Renovation & Relocation: MIT Undergraduate Residences

How could MIT house students during the renovations of undergraduate
residences in order to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement?

by

Sarah H. Edgar

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

As MIT renovates many of its undergraduate dormitories, special attention must be paid to the fate of displaced students and communities. This thesis examines the context that necessitates renewal processes on college campuses and at MIT specifically. It connects the issue to existing displacement research from urban renewal and gentrification, as well as theories of practice for participatory planning processes. Much of the research involves interviews held with students from communities that have been displaced by recent emergencies and renovations as well as communities in buildings that are slated for future renovation. The key findings are used to form a number of recommendations for best practices in future planned displacements at MIT.

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"To make matters worse, a significant group of students has come to share… the feeling of utter powerlessness to affect even their own immediate learning environment," – Creative Renewal in a Time of Crisis: Report by the Commission on MIT Education, p. 3

"I feel like it's not that [administrators] don't care, but there's a lot of misunderstanding."
– New House resident

"My largest concern coming from…renovations is that I will lose my community. The facilities don't matter much or at all to me. But the people who live here do and I feel as if we are going to get dispersed and lose our ties." – Burton Connor resident

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

MIT is in the midst of a major building renewal initiative for its undergraduate dormitories. Most recently announced were the planed renovations of Burton Conner, set to begin in 2020, and East Campus, set for some time in the nebulous future (Shi, 2019). While these buildings are undergoing physical upgrades, the communities that usually inhabit them will need to be housed elsewhere. The purpose of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how MIT handles these sorts of displacement in order to identify key issues of relocation and make recommendations for future processes. Recent examples of these situations fall into two distinct categories: emergency crisis response and planned renovation. Of the former, the two most recent cases are the flooding of New House where a good half of the residents were subsequently housed in the Hyatt Hotel, and the fire at Random Hall where residents were moved to New House (which had been closed for the summer). Both of these cases required relocation to temporary housing lasting a few months. Examining student feedback on these experiences will offer more data on potential benefits or pitfalls of temp housing strategies. Of the latter case, the most recent examples are the recently completed renovation of New House and the ongoing planning process for the renewal of Burton Connor.

To better interpret the potential impacts of different strategies for dormitory relocation planning, this thesis will also examine the idiosyncrasies of life in different undergraduate residences. This may shed light on what displacement could mean for the diverse communities of MIT's undergraduate housing system. Certain residence halls are designated as "cook for yourself" communities with kitchens where students can prepare meals or choose to purchase a campus meal plan. Others are outfitted with dining halls and mandate that residents purchase a meal plan. Some residence halls allow students to paint murals, largely at their own discretion. Certain of these also allow residents to customize their room's flooring or build lofts. Two even allow residents to own cats, who are free to roam beyond their owner's room. The residence halls are often divided into sub-communities in a variety of ways including building floors or entries; suites of between 4 and 12 students; social lounges without particular spatial affiliation; cultural houses and living learning communities; and more. MIT currently operates a policy of charging different rents for three different "tiers" of housing, designated at the building level. Certain

residence halls house significantly greater percentages of queer students who may have unique concerns about relocation.

When planning for relocation, it may be necessary to consider outcomes on a personal level – what will happen to students who cook or to students with cats, say – as well as on a community level – will the entire dorm be housed in the same temporary area, or will floors or suites be. Finally, how will MIT charge students for their temporary housing? If the cost of living in the designated accommodations is too high, it could force students to choose between living within their budgets or their communities, potentially exacerbating the negative impacts of displacement by isolating them from support systems. This thesis will closely examine past precedent and student experiences in order to determine the severity of these concerns.

By reflecting on all these questions, we can attempt to address some of the key considerations for the planning of temporary housing for undergraduate students displaced by dormitory renovations at MIT.

In order to determine these issues, this thesis includes an in depth review of the existing literature around displacement and the findings of qualitative research methods such as in-person interviews. Interviews were conducted with students from communities that recently underwent displacement as well as those anticipating upcoming displacement. Additional interviews were held with members of student committees and executive teams charged with exploring strategies for housing students during renovations. Some statistics are also included from surveys conducted by the Department of Student Life and the Office of Institutional Research at MIT.

Section II reviews existing literature on building maintenance, displacement, and college climate. Section III explores the MIT specific context with respect to housing, student life, and the undergraduate experience. Section IV describes the methodology to be used in the development of thesis. Section V reports the findings of this thesis. Section VI contains an analysis of the repeated themes of the findings. Section VII offers recommendations for best practices and concluding thoughts. The bibliography follows.

A Brief Disclosure of Potential Sources of Personal Bias

It should be noted that, though I have attempted to establish a nuanced and neutral position throughout this research, there are a number of potential sources for personal bias that should be properly disclosed. I have been a resident of the East Campus dormitory for the past

four years. I lived in Random Hall during the summer of 2016 when students were relocated as a result of the roof-deck fire. I participated in the 2017 summer peaceful demonstrations surrounding the closing of Senior House. I am also a friend of present and/or former members of the executive teams of several dormitories including ones relevant to this research, namely: Burton Conner, East Campus, Random Hall, and certain cultural houses within New House. Finally, I served as the undergraduate representative to the Faculty Committee on Campus Planning during the 2018-2019 academic year.

SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wealth of literature on the subject of displacement and its effects on individuals and communities. This section seeks to explore the parts of that literature that may be most relevant to our MIT specific case. The literature review is divided into 7 subsections: Building Maintenance & Dormitory Planning, Transparency & the Role of Students, Methods of Participatory Research, Urban Renewal & Displacement Research, Root Shocks, Alcohol, & Mental Health, Financial Costs to Students, and Queer Displacement. The first of these subsections details the costs of maintaining physical plant and the ramifications of not making such repairs, as well as how the structuring of campus housing can facilitate community. The second subsection reviews arguments for a high degree of transparency and student involvement in planning processes that impact their lives. The third subsection explores participatory methods for research that may be applicable to goals set by the second. The fourth recounts early literature on the negative impacts of displacement, which explored the results of the urban renewal that took place across the river in Boston's West End. The fifth details more recent displacement research into the "root shocks" that may hurt former residents. The penultimate subsection explores some of the ramifications of increased financial costs to students through an MIT report on food insecurity on campus. The final subsection explores what it means for a space to be "queer" and the costs of displacement from queer communities.

Building Maintenance & Dormitory Planning

In Wardhana and Hadipriono's "Study of Recent Building Failures in the United States" (2003) the authors seek to discover trends in building failures, specifically those in the United States that occurred between 1989 and 2000. They compiled a database of such incidents as they could find on LexisNexis, an online newspaper collection database. The study records 225 cases total, though not all the entries include data for all its chosen relevant fields. "Failure" was determined as buildings in a state of collapse or "distress," where the latter refers problems with the building's structure that may, in turn, lead to collapse. The authors excluded failures that resulted from natural disasters in order to specifically determine factors of collapse that stem from human related errors in construction. That being said, only the most significant and

probable source of failure was recorded for each case, such that contributing factors from the weather may have been ignored in some cases.

The study found that a majority of the failures occurred in "low-rise buildings" or those that were four stories or fewer. The next most common building type for failures was multistory, a "distant second" (page 1). In both cases, apartment buildings were more likely to fail. In fact, single family homes – the majority of low rise buildings in the U.S. – had much lower rates of failure. Once the authors removed the cases of failure during construction, the average serviceability expectancy of a building was 60 years. Though the authors do not cite any data to support it, they suggest that over time owners may change the function of their buildings or add new loads without modifying the structure to handle a higher capacity. The study classifies failures as the result of external events or errors in design, material, detailing, construction, or maintenance. External causes, construction, and maintenance are cited as the most common causes of building failure. In the area of more specific clauses, the most common was deterioration, which the article claims came be prevented by proper maintenance. In fact, they note that in several cases tenants noticed physical signs of deterioration as the first stage of failure.

This study supports the assumption that over time buildings need to be repaired or maintained to prevent collapse. It also highlights several reasons that the renovations like those proposed for East Campus and Burton Conner may be necessary. Both buildings are around or above 60 years of age. Both are dormitories, and thus possess many similarities to apartment buildings. Both are subject to MIT's backlog of "deferred maintenance." Though both dorms are, in fact, more than four stories in height and thus "multi-story" by the definition of this study, East Campus falls near that line at five stories tall. Though the authors' claim that building owners increase the load on the structure over time is unsubstantiated by the text, if they are right then MIT's decision to increase the number of beds in many dorms including Burton Conner (now home to so-called "forced triples," intended to house two students and now housing three) may have further damned the buildings to an increased chance of failure, and thus an increased need for repair and maintenance.[1]

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[1] Many students from New House are of the belief that the main purpose of renovations was to decrease room sizes to the legal minimums for singles and doubles in order to increase capacity. This would add the weight of additional students, furniture, and walls. This is not as substantial

Campus in Transition (1975) is a report by the Education Facilities Laboratories that seeks to examine how colleges are changing and must continue to change in responses to changes in enrollment rates, largely as a result of fluctuations in population according to baby boomers. Much of the text centers around a discussion of how to increase revenue generation at these schools. The central argument of the report seems to be that operating a university is inherently a 'bad business' doomed to running at great losses. Tuition cannot support the cost of research, faculty, building, and housing. In the past, the authors claim, universities were able to rely on rising enrollment from the population explosion to support costs. However, now faced with declining enrollment, education was a "New Academic Depression". Accordingly, much of the report is centered around the need to locate other sources of revenue or means of cutting costs.

