the stewardship, renewal, and sustainability of the campus landscape. To undertake this work, the team engages in a range of activities—managing small and large landscape projects, providing input on building project landscapes, coordinating with MIT Grounds Services, advising on the construction logistics for site improvements, and siting elements within the landscape for donor recognition as well as for other projects and programs.

This year marked the opening of a significant, transformative landscape at the heart of the campus: the North Corridor. The Office of Campus Planning led the effort to convert the former service drive between buildings 31, 24, 13, and MIT.nano into an inviting, accessible, and pedestrian-friendly campus connector, which opened to the community in fall 2018. The project incorporated landscape infrastructure—including planting beds and trees—to decrease storm runoff, store and cleanse water, capture carbon, and provide shade and cooling. The design further integrated stormwater management methods and systems, using trench drains and distribution piping, to form a landscape filter. The engineered landscape received a 2019 Engineering Excellence Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies.

Collaborating with Campus Construction and Grounds Services, among other MIT groups, the Office of Campus Planning played a pivotal role in shaping many of the new and planned landscapes on campus.

- Campus Planning worked with the Fish Family Foundation on the siting of a grove of cherry trees, the final location being the lawn between the Stratton Student Center and Massachusetts Avenue. The planting of the five cherry trees was completed in June 2019 and the dedication is scheduled for early fall.
- Staff worked with DAPER to renovate the twelve DuPont outdoor tennis courts, which opened in the summer of 2018 with a new post-tensioned concrete playing surface, fencing, and stadium lighting.
- OCP managed the replacement of four tennis courts next to Walker Memorial Hall that had fallen into disrepair with an expansive lawn along Memorial Drive. The lawn was completed in the fall of 2018 for student recreation, campus events, and other uses.
- OCP staff worked with the City of Cambridge arborist to determine a replacement plan for the street trees along the length of Vassar Street from Massachusetts Avenue to Main Street, which are not thriving. The plan will replace the ginkgo trees with a variety of native trees, update planting soils, and improve irrigation and drainage. The design is in progress and the work is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2020.

Civic Engagement and Governance Support

Committee activity and civic engagement related to physical planning are essential parts of the work of OCP.

Civic Engagement and Liaison Activity

An OCP staff member represents MIT on the boards of the Kendall Square Association and the A Better City nonprofit organization. Office of Campus Planning staff represent MIT on several City of Cambridge committees, including the Cambridge bicycle, pedestrian, and transit committees, the Vision Zero Task Force, and the Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan Task Force.

The City of Cambridge started a major community planning process, Envision Cambridge, in 2016. Over the past several years, the Office of Campus Planning, along with the Office of Sustainability and the Office of Government and Community Relations, has participated in the Advisory Committee's work and with the economy, housing, mobility, and climate and the environment working groups. The final report of this effort was published in May 2019.

South Mass Ave

The City of Cambridge initiated the South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements Project in the summer of 2018 to improve safety for bicyclists and buses on Massachusetts Avenue from Sidney Street to Memorial Drive. The South Massachusetts Avenue corridor is a key piece of Cambridge's transportation network and an important link to the City of Boston. It is also central to MIT's campus, and OCP engaged closely with the city on this effort, participating on the project advisory board, conducting observations, and providing feedback. OCP collaborated with other MIT entities, including the Office of Government and Community Relations, MIT Police, and the Graduate Student Council on this effort. The MIT team ensured that MIT's concerns about safety, vehicular delay, and enforcement were primary considerations in this project.

Grand Junction Multiuse Path

As part of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center site agreement in 2017, MIT committed to provide easements to the City of Cambridge for a multiuse path in the portion of the Grand Junction right of way owned by the Institute, from Main Street west to the southeast corner of the land occupied by the Cambridge and Somerville Program for Alcoholism Rehabilitation facility. The City of Cambridge began design for the entire length of the pathway from the Cambridge–Somerville line to near Memorial Drive in the spring of 2019. The Office of Campus Planning is coordinating with a wide range of MIT stakeholders to provide design review to the City of Cambridge, with a concept design expected in the fall of 2019.

Permitting and Reporting

Campus Planning continues to conduct ongoing permitting activities for building, renovation, and planning projects. Notably, this year's work included handling the permitting requirements for the Central Utility Plant expansion, the new undergraduate residence on Vassar Street, and the renovation of MIT's boathouse.

Office staff prepared the annual reporting documents to the City of Cambridge. That activity included the MIT parking inventory for 2018–2019 and the 2018 dumpster permit license application. Staff also contributed to the compilation of the annual *Town Gown Report* and its presentation to the Planning Board.

Committee Support and Internal MIT Activities

OCP assists the Faculty Committee on Campus Planning through staff support, updates on emerging projects, and information on campus planning topics, as requested by the committee. OCP staff served on several Institute committees and groups, including the Committee for Renovation and Space Planning, the Transportation Committee, and the Greenhouse Gas Governance Subcommittee.

Facility Information Systems

The FIS group maintains the system of record for space accounting and manages information about MIT's physical space, buildings, and campus. The team employs information technology to assist in the management of this information, and spans the disciplines of space accounting, geographic information systems and mapping, building information and modeling, and archiving. The group further provides signage services for projects and the MIT community, ensuring they meet code requirements and follow MIT's guidelines.

Some key highlights for fiscal year 2019 include:

- Between February and June 2019, FIS staff completed the biannual field survey of more than 7 million square feet of space on campus in support of the indirect cost recovery effort of the Office of Sponsored Programs. Indirect cost recovery seeks reimbursement from the federal government for sponsored science and engineering research on campus. This space audit updates the record space data, specifically incorporating any unknown changes in the space or its use.
- After a full year of planning, packing, and preparation, the Facilities Archive moved to a new storage facility in Merrimack, NH, in February 2019. Dating back to 1911, the collection includes drawings, surveys, and documentation, and contains approximately 67,000 paper records integral to MIT's built history.
- The FIS team manages nearly 143,000 individual digital records in the Meridian database, including archival documents as well as other materials, such as space documentation, campus mapping, and surveys. Of the total digital records in Meridian, the archival documents comprise more than 131,000 records, ranging from building drawings and reports to operation and maintenance manuals.
- The FIS group processed nearly 1,400 requests from the MIT community, including:
 - 124 space planning requests (room numbering, floor plan updates, etc.)
 - 754 archives requests (project documentation and research)
 - 367 signage requests (project and department signage)
 - 127 mapping requests (overall campus mapping as well as specialty maps)
- The FIS mapping group worked on several major projects, including an update to the campus accessibility map, an inventory of indoor and outdoor bicycle racks and facilities on campus, and updated Commencement 2019 documentation and plans, including a joint effort with the Institute Affairs staff to create new plans for the annual ceremony of investiture of doctoral hoods.

Personnel and Staff Recognition

Campus Planning promoted several OCP staff members and welcomed a new member to the OCP team. The OCP team, with the incorporation of FIS, now numbers 20 staff members.

Jennifer Marshall was promoted to assistant director of campus planning. Morgan Pinney, Todd Robinson, and Melissa Shakro Stopa were promoted to senior campus planners. Vasso Mathes joined the Office of Campus Planning as a senior campus planner. Laura Tenny served on the jury for the 2019 Society for Campus and University Planning Excellence Awards. This July, she presented MIT's North Corridor project with the consultant team at the society's 2019 annual conference. Jon Alvarez served on the jury of the Boston Society of Architects 2019 Education Facilities Design Awards.

Jon Alvarez
Director