The authors suggest that cost cutting could have major impacts for the 'physical plant' – slang for physical maintenance and construction on college campuses. This is in line with Wardhana, et al.'s study of building failures that concluded that most failures occurred in apartment buildings due to the opportunity cost of maintenance. It also reflects what is known of MIT's own policy of deferred maintenance. Though this information all links together well, it is counterintuitive with the fact of MIT's eight billion dollar endowment. Logically, we might intuit that a university is a costly investment that makes for bad business, but this intuition is harmed by the presence of such a counter intuitively large endowment.

One section of the report focuses on the growing demand for on campus housing. The authors attribute this demand to changing moral values among the greater student community, new policies by campus administrations, and increasing costs of living in cities and other nearby areas off campus. This rapidly changing demand lead to what the report calls a 'dormitory crisis', which is similar to phrasing that, anecdotally, has been used by MIT administrators and students when discussing the need for more beds. In discussing the scale of housing, the authors have this to say: "… people do not respond well to large impersonal spaces. This reaction is usually coupled with a concern – conscious or not – for neighborhood or community," (p. 62). This idea could help to explain why students at MIT form such attachments for their residence halls. As such, it also reflects a reason why MIT might concern itself with ways to preserve these communities during the renovations and displacements. The report also emphasizes the importance of providing "the means for students to 'personalize' their spaces," (p. 62). This can

currently best be seen in the mural policies present in certain MIT residence halls, which allow students to paint murals in their individual dorm rooms as well as common spaces such as hallways, lounges, and kitchens.

Dorms at Berkeley (1967) is a report by Sim Van der Ryn and Murray Silverstein from the University of California, Berkeley, and funded in part by the Educational Facilities Laboratories. The authors begin by identifying an increasing demand for campus housing and express concern that the architectural design for this housing is rapidly becoming more cost driven with little focus on what is best for students. They next give a short context for housing at Berkeley specifically, before moving into their findings. Based on these findings, they give a few design proposals for campus housing. In closing they offer a closer looks at the methods of analysis by which they came to their conclusions, and through which, they argue, future buildings may be evaluated. These methods include direct observations inside these spaces, interviews and questionnaires given to students, daily activity logs by students, and literature reviews.

The authors offer three important roles filled by dormitory housing: shelter, study space, and community. Much of the design proposals outside of the individual room focus on ways the built environment can foster community through means such as the physical suggestion of in-dorm sub-groups. We see these in various dormitory sub-communities at MIT such as floors, suites, cultural houses, and lounges. In this sense, MIT has already succeeded in creating community in its housing. This success also means that MIT must now concern itself with the potential effects of splitting these communities in some potential temporary rooming plans.

By far the most common complaints the report makes of campus housing are an unfulfilled need for privacy and a lack of student choice and control over the mutability of their space. In the case of the former, the authors unequivocally prioritize single rooms, with allowance for some number of doubles for students making cost concessions. They claim that while no one has researched the "psychic stress" (p. 32) of rooming with another person, their research supports the idea that it inevitably pushes one or the other out of the room for large chunks of time. For residence halls primarily made of singles, the potential for added stress from additional roommates in some relocation plans – in moving to dorms with fewer single rooms or with higher rents that necessitate taking on extra roommates – may need to be considered. With respect to student control of their space, the report argues that students under the 'in-loco-

parentis' rule of the college have a strong desire for control in their lives. The authors argue for a greater degree of control in their living quarters ranging from moveable furniture to hanging posters to writing on the walls. In the renovation of dorms that allow for mural painting – or even student-performed renovations of flooring, lofts, lighting, furniture, and sinks – a shift to a temporary housing environment that does not allow for such control could offer additional stress to displacement. Additionally, if this desire for control arises from rules set according to the perceived 'in-loco-parentis' role of the university, there may be value in incorporating dormitory governing bodies in the establishment of those roles and in the process of relocation as a whole.

In 1999, following the decision to mandate that all MIT first year students be housed on campus, Chancellor Lawrence S. Bacow produced a report entitled, "The Design of the New Residence System." This report is colloquially referred to on campus as the Bacow Report. The Bacow Report is itself a response to findings of the Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor.

The undergraduate residence hall system at MIT differs from that of many of its peers. Each dormitory boasts a unique "culture" and is home to a unique, strong community. New students go through a lottery where they rank their choices for residence. There is a period prior to the start of classes where new students are able to experience the different cultures first hand, known as the residence exploration period or REX. At the end of this period, students may move from their temporary rooming assignment to a new one elsewhere on campus. Upperclassmen students are charged with many of the aspects of assigning rooms to first years through Rooming Assignment Chairs, or RACs, in each dormitory. Students generally favor this system, claiming it as evidence of MIT "treat[ing] them as adults, (Bacow, 1999, p.7).

According to the report, "A commonly expressed sentiment among MIT students is, 'I never would have elected to live in my living group if I had not been given the opportunity to see it first hand,'" (Bacow, 1999, p.8). This underscores the importance of the question of the role of first year students during renovation. If there is no space by which first year students can be introduced to communities while their residences are undergoing renovation, then those students may not choose to transfer to those residences after the communities return. Not only might those students have preferred to live in these communities during their later years at MIT, those communities are liable to have disparate class sizes.

Selection as opposed to random assignment has been credited as helping these dormitories to establish distinctive cultures (Bacow, 1999). This allows MIT to offer a more diverse range of housing options that benefits its diverse population of students with a wide range of needs. The diversity of housing at MIT is cited by Chancellor Bacow as a major strength of the system and is supported heavily by the SAC. As a result of these innovative matching programs for residential housing, students move residences much less than at peer institutions. During the late 90s the proportion of students who lived in the same building all four years was roughly 80%.[2] In a 1996 survey, students reported an 87% satisfaction rate with their housing, which was higher than other institutions polled (Bacow, 1999).

According to the Advisory Committee the goal of MIT's residential system is to provide and support house, home, and community. The report also emphasizes that a home-like environment is critical at the institute, as a result of the rigor and intensity of the MIT experience. Based on this metric, the undergraduate residence system is markedly more successful than many of its peers.

Though the report finds many more strengths of the system as whole then it does weakness, there are some that should be mentioned. One weakness is that this structure fractures the larger MIT community in order to create stronger living group bonds and sub-communities. The report does not argue that this is the wrong choice, instead suggesting that this may be a perfectly reasonable tradeoff. It simply remarks that it is a factor that must be mentioned in evaluating the system. Another weakness is that the system does not even approach meeting the residential needs of all graduate students (Bacow, 1999). MIT is struggling with both an undergraduate and a graduate housing crisis. The report stresses that the Boston housing market is expensive and that solutions involving students – both graduate and undergraduate – turning to the private housing market are therefore not desirable.

In writing the report after the decision to require that first year students live on campus, the Bacow Report had to acknowledge the bad feelings the announcement instilled in the greater community. Many students and alumni were critical of President Vest's decision and felt that they had not been adequately consulted. In the report, Chancellor Bacow disagrees and says that

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[2] At this time first year students were able to live in FSILGs, or Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups. Following the decision to require undergraduate students to live on campus during their first year, this number is likely to be lower, since students who desire to live in FSILGs can only begin to do so as sophomores.

the decision was heavily informed by the opinions of faculty, students, and alumni. He concedes that a more formal consultation process may still have been desirable (Bacow, 1999). In the report Chancellor Bacow also expresses his personal hope that students will continue to be engaged in the process of designing the residence system during its implementation.

Based on all of the above information, the Bacow Report included in its list of principles for the housing redesign a number a points that are relevant to the issue of displacement. Firstly, the report recommends that first years be able to play an active role in determining their residence. Secondly, the report also tasks MIT with respecting the existing diversity of dormitory cultures. Finally, the report recommends respecting dormitory governing structures in the rooming process. For the purposes of renovation, we might draw a parallel to respecting student leaders and governments in the process of assigning temporary housing, as well as in continued issues related to renovation that occur throughout the process.

Transparency & the Role of Students

Creative Renewal in a Time of Crisis is a report written by the Commission on MIT Education in 1970, largely as a response to the upheaval on college campuses across the U.S. that took place during that time. Much of the report is focused on concerns related to education and research, topics not directly related to this study. However, a good portion of the Commission's report discusses discussion. That is to say, concerns about transparency in decision making, about incorporating students and faculty in vital conversations, and about creativity in administrative decisions.

The report acknowledges that, often, the nature of education at the institute is so broad that students cannot find answers from their advisors or through other formal means. Instead, students have taken on the role of guiding underclassmen through their time at the institute, and performing more active roles in shaping their own environment. This, the commission argues, reflects the students' desire to learn more than just the facts of their academic field. Students, they write, want to freedom in their choices, and the freedom to confront the big questions plaguing society. The report offers some warning that due to the limited timeframe in which students live and work and study at MIT, they are liable to devalue concerns that will only take effect in a longer run. Accordingly, they suggest that this be taken into account on a case by case basis for establishing student governance and power in planning at MIT, but not that students be

removed from this process altogether. In fact, the Commission specifically recommends that information relevant to choices being made about the future of the Institute be made readily available, and that the administration make a greater effort to seek consultation from the greater MIT community.

In "Dialogue and Demographic Complexity," Ceasar McDowell outlines a set of design principles that can be applied to a series of stages in the design process to form a greater Civic Design Framework. These phases of design include "framing," "ideation," "prioritizing," "selection," and "implementing/moderating," (McDowell, 2018, p.222). McDowell argues that citizens must be engaged in all of these conversations for a truly participatory design. For the sake of brevity, this thesis will focus on only one of the design principles, healing, which is particularly relevant. McDowell writes, "…for many people, and especially those at the margins of society, participation in public processes has been a repeated story of betrayal," (McDowell, 2018, p.227). In this context, the source of the mistrust between students and the Department of Student Life is not simply the result of contentious decisions or opacity on the part of DSL, it is the announcement of such decisions through opaque decision making processes following significant student involvement in the designing. Because students have used their own capacities, in time and mental resources, to engage with the design process, the hurt caused by the contention feels greater, and they become disinclined to participate in future processes. Importantly, McDowell suggests that perceptions of betrayal damage trust in both directions. When processes "betray" the public, the public loses faith in its institutions. This loss of faith creates a mirror of itself in the institutions as those who work within them lose faith in the public (McDowell, 2018). In the case of MIT and the Department of Student Life, repeated incidents have led to student distrust of DSL. When students reactively respond in guarded or combative ways to new DSL initiatives, administrators perceive the tension or outright hostility and begin to distrust student opinion as inherently negative or misguided.

McDowell offers two necessary components to healing. The first is acknowledging the harm that has occurred. The second is creating means to address potential harms that occur in the future (McDowell, 2018). This is a logical framework. Without the second component, it is only too probable that we will continue to make the same mistakes over and over again and create new hurts from which to heal. Without the first, we cannot fully invest in future plans because there has been no attempt to reestablish trust.

Methods of Participatory Research

In Herbert J. Gans' *The Urban Villagers*, the author employs a Participant Researcher method of study. This method, as the name implies, involves the researcher participating in the area they are studying. Gans offers three potential models for this method. The first is that the research acts as an observer. The second is that the researcher participates, but only as a researcher, i.e. speaking up in the meetings they attend, but only to ask questions or improve their understanding of the goings-on. The third is that the researcher participates, abandoning their original role to become a genuine participant in the process. During his research in the West End, Gans claims to have mainly employed the first method at community meetings and the third method in his use of the facilities as a new resident (Gans, 1982).

In their introduction to *Introduction to Action Research Social Research for Social Change*, Greenwood and Levin outline their theory of "Action Research." The field of Action Research, if it can be considered a field, is quite broad with many different working theories or practices. This particular definition is well served to the context of MIT and the current practices by the Department of Student Life. According to Greenwood and Levin, Action Research (AR) is carried out by a team including stakeholders, in this case the members of a community, and a professional researcher. Action Research is also necessarily searching for a way to improve the situation of the participants. In short, it must include action, actively creating social change; research, studying how to create that change; and participation, pooling the knowledge of those living in the environment to be changed. Action Research may be qualitative, quantitative, or a mixture of the two (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

The authors position AR as a way to encourage extensive and inclusive participation in research, and to promote a more satisfying or just outcome for participants. They claim that this theory rests on the principle that, "…all people… accumulate, organize, and use complex knowledge continuously in everyday life," (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p.4). Furthermore, the authors argue that the team is incentivized to ensure the validity of the research because the participants will be directly affected by its outcomes (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).
This thesis is more closely related to Action Research in that I am more easily considered a participant who began to research, than a researcher who began to participate. It is more closely related to the Participant Researcher methodology in that I did not perform any action, instead

observing preexisting conditions. Future research should consider employing an Action Research framework in full, in order to create changes that have greater student and community support.

Urban Renewal & Displacement Research

During the 1950s and 1960s Boston pursued a large scale urban renewal project in its West End neighborhood that displaced the majority of its former residents. A number of social scientists studied the neighborhood and the results of renewal, coming to largely negative conclusions and, in some cases, changing opinions of urban renewal policy. One of the first significant pieces to come from this research was Herbert J. Gans' *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans*, originally published in 1965, with an updated and expanded version released in 1982. Gans employed a "participant researcher" method of study in which he lived in the West End during the years prior to renewal. Gans' focus was more on the West Enders than on renewal, but because of the time in which his work took place, he could not ignore the ways in which renewal affected their lives.

Gans describes the poor conditions of apartments in the West End and says that residents were happy with the state of the buildings, but that they were happy with the low rents. "…Modernity," he says, "is not much of an advantage when it depletes the family budget," (Gans, 1982, p.13). Gans also describes the way in which the preexisting emotional, social, and economic problems of residents were worsened by displacement from their inexpensive and familiar conditions. True, he says, urban renewal was of great benefit to the city, but he argues that those benefits must be weighed against the social and economic costs of urban renewal on the residents it displaced (Gans, 1982).

According to Gans, West Enders were distrustful of officials. "…[T]he law, the police, and the government. Conceived as agencies that exist to exploit West Enders, they are thus viewed with considerable hostility. If possible, contact with them is minimized, and relegated to the politician," (Gans, 1982, p.121). Gans also offered that "caretakers" in the West End often did not understand residents because they were members of middle class who lived elsewhere and thus came from a different context with its own culture and social structure. Gans claimed that the caretakers, not wanting to recognize this in themselves, instead attributed differences in opinions between them and West Enders to the physical environment, with the assumption being

that that environment was bad for residents and, once removed, former West Enders would change their minds (Gans, 1982).

Gans describes one approach to creating more accountability in planning processes in which "clients" – in cases of housing, tenants – are involved directly in the formation and implementation of policy. He then argues that this approach can be flawed since professionals and bureaucrats often have more power and prestige than the clients, allowing them to be outmaneuvered, (Gans, 1982). He also argues that a lack of transparency created difficulties for residents in understanding the process, "…since bureaucracies do not generally explain the reasons for their actions to clients, there is little opportunity to learn how they work," (Gans, 1982, p.167). In avoiding disseminating information that they were not completely certain of, Gans claims that authorities left residents with so little knowledge of what was to come that all residents had to go on was rumor and misinformation that only increased their suspicion.

The Urban Villagers takes a hard stance against the urban renewal of the West End. Gans does not seem to believe that officials all had negative intent in the project, but does argue that in trying to save residents from a so-called slum – a label with which he did not agree – they instead hurt those residents (Gans, 1982). As Gans conducted his research and lived in the West End, he began to find himself of the opinion that the city's actions were wrong and eventually began discussing his work with the residents, and writing papers in opposition to the renewal.

The book includes a list of recommendations for future renewal projects requiring relocation. This list includes a number of recommendations that are potentially relevant to this thesis, such as:

- Projects requiring relocation on a massive scale must be studied prior to implementation and should not be begun until adequate housing for relocation has been planned and secured.
- Policy makers must consider low-income residents in all of its planning.
- The relocation plan should fit the demands and needs of residents such that officials can be aware of the potential consequences of the process.
- Policies should be implemented to help relocated peoples adjust to higher rents.
- Communication between agencies and residents should maximize the amount of information shared with residents, thus warding against the spread of rumors.

- Officials should receive training in the "inevitably deprivatory [*sic*] nature of relocation" to help them understand residents' concerns about the process, (Gans, 1982, p.374).

- Relocation staff should include social workers that aid residents on demand.

- Extended families should be relocated together if they so desire. To the extent that this can be replicated on a larger scale for "ethnic groups," it should be.

- Institutions and organizations important to the zone of renewal should be replicated in a new area if a majority or plurality of residents were moved there.

Gans acknowledges that many of these proposals increase the costs of renewal to the municipality, but argues that this is just, as it accounts for the hidden costs to residents (Gans, 1982).

Between the initial publication of *the Urban Villagers* and that of the updated and expanded edition, Marc Fried released a study on the mental effects on former West Enders in the years immediately following displacement. This research, *Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation* is mentioned in Gans' updates. The results of Fried's study were striking. Most notably was that the reaction of West Enders could most accurately be described as a grief response.[3] At least 46% of women and 38% of men in the study exhibited a fairly severe reaction of grief, reporting a period of depression or sadness of greater than six months. Over half of those reported that they were still experiencing this period at the end of the two year study (Fried, 1966). These results were far more extreme than Fried and his team had been expecting.

The study found that one of the predictors for the extremity of the grief was the degree to which the participants had thought of the West End as "home." Also included in this "spatial identity" were factors such as the number of other residents with the participant had been familiar. The more a participant thought of the West End as their home, and the more people they knew in the neighborhood, the stronger their grief reaction (Fried, 1966). Another predictor

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[3] Fried includes a number of quotes from former West Enders to exhibit this grief. To someone who experienced the dissolutions of Bexley Hall or Senior House, these quotes from West Enders are hauntingly familiar. There is a repository at eastcamp.us/culture/ wherein members of MIT's East Side shared their feelings about what it meant to live there with the, then relatively new, Chancellor, Cynthia Barnhart. At times during the writing of this thesis, I would read a quote to a colleague, while eliminating any location tags, and challenge them to place it to either urban renewal of the West End or blogs on the repository, named "This is the East Side." My colleagues generally did not perform significantly better than chance.

of the severity of grief was the extent to which "group identity" had been fractured by displacement. According to Fried, "Since… effective relationships with others are dependent upon a continuing sense of common group identity, the experience of loss and disruption of these affiliations is intense and frequently irrevocable," (Fried, 1966, p.366). Applied to an MIT context, this could include the extent to which dormitory communities and sub-communities such as floors or houses are separated. Spatial and social factors were shown to have an internal relationship with one another; however, each also showed significant contributions to the grief effect when the other was held constant, suggesting independent contributions beyond the overlap (Fried, 1966).

Other predictors of the grief response included class and post-relocation experiences. Wealthier residents were better able to adjust to displacement post-relocation experiences and a better post-relocation experience could help to mitigate grief, though not remove it entirely (Fried, 1966). Finally, those predisposed to mental illness and depression were most likely to show a severe grief reaction, but by no means were the only participants who did show such a reaction predisposed. Fried stresses in his report that the effects of each contributor to grief were cumulative (Fried, 1966).

In his study, Fried offers a number of potential solutions or improvements to alleviate the severity of grief. The first of these includes providing counseling and other assistive services to the displaced, including psychological, psychiatric, and social services. Fried also recommends that municipalities provide opportunities for the displaced to maintain their sense of community, i.e. space and time for community activity and interaction, as well as physical space to perform old objectives in new areas. The study also counsels cities to reduce the number of "drastic" renewal projects, and when unavoidable make it more possible for some residents to stay in the area during and after renewal.

Root Shocks, Alcohol, & Mental Health

In the updated and expanded edition of *The Urban Villagers*, Gans draws a parallel between the displacement of the urban renewal era and that of modern gentrification. Much of modern research about displacement uses this context. In "Impact of Residential Displacement on Healthcare Access and Mental Health among Original Residents of Gentrifying Neighborhoods in New York City" (2017) Lim et al. seek to discover how mental health and

access to mental health care are impacted by displacement. To accomplish this, the researchers took a sample of residents in neighborhoods they determined to be experiencing gentrification, limiting it to only those residents that had either visited Emergency Departments or been hospitalized at least once biennially during the nine year study period. They found that displaced residents were more likely to be hospitalized or visit EDs (largely for issues related to mental health) in the studied period post-displacement than their non-displaced counterparts, and concluded that displacement has a negative impact on mental health. They remark that these effects are "particularly" true among: 1. Adults, 2. In urban areas, 3. With a past history of hospitalization/ED visits. However, these were also the only demographics studied, and drawing larger conclusions may be disingenuous.

To determine more robust conclusions, the study included sex, age, and the number of moves and number of hospital visits, in the year prior to study, as covariates for regression. Furthermore, upon finding drastically higher rates (6-7x) of drug and alcohol related admissions in the displaced group, such visits were excluded from the analysis. Excluding these results lowered the magnitude of the effect, but the findings were still significant without them. As a final sensitivity test, the study was able to achieve similar results when comparing the displaced group to residents of poor, non-gentrifying neighborhoods. Accordingly, the findings can be attributed to the effects of displacement as opposed to poverty or environmental conditions in general.

Based on these findings, the study offers potential causal stories related to displacement. The main conclusion is that the "root shock" of displacement severs displaced residents from their social networks, routines, and resources, creating significant stress that contributes to larger issues in mental health. Despite removing the results, the researchers argue that the higher rates of drug and alcohol related admissions are unlikely to be the result of bias (i.e. that addicts are more likely to be displaced) given the controls they ran for medical and mental health history. They offer that the increased stress caused by displacement may also lead to higher rates of substance use and/or abuse.

An interesting facet of this study is that the authors use ED visits and hospitalization as a proxy for mental health, though these may reflect health outcomes in general. At one point in the analysis, they mention studying "ACS" conditions, or Ambulatory Care Sensitive conditions, such as diabetes, heart failure, hypertension, and asthma, because these conditions are

preventable and can suggest a lack of proper primary care. However, many of these conditions are also associated either with poor environmental conditions or stress and poor mental health.

In studying the impacts of displacement from specific undergraduate residents at MIT upon students, of crucial import is the impact upon their health. There is a strong emphasis on mental health at MIT, resulting from rigorous curricula and substantial pressure on students. Even beyond a simpler argument about displacement and mental health, some of these cases of displacement were in direct response to concerns about residents' health and safety, often with respect to mental health or substance abuse. In the context of this research, one might reasonably have concerns about the impacts of this policy.

O'Malley and Johnson in "Epidemiology of alcohol and other drug use among American college students" (2002) seek to establish whether stereotypes of students as heavy drinkers and party animals carry any merit. To accomplish this, they compile and analyze the results of five separate studies and surveys. Specifically: the Core Institute (CORE), Monitoring the Future (MTF), Harvard School of Public Health's College Alcohol Study (CAS), the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), and the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (NCHRBS). They exclude part-time students from their results and separate the data for two and four year program students, claiming that part time students are more likely to also work jobs or support their families and that the varying program lengths attract different types of people. While there is certainly logic to their argument, anecdotal data and that of the MIT Food Insecurity Solutions Working Group (which found that a significant number of students sometimes send money home to their families) suggests that this behavior attributed to part time students (i.e. working or supporting families), may also be evident, if in lower numbers, in full time ones. The authors do not cite any data supporting their conclusion.

The study found that college students were more likely to be heavy drinkers than their non-student peers. This was true even though it also found that these students drank less than their peers when they were in high school. Conversely, the study did not find higher rates of use for cigarettes, cocaine, or marijuana. It also found that rates of alcohol use in student populations were high in general: two out of five American students being heavy drinkers. The authors note that there have been improvements (i.e. decreases in the level of drinking among college students) in this area over the two decades prior to the study. Given such a trend, it is possible that heavy alcohol use may have further declined in the years since the study was made.

However, since they found only a slight decline, it seems probable that there still exists some significant difference in alcohol and drug use between college students and their non-student peers.

Taken in conjunction with the results of Lim, et al.'s study of the effects of displacement on mental health (which found that alcohol and other drug related emergency visits increased after displacement, especially among those who were predisposed to drink or use other drugs) this paper suggests that college students may be more likely to abuse alcohol in the wake of displacement. If MIT is committed to reducing alcohol and other drug abuse, or at least preventing a rise thereof related to renovation based displacement, then it has even more reason to be wary of "root shock" and to seek out means of temporary relocation that mitigate its effects.

Mental health is a topic routinely analyzed at MIT. In *The Cultural Life of Suicide: Observing Care and Death at MIT*, a Bachelors Thesis in the Comparative Media Studies Department at MIT, Allan Ko writes of the pervasiveness of a culture of suicide at MIT and the means by which students cope. Ko describes the institute as "an environment where suicide is ambient and infrastructural," (Ko, 2018, p.2). I do not mean to suggest that this culture is exclusive to MIT or that it is descended from issues of housing. Instead, this research implies that communities within dormitories play a critical role in how students cope with trauma. It is accordingly necessary to reflect on how interruptions to that sense of community could damage students' ability to handle unrelated trauma.

Ko designates certain support structures as material and social infrastructures. The former refers to physical and digital spaces for community such as mailing lists, social media, lounges, boards, and hallways. The latter refers to cultural communities and traditions such as dorms, clubs, and potlucks. Both are essential to mechanisms that help students cope with major negative events at MIT (Ko, 2018). Furthermore, the two are deeply tied to one another. An example given by Ko is that of a "TeaTime" event where a dormitory resident would share their tea with their neighbors and after a suicide by an MIT student, emailed an invitation to the wider audience of their dorm as a whole. TeaTime itself is a social infrastructure, not created with the intention of offering support in the wake of suicide, and yet filling that role when the time came. Additionally, by using mailing lists and the physical space on their floor within the dorm, TeaTime also invoked material infrastructures. For these reasons, Ko argues that the two are "fundamentally relational," (Ko, 2018, p.30).

Relocating students therefore creates several pain points that could weaken students' ability to cope with traumatic situations. The process inherently removes students from their old physical spaces, and to the extent that students are divided amongst many dorms, it creates a physical divide that may make it difficult to establish community in the new spaces. With geographic distance between students, it may also prove difficult to continue the traditions of social infrastructures. The decision of whether or not to maintain mailing lists and other digital dormitory infrastructures while the students are no longer residing in that dorm could have a substantial impact on the continued effectiveness of those material infrastructures.

Financial Costs to Students

In the Fall 2017 report of MIT's Food Insecurity Solutions Working Group (the group's first and only report thus far), there is detailed the findings of that group's research into food insecurity on campus: its extent, drivers, etc. (Division of Student Life, 2018). FISWG consisted of various students, administrators, and faculty members. It convened during the fall semester of the 2017-2018 school year and its methods included analyzing survey data from MIT students and holding conversations with students and other community members. In addition, the group also looked to peek institutions to learn what other schools had attempted in combatting food insecurity.

According to survey data, 13% of undergrads and between two and eight percent of graduate students reported that they had trouble accessing food while at MIT. FISWG concluded from their conversations that while financial resources were critical to accessing food other impediments included a lack of time, physical access, and knowledge (i.e. financial literacy). Furthermore, it also noted that simply providing students with financial aid often did not solve the issue either because not enough aid was provided, or because students saved the money for emergencies or for their families back home, or because paperwork errors meant that the aid was not actually provided until much later. With respect to timing, stakeholders specifically claimed that they were unable to travel between classes and their residences or places of work in time to eat and return. This may represent another source of geographic specific shock effects of displacement, should students be rehoused in an area significantly further from dining options.

Queer Displacement

In Sarah Nusser's master's thesis, *What Would a Non-Heterosexist City Look Like?*, she creates a spectrum for defining spaces as "queer." At one end of her spectrum is "queer" space. At the other is "anti-queer" space. Falling in between are terms such as "don't ask, don't tell," "queer tolerant," and "queer friendly," (Nusser, 2010, p.41). There is a difference between a space that is "queer" and one that is merely "queer friendly." For that matter, there is a difference between spaces that are "queer friendly" and "queer but straight friendly." These distinctions can be important in determining how members of the LGBTQ+ community exist in spaces with different attitudes toward them. The comfort that someone may feel in space that is explicitly queer may be stronger than in one that is simply accepting, even though that individual is unlikely to experience violent homophobia in either space.

In "The Demise of Queer Space? Resurgent Gentrification and the Assimilation of LGBT Neighborhoods," (2011) Doan and Higgins make a study of the impacts of gentrification on residents of queer neighborhoods in Atlanta, GA. They outline that past research has found that in many 'gayborhoods,' gays were responsible for urban change and renovation, and that this has often lead to gentrification, which in turn draws in new residents with homonormative expectations, raises rents, and drives LGBTQ residents out. This has sociological impacts, in that the authors argue that neighborhood residence has become linked with identity – and thus in this case queer identity – as well as political impacts, in that LGBTQ activists are concerned that dispersal hurts political organization potentials of the queer community.

To conduct their own analysis of the impacts in Atlanta, the authors studied census data for spatial demographic patterns, examined planning documents from the city, and interviewed both straight and queer residents. They found their interviewees through a 'snowball approach' wherein contact with one subject (a realtor, business owner, etc.) lead to contact with another (a homebuyer or renter, citizen activist, etc.). They argue that this approach is useful in finding subjects from a marginalized community, but offer as a disclaimer that their subjects overrepresented white, middle and upper-middle class residents, potentially revealing a flaw in the strategy if community subgroups (in this case intersections with racial or socioeconomic classifications) are relatively isolated.

The study finds that gentrification offers some benefits to gay neighborhoods in that early gentrifiers benefit from the rise in property values; however, it also finds that rising

unaffordability is the leading cause of displacement of LGBTQ residents from these areas. It concludes that many queer individuals desire a larger queer community, but that the displacement tends to lead to dispersal, which can reduce safety in queer neighborhoods, isolate individuals, and make it different to organize politically. On another note, the authors find that though displaced residents disperse to different neighborhoods according to their socio-economic classes, they often express a desire to live in 'diverse' communities even if they cannot live in queer ones. As a result, the authors argue that displaced residents often themselves gentrify neighborhoods associated with people of color and increase racial tensions.

At one point in the text, the authors complain that many of the planning documents they studied failed to even acknowledge that they were discussing queer neighborhoods, despite the fact that their identification as such is considered common knowledge. Given that East Side dorms have such a high proportion of LGBTQ+ identifying residents (see Section III), it would be remiss of this thesis not to consider how this displacement could affect them specifically: perhaps via cost effects, safety and harassment concerns, community dispersal, or considerations of student governance. The methodology of this study is reflective of that planned for this thesis: review of demographic data and planning documents and interviews with affected persons. Use of the 'snowball approach' may be useful for identifying concerns from marginalized communities within the dorms, or for reaching out to residents of past displacements that are now alums and more difficult to contact.

SECTION III: MIT CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Reviewing displacement literature and theory is necessary, but not sufficient to building a background for understanding the issues at play. It is also necessary to attach that theory to the MIT specific context in which the displacements have taken and will take place. This section is divided into four subsections: Deferred Maintenance, Root Shocks, LGBTQ+ Populations, and Distrust. The first of these subsections delineates MIT's past policies of deferred maintenance that have led to contemporary structural problems or other concerns related to the repair of the physical plant. The second subsection outlines the main sources of root shock we might expect for displaced students, and the third examines how these might be exacerbated for queer students. The final subsection details the sources and severity of the current distrust between many undergraduates and the Department of Student Life, as well as exploring how this may impede future planning processes.

Deferred Maintenance

Old buildings are liable to fail in the absence of proper maintenance or reconstruction. This is both an intuitive assertion and the conclusion of research on the subject. One study of building failures in the U.S. found that failures were especially common in apartment buildings and that maintenance deficiencies were responsible for a significant portion of building failures (Wardhana, 2003). This conclusion makes sense since it may prove more difficult to perform intensive renewal projects with tenants constantly moving into and out of the building at irregular times. Furthermore, time spent with units unoccupied for renovations comes with the opportunity cost of lost rent. Building owners are therefore incentivized to perform only the base minimum of repairs.

While we may not think of them that way, residence halls found on many college campuses are physically essentially apartment buildings, the largest difference being that individual units, or rooms, do not often have kitchens or bathrooms.[4] This makes dormitory renovation more necessary than one might initially suspect. Residential housing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or MIT, has had many longstanding issues with respect

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[4] Interestingly enough, in a quirk of its design rooms in East Campus are often equipped with sinks.

Figure 1 – 2006 Campus Map,[5] Bexley Hall is not yet demolished, nor is W1 yet Maseeh Hall

[5] web.mit.edu/campus-map/pdf/campusmap06.pdf

to its policy of "deferred maintenance". For similar reasons to commercial landlords, MIT has often chosen not to perform regular maintenance on its buildings due to a lack of budgeting for repair costs or else to a full capacity. During the academic year, this housing is needed for students and there is very little overflow. During the summer, MIT hosts conference attendees within several of the dormitories in order to accumulate funds for necessary upkeep. Other dormitories are used to house students that have applied for summer housing on campus. Deferred maintenance as a policy problem is exacerbated by the fact that donors to universities are often uninterested in the relatively unflashy goal of structural repair and maintenance (Bushak, 2008). Funding renovations can prove difficult, even for an institution that receives millions of dollars in gifts and that has a $16.4 billion endowment (Wren, 2018).

Deferred maintenance has its costs, however. This policy is cited as one of the main reasons for the closing of Bexley Hall, a former undergraduate residence. When an attempt was made to renovate Bexley after years of postponement, it was discovered that the building was near to collapse and could no longer safely house students (Lin, 2013). Deferred maintenance is also at the heart of both of the displacements from New House that will be used as case studies in this thesis. In the first case, many students from New House were evacuated during plumbing repair that was necessitated by frequent flooding caused by leaking pipes (Wang, 2015). The renovations that make up the second New House case study were the direct result of failures to solve these problems permanently. The floods made it clear that maintenance had been, perhaps, too far deferred, and that action such as large-scale renovation was now absolutely necessary.

Closing residence halls is associated with significant opportunity cost in the form of lost rent. It may also be associated with other costs from rehousing residents. In some cases, such as that of Bexley Hall, it may be possible to absorb students into other existing residence halls. However, during the flooding crisis in New House cited above, it was decided to house students instead in the local Hyatt hotel. The cost to MIT was great. The institute paid for hotel rooms for these students for the rest of the semester, a time period of several months. New House is also one of MIT's "cook for yourself" communities. These residence halls have kitchens in which students can cook their own meals rather than purchase a meal plan for use in campus dining halls.

Table 1 – Lists of Dining Dorms and Cook-for-Yourself Communities[6]

	House Dining	Cook-for-Yourself Communities
Present Dorms	Baker House, Maseeh Hall, McCormick Hall, Next House, Simmons Hall	Burton Conner, East Campus, MacGregor House, New House, Random Hall
Historic		Bexley Hall, Senior House

Because students would not have access to such facilities in the Hyatt, MIT was also forced to cover the cost of meal plans for displaced students. During planned renovations, if temporarily rehoused in a dining dorm, students might be expected to pay for their own meal plans since they would have advance warning, unlike the displaced residents of the flood crisis. The only way to avoid this cost for both MIT and its students would be to house the displaced residents in buildings with student accessible kitchen facilities.

Root Shocks

As hinted at above, closing residence halls also creates the problem of displacing current residents. Urban planning and sociological research has often shown significant detrimental effects on displaced individuals and populations. Displacement is said to cause a "root shock." This shock has been associated in at least one study with negative impacts to mental health, shown by an increase in emergency visits relating to mental health conditions following displacement, as well as an increase in visits due to alcohol or drug abuse (Lim et al., 2017). This "root shock" has been speculated to be caused by a range of factors such as a loss of access to neighborhood resources, or the disconnection of social networks.

The former may be of some concern to the question of temporary housing for students during residence hall renovations. If students are moved a significant distance geographically, it

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[6] http://studentlife.mit.edu/dining/residential-dining

may put them further from student resources. For example, East Campus is currently in direct proximity to MIT's medical facilities. Given the relative size of campus, however, this concern may be mitigated since all distances remain somewhat walkable. Alternatively, if residents from the dorm are divided, some may be housed separately from their House Team including Heads of House, Associate Heads of House, or RLADs (Residence Life Area Directors). This is likely to be a concern even if the distance is not great, since students may be less willing to leave their building to reach out. This is, after all, the reason for housing such positions in the residence halls of the students they serve.

The latter source of shock – disruption of social networks – may be even more significant. It may seem silly to be concerned about root shock in this sort of temporary rehousing, given that dorms are inherently temporary housing; however, at MIT students often remain in the same residence for all four years, and the residences often form strong, self-governing communities that can become a student's main support system. Many dorms at MIT house several hundred students each. Moving all the students to the same location may prove unwieldy or impossible. If it is necessary to divide students into smaller groups, this may disconnect them from previous social networks. Given that most residence halls are located in a region of campus known as "dorm row," some of this shock may still occur for students displaced from the region, even if the dormitory's residents are all kept together. If students are housed elsewhere, it may be more difficult for them to connect with former neighbors and friends.

Finally, there may be concerns about an uptick in drug and alcohol related emergency care visits. Students in American universities have been found to have higher levels of alcohol consumption and drug use than their non-student peers (O'Malley, 2002). The study that found higher rates of emergency visits for alcohol and drug abuse also found that this rate increase was largely associated with those that already engaged in such behaviors. Given that college students are more likely to consume alcohol or use drugs, it might then be concerning that displacement can have such an impact on this aspect of health. In determining policy for the temporary housing, MIT may want to consider adding additional resources with respect to alcohol and other drug use in addition to ensuring that the root shocks of displacement are felt less strongly by students.

Another potential contributor to "root shock" in this temporary housing is cost. If students are unable to pay the costs of their temporary housing, they may be forced to pick alternative housing in one of the other residence halls. This asks those students to isolate themselves, subjecting them to a greater shock. Dormitories at MIT also charge different rents depending on their "tier," as shown below in Table 2:

Table 2 – Housing Rates by Tier[7]

Tier	Dorms	Per Semester Rates for Fall '18 and Spring'19			
		Single	Double	Triple	Quad
I	Baker House, Maseeh Hall, McCormick Hall, New House, Simmons Hall	$5,590	$4,945	$4,420	$3,905
II	Burton Conner, MacGregor, Next House	$5,220	$4,610	$4,130	N/A
III	East Campus, Random Hall	$4,660	$4,115	N/A	N/A

Tier III dorms are the cheapest, and Tier I dorms are the most expensive. Should students from renovating communities be temporarily housed in a residence of a higher tier and asked to pay the new, higher rents, it may force some students to select alternate housing in a cheaper residence hall, or to move off campus altogether. Doing so could exacerbate the shock of displacement as it disconnects students from their social networks or even from campus resources in the case of off campus housing.

The possibility of charging students for meal plans was mentioned earlier. Meals at MIT are at a premium. The cheapest meal, breakfast, is $8.25, and the most expensive, dinner, is $14. Lunch and brunch fall in the middle at $11.25.[8] Students often refer to the expense of these prices, joking that they fail the so-called "Chipotle Test" in that a student could eat out at

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[7] https://studentlife.mit.edu/housing/undergraduate-housing/residence-halls/undergraduate-housing-rates
[8] https://studentlife.mit.edu/dining/residential-dining

Chipotle for every meal and pay less. Many students opt to live in "cook for yourself" communities as a way of saving money on food throughout the semester. Purchasing a meal plan would be an additional expense for these students, who could be made to feel as though they are being forced to choose between their budget and their social networks.

Furthermore, even if students do not choose to move and instead accept the new, higher costs, this too could have a "shock" effect. Increased costs may eat into students' budgets, decreasing their available resources and economic capital. This could leave students unable to respond to sudden financial crises or could otherwise increase stress in their lives. A report on food insecurity on campus recently found that many students are already food insecure (Division of Student Life, 2018). Additional costs can only exacerbate this problem. It is important to keep all of these costs in mind, since whichever choice the student makes is associated with some negative effects. While they might not always be the anticipated direct effects of plans such as housing students in a Tier I dining dorm, they are still likely indirect effects of such a policy.

LGBTQ+ Populations

Current research on the effects of housing displacement from gentrification in queer neighborhoods suggests that community is important to queer identity and political power, and that these can be weakened by dispersal (Doan & Higgins, 2011). There are few, if any, spaces in MIT residences that are perceived as hostile to queer students. However, the difference between tolerant spaces and queer ones are still relevant to this discussion. Anecdotally, some students who have changed living spaces have justified their relocation by claiming that they were tired of being the 'token gay friend.' This is not likely to be the case in residences with large populations of queer students. Throughout this thesis, dormitories belonging to the East Side are referred to as "queer." We can observe that the three East Side dorms operating at the time of the 2015 Enrolled Student Survey – East Campus, Random Hall, and Senior House – have the highest rates of queer reporting students. Figure 2 on the next page depicts the percent of residents in each residence hall that identified as "non-heterosexual." Though these numbers do not include the number of transgender students, anecdotal evidence suggests that those patterns are similar. With roughly 40% of their populations identifying as queer, these three more than double the next highest rate (New House at 16%) and roughly quadruple all the rest. Furthermore, residents report that East Side dorms have become even more queer in the years following this survey,

Figure 2 – Sexual Orientation by Residence Hall[9]

which they claim is a result of the closing of Senior House as well as changes in demographic trends. In relocating students from dorms with large queer populations and communities, MIT may want to consider means of helping queer students to continue to feel safe, welcome, and not alone in their temporary housing.

To an extent, it is also possible disparate effects of cost could have disparate impacts for queer populations. There exist concerns in the literature about economic hardship in relation to displacement from gentrification in queer neighborhoods (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Furthermore, rising costs may force students to increase their number of roommates as per the rents shown in Table 1. Of even more concern is the fact that roommates in college dormitories are heavily gender segregated in a way that leans upon a cis- and hetero- normative perspective. Though MIT has gender inclusive housing policies, one may still worry that its efficacy varies in application. "Gender Inclusive Housing" is a policy wherein students may elect to live with other students of any gender identity.[10] This policy does not extend to single gender living spaces such as McCormick Hall, Chocolate City, or certain floors in Random Hall. There is no evidence to suggest that these communities are not open to trans students whose gender identity matches that

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[9] Institutional Research, Office of the Provost: http://ir.mit.edu/demographics-by-residence-hall/?fbclid=IwAR10tgg_kb9dWfqEEHGbx2sLzsYUggkqZiBnrE5S6RfvwtKoPqkgWOADW6o
[10] https://studentlife.mit.edu/gender-inclusive-housing

of the space, despite frequently being designated as "same-sex communities". The only written stipulation is that MIT discourages students from rooming together if they are engaged in a relationship, regardless of the parties' genders. There is no readily available anecdotal evidence of any rooming assignments with men and women as roommates. It's unclear whether this is an actual policy choice, or simply a result of lack of interest. Consideration of how these factors of cost may disparately impact trans students is relevant to this analysis of temporary housing plans.

At the forefront of recent conversations surrounding the use of space by queer and trans individuals is the discussion over bathroom use. For students with non binary gender identities (i.e. neither man nor woman aligned), the designation of most public bathrooms as "male" or "female" can leave them with no available restroom, or can force them to "pick a side" as it were. There also exists very real danger associated with gendered restrooms. Nationally, transgender individuals may face verbal and physical harassment and assault when attempting to use a public restroom. In the 2015 US Transgender Survey (USTS) over half of respondents reported that they had avoided using a public bathroom out of fear (James, 2016). Within dormitories, the bathroom situation is different. While many "West Side" dorms do have gendered bathrooms, bathrooms on the East Side have a long history of gender neutrality. Bathrooms in Senior House functioned in a non-gendered "knock and enter" style similar to that of a family home at a time when that was shocking to many outside the dorm (Jenkins, 2018). More recently, when students in East Campus were supplied with one "Gender Neutral Bathroom" sign per floor, many elected to hang it in other areas – such as a kitchen door on my own hall – rather than imply that the other bathrooms were segregated or otherwise unsafe. Following renovations in New House, previously ungendered bathrooms have become segregated; or at least, they have become physically demarcated as "male" or "female". In practice, one resident informed me, students chose to ignore the new labels. Still, it is concerning that such a change would be instituted, and may prove difficult to maintain non-compliance with these changes as new students cycle through the dorm. Keeping in mind the existing bathroom policies in renovating dorms may be essential to helping trans students to feel safe in their temporary housing.

Distrust

A final important consideration for the MIT context is that of trust. One of the design principles outlined in Ceasar McDowell's Civic Design Framework is that of designing for healing. He suggests that when there is a history of mistrust between the planner and the public, future processes must account space for healing that divide in order for the public to put faith in new projects (McDowell, 2018). Regardless of the intent of the actions, there are a number of past behaviors that have damaged MIT students' confidence in the Department of Student Life. Understanding this history is necessary to understanding the potential impacts or reactions to certain strategies for rehousing.

The closing of Bexley Hall functions as an essential case study. Students were originally given notice shortly before finals and the summer break that the building would be closing and students would be rehoused elsewhere in the fall. They were also told that the building would potentially reopen in two to three years after renovations (Faviero, 2014). In the summer of 2015 Bexley was demolished over concerns about the cost of rebuilding, leaving students feeling "misled" (Srivastava and Wang, 2015).

Senior House was closed to undergraduates for reasons entirely unrelated to structural repair (Barnhart, 2017). In fact, it stands open today as a graduate residence. Its closure is relevant for two main reasons: the role of quantitative data and its status as part of the East Side. One of the reasons cited for the changes at Senior House was data from the 2015 Healthy Minds Survey. In the wake of the decision, a number of criticisms have been launched regarding the means by which this data was collected and analyzed.

Elizabeth Glaser was a visiting faculty member at MIT at the time of writing her article, as well as the parent of a student who took the survey in question. According to Glaser, students were given the impression that the data would not be tied to specific living groups. She also requested a copy of the survey protocol, but was denied (Glaser, 2017).[11] In her article, student Jessica Adams reiterates many of Glaser's complaints and ties the issue to a larger trend of perceived data misuse by the Department of Student Life. She points out that many recent controversial decisions by DSL included "vague appeal[s] to 'the data,'" without providing any

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[11] Interestingly, surveys conducted by DSL often fall out of the purview of the Provost's Office of Institutional Research, which has a more transparent process for requesting data. I actually requested data from such a survey of this Office and was forwarded to DSL, who denied my request for privacy concerns.

of said data for students to examine themselves (Adams, 2019, n.p.). Taken collectively, these smaller concerns about data usage create a deeper feeling of mistrust.[12]

It is unlikely that any of these decisions were made with ill intent; however, they stirred up a wave of negative sentiment in students that served to weaken their relationship with DSL.[13] Many students now commonly believe that the Department of Student Life is seeking to end dormitory culture. This fear is exacerbated in residences associated with the East Side. There were originally four 'East Side' dorms that did not share geographical vicinity so much as similar policies and counter-cultures. These dorms included Bexley Hall, East Campus, Random Hall, and Senior House. Of those four, fifty percent have closed in the past six years. This thesis will not be exploring the circumstances of those closures in further detail, but regardless of whether students' fears are merited, there is a pervasive concern throughout the East Side that any attention from DSL may be a harbinger of death.

As residence halls have been closed, there has been a need for an increase in beds for undergraduates. To fill this need, construction is underway on a dorm temporarily termed "New Vassar". A committee including student representatives was charged with drafting an architectural principles document for designing future dorms (Chin, 2019). Students from this committee have expressed frustration with the process, claiming that parameters were changed after the fact and agreements were reneged upon. Specifically, students complained that compromises about the number of single versus double or triple rooms were ignored and that despite a committee recommendation to build "cook-for-yourself" dorms, the design shifted over time to include fewer and fewer kitchens, putting more resources into a dining hall (Chin, 2019). Students were also upset that, though New Vassar had originally been billed as "swing dorm" for displaced communities during renovations, when announcing the upcoming Burton Conner

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[12] I personally have been counseled privately, and informally, by other students not to participate in any new internal research or surveys. I have also witnessed some upperclassmen advise first year students to behave likewise.

[13] Speaking from personal experience, a student once confided in me, firm in their belief that they had seen the plans to Bexley in a basement and knew beyond a doubt that it was not in structural disrepair, that the whole debacle was a conspiracy theory to erase that dorm's 'dangerous' culture. From the rest of my research, I would conclude that this is almost certainly false, but it is reflective of the very real fear in students that DSL wants to 'destroy' existing cultures and prevent new ones from forming.

renovations it was instead revealed that New Vassar would not now, or at any time in the future be used for such a purpose (Chin, 2019).

Many of the details of this process and the changes in framing have only come to light as a result of the actions of one former committee member, who saved all correspondence throughout the planning and wrote a guest column in *the Tech*, MIT's student newspaper, in which she included stable links to all her documentation (Chin, 2019). While it is entirely possible and probable that changes to the design were the result of non-negotiable cost constraints, by changing the constraints after coming to agreements with students, the process left students feeling ignored and betrayed. Whether or not students were ignored or betrayed, the fact is that such a feeling pervades the student body and could impact their trust in future processes. Combined with fears related to earlier incidents, there is a great deal of unease among students following new announcements by DSL.

Closing

It is within this context that this thesis explores the question of temporary housing. The displacements, or planned displacements, from Random Hall, New House, Burton Connor and East Campus make up the case studies explored further in the following sections. The findings often return to issues outlined here.

SECTION IV: METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the question of how MIT could best house students displaced by dormitory renovation, this research primarily relied on qualitative methods of study such as interviews. This study attempted to discover the effects of temporary relocation on students, what is MIT's decision-making process when dealing with temporary relocations, and what are the concerns about future processes. It should also be noted that this study bears some resemblance to the kind of participant researcher methodology employed by Gans, as I am an undergraduate student living in a dormitory slated for renovation. This was not the primary strategy or method of research, but has undoubtedly offered additional avenues for making contact with interview subjects.

As the primary persons affected by displacement, interviews with dormitory residents were the cornerstone of this research. Students from New House and Random Hall offered testimonials of the processes that took place during the three past case studies: the New House floods and subsequent move to the Hyatt Hotel, the Random Hall summer fire and subsequent move to New House, and the New House renovation. Residents of Burton Connor offered their experiences of the ongoing relocation planning process for their upcoming renovation to show how strategies have changed following the New House renovation. Residents of East Campus spoke to the feelings of students in dormitories slated for future renovations, but not yet fully entrenched in a planned process.

Students were primarily reached via dorm discussion mailing lists to get short feedback and schedule interviews. The one exception was Random Hall as the residents impacted by the fire were a mix of "Randomites" and students who were merely living there for the summer. Furthermore, due to the small size of Random and the age of the incident, few students who experienced the move are still on campus or on relevant mailing lists. As a result, these students were contacted by of a "snowball" methodology for finding interview subjects- wherein acquaintances offered contact with a first set of interviewees, who then directed the study to additional interviewees, and so on.[14]

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[14] This was aided by the fact that I was one of the students displaced by this fire, and was able to contact former floor-mates.

In interviews, students were asked a series of questions related to how they felt about their past, future, or potential temporary housing. Questions such as:

1. What factor of housing is most important to you?
2. What factors make relocating residents of your dorm unique?
3. What would be your best and worst case scenarios for relocation?

Students that had already gone through a relocation process were also asked questions such as:

4. Did you feel the quality of this factor was preserved during your temporary re-housing? (In reference to the first question)
5. What was most important to you about your reslife experience during your time in the alternate housing?
6. Did this alternate housing affect your daily life in any significant way?
7. How would you describe your overall opinion of the temporary housing experience? Positive? Negative? Neutral?

Thorough study of planning issues must endeavor to account for most, or all, key perspectives. It is otherwise hard to plan around problems or parameters that only affect certain parties. For this reason attempts were made to contact administrative staff from the Department of Student Life as well as Housing and Residential Life in order to learn about their role in past processes and their constraints for future projects. Unfortunately, communications ended before interviews could be scheduled. Attempts were also made to access more recent survey results containing information on the demographics of the residence halls; however, this data could not be shared for privacy reasons.[15]

In lieu of interviews with DSL staff, contact was made with some current and former members of dormitory executive teams, student renovation chairs, and members of the Dorm Renewal Working Group (DRWG). While these students are not privy to all the same information as these departments, they meet or have met regularly with administrators and staff to discuss relocation processes. Many of the connections for these interviews were made by use of "snowball" methodology. Members of the Working Group were contacted through their mailing list, received from a prior interviewee.

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[15] Statistics given earlier in Section II are based on older iterations of recent surveys. While the older surveys make publically available demographic results broken down by residence hall, the publically available versions of the results for the recent iterations use "residence type" as the smallest aggregation, such that the results of all dormitories are averaged together.

In addition to asking these students about their own, personal experiences with renovations, these interviews also included questions about the process of planning for temporary housing. Questions such as:

1. What was/has been your role in the decision making process? What were/have been the logistics of that role? Generally speaking, with whom did you meet and what was asked of you?
2. Did you feel that your contributions had power or weight to them?
3. What constraints for this housing were/have been communicated to you?
4. What are the primary concerns your constituents brought/have brought to you, if any?
5. What would it take for you to get trust or buy-in from your constituents on a "DSL" branded relocation plan?

Questions from the earlier list for students were also often answered with both personal perspectives and executive insights.

In all, roughly a dozen students were interviewed in the course of this research, with at least two responses per dormitory or group. In person interviews lasted between half an hour and an hour. Nearly all of the students were women or non-binary persons. This work may, therefore, not address some unknown issues of relocation specific to men. Such a selection was not purposeful, and merely the result of who responded to the emails sent to large mailing lists including people of all genders.

In that I am also a resident of one of these undergraduate dormitories and am relatively active in the goings-on of that dormitory, my own experiences may have colored my interpretations of these interviews. Additionally, given the historical patterns of mistrust between students and administrators, my position as a student may have, at times, made it difficult to trust that I was not interested in painting a negative account of any specific party. On the positive side of this perception, students may have been more willing to trust me with certain complaints or fears, enabling me to gain a greater context for resident concerns. I made an effort throughout this work to keep a neutral and open mind to new information and perspectives, and to convey this open-mindedness to interview participants. A counterpoint to the challenges of studying this issue as an involved party is that my understanding of the context, after four years living within it, is greater than may be achieved by an outside perspective.

SECTION V: FINDINGS

This section details the responses of students in interviews conducted as part of this work. The section is divided by residence hall beginning with the 2016 Random Hall fire, followed by the 2015 New House flood and 2017-2018 New House Renovations, the ongoing planning of the Burton Connor renovations, the potential future East Campus renovations, and closing with the student Dorm Renewal Working Group. Sub-sections vary in length according to the number and length of student responses, as well as the complexity of the displacement. An analysis of the recurring themes from these interviews and synthesis of student consensus across residence halls can be found in the next section.

RANDOM HALL

In the summer of 2016, the roof-deck of Random Hall caught fire, forcing students elsewhere. These students included both members of the Random Hall community and residents of other dormitories that were living in Random as one of two residence halls open for the summer. For the rest of the summer, residents were housed in New House. Full-year residents of Random were able to return in the fall.

Residence Priorities & Personal Effects of Displacement

Students generally agreed that the most important factors to their housing experience at MIT has been the community of people that they live with and the ability to choose that community. Residents often reported appreciating the "community norms" set in their living environment, which they felt were able to be maintained because the other members of their community or sub-communities were very invested in where they lived and cared about their floors or dormitories as social units. On the floor of one student, all the seniors had lived there for all four years. Students also argued that part of what made it possible to residents to form strong communities that agree on their internal values was that residents had a choice of where to live. The range of living communities on MIT's campus is large and even the sub-communities within a dormitory can vary drastically.

Many floors struggled to preserve their community bonds and policies in the temporary housing. Students claimed that it had been harder to enforce so-called "community norms" in public spaces as there were often students from outside a given community using the same space. They also said that it felt wrong to try and impose rules when it was not their space "really." One resident reported that although the members of their floor had been placed into adjacent rooms, those rooms were not near to any useful communal spaces such as lounges and kitchens, with the exception of a lounge that they described as a small "alcove." They felt that the culture of their community had been interrupted since residents were more likely to stay in their rooms as opposed to a communal space. They felt lonelier the rest of the summer, which made it harder for them to deal with what was a difficult time for them personally. This resident acknowledged that their floor had actively chosen to use a kitchen farther from their rooms in order to not compete for cooking space with a number of other floors. They also mentioned that they believed that other floors had fared better, with better layout of student rooms and communal space, and that they were confident that the arrangement worked better for New House residents whose communities fit into the space differently. Though they felt some resentment for these other floors with better spaces, they also acknowledged that had they received that space, the other floors would not have, which would not have been preferable overall. The resentment, they said, did not do any long-term damage and ended with the displacement.

Students' best-case scenarios for their temporary housing often included an acknowledgement that the housing they received was fairly good given the circumstances. They were glad to have been placed in a cook-for-yourself dormitory and generally were unsure of where else they could have gone. One interviewee claimed that their understanding was that residents were lucky to have gotten housing in New House. Another resident said that a best-case solution would involve placing students in a suite-style residence hall since Random is made of smaller floors. There were culture clashes between full year "Randomites" and summer residents that they argued could have been reduced by giving them separate kitchens. They continued by saying that they generally prefer to share a kitchen with fewer residents, which would have been possible in a suite. This resident also pointed to the fact that some floors of Random are designated as "single-sex," and may have benefitted from the ability to transition to "single-sex" suites.

For some students, a worst-case scenario of temporary housing would entail breaking up the communities of displaced students as much as possible and denying them access to the same level of resources they had previously. Examples of the latter included placing students in dining dorms, facilities without social spaces, or hotels. Other students suggested an even worse option: forcing residents out of MIT housing entirely. According to one resident, New House was one of their personal least preferred options, and they would have rather lived somewhere like a graduate dormitory or a dining dorm where the meal plan was provided for free.

Unique Concerns or Issues of the Residence

Many residents cited the architectural layout of Random Hall and critical to its social process. Each floor, or sub-community, has its own kitchen and lounge. In order to reach their room, students must pass through one or the other. One resident referred to the "critical paths" of the dormitory, claiming that the space was well designed to naturally cause neighbors to "bump into" one another and interact. This resident conceded that it might not be an "efficient" use of space and therefore is largely un-replicated elsewhere on campus. Suite-style residences, they said, may provide a somewhat similar environment. Kitchens were also cited as important to community building, and appeared to be valuable as social space in addition to providing students with a way to feed themselves.

Geographically, Random Hall is far from other residence halls, but one resident claimed that New House had felt farther from main campus than Random. It was good, they said, that there had been space to store bikes in New House. Random Hall is also much closer to grocery options than many other residences. During the summer students said they had more time available for shopping, but if the relocation had occurred during the academic year, students would have appreciated grocery accommodations. One resident said they would have liked just have had someone tell the students what the best way to get groceries was in that location, rather than spend a month determining it for themself.

Displacement to New House

Over the course of the moving process, housing staff took a number of measures to assist students. For the first few days after the fire MIT provided residents with free meals at one of the dining halls, Maseeh Hall. Students cited this as helpful, since they were in the middle of

moving, with no time to cook and groceries scattered across campus. MIT also paid for a moving service to take students' belonging to their new housing and back again at the end of the summer. This allowed residents to save on the time, expense, and stress of the actual process of moving, even if they were displaced. Furthermore, for some residents whose rooms had been damaged by fire or by the water used to combat it, they were required to move all of their belongings and were unable to store any in their rooms. Movers were, therefore, critical to these students.

One of the ways in which housing staff sought to accommodate the displaced students after the initial move was through laundry. In Random Hall laundry is free, unlike in New House. When students made administrators aware of this fact, they immediately agreed not to charge for this service. Machines were set to charge $0 in TechCash, MIT's ID card based payment system, when residents swiped their cards. Unfortunately, one student claimed that because they had not stocked their card with TechCash, they could not purchase a laundry cycle with their ID, despite the fact that the actual amount of money it would have subtracted was zero. The student instead used the coin-operated features of the machine, and so paid for their laundry. Other residents did not have this issue and expressed gratitude for so easily accommodating them.

Though New House does not allow students to own pets, apart from service animals, Random Hall is home to a number of cat floors. Furthermore, Random happened to be host to a number of unregistered pets at the time of the fire. Not only were registered pet owners able to bring their cats to New House, owners of unregistered animals were not fined and were also able to bring their pets to the temporary housing. Cats were confined to student rooms in New House and were not able to roam the halls. This had a negative impact on many of the cats, especially the more social ones. Students generally agreed that little could have been done in this case, given that New House normally housed students that may have had cat allergies, but remarked that this could be an issue for longer or otherwise planned displacements. Generally speaking, residents were happy with how the pet issue was handled and that owners were not forced to re-home their pets.

Opinions on the Process

Students were very forgiving of any issues associated with the temporary housing on the grounds that this was an emergency situation. Complaints would often be followed with

statements like "What can you do?" or "I don't fault them for that… there was a fire." While students spoke negatively of the displacement and complained about some of the actions taken by administrators, they also spoke very positively of the administrators themselves. This was a difficult situation, they said, and given the speed of the response, staff must have either had a rigorous emergency plan in place or worked around the clock to problem solve, something that students were deeply appreciative of.

On the first day staff brought students together and fed them as they answered questions. According to one resident, "It was actually a pleasant evening, for all the weirdness." This was emblematic of the way students said "on the ground level" worked to do "nice things" for students and worked to do them quickly. Residents often remarked that they believed that whoever was "on the ground level" from MIT staff did a good job with the displacement and genuinely tried their hardest to help. The effort to keep communities in adjacent rooms was something that students were very thankful for.

On the negative side of the process, students would have preferred greater transparency from administrators. What had been the options for host dormitories, for example. Students expressed that there had been many fears that Random Hall might be closed for a longer period or shut down entirely and wished that staff could have done more to reassure them that that was not happening. Students also wanted more time in Random Hall to pack their belongings. It seemed to them that they were adults and could have signed a waiver if there were safety or liability concerns with being in the building. If such an option were not possible, they would have liked to know that it was at least considered.

NEW HOUSE

During the 2015-2016 academic year, New House struggled with issues related to pipes and flooding in the dormitory. As a result, a number of students were housed on a temporary basis in the Hyatt Hotel near campus. Following these repairs, it was announced that New House would undergo a planned full-year renovation. The New House renovations took place during the 2017-2018 academic year. Many of the cultural houses remained in residence during renovations and were moved from one half of the building to the other during IAP, or Independent Activities Period, MIT's January Term. Construction work was localized to the half they were not in. The

numbered houses, and one of the cultural houses, were moved to various locations across MIT's housing system including other undergraduate residences, graduate residences, and former fraternity houses off campus. Efforts were made to keep these students with their house.

Residence Priorities & Personal Effects of Displacement

Students generally gave negative reactions to the temporary housing overall. Perhaps the kindest response was "neutral on the negative side." One resident from a cultural community that remained in the dorm throughout renovations claimed that they believed it was "really, really great for the houses that stayed, and really, really bad for everyone else." Even though attempts were made to keep displaced students in larger groups, residents claimed that even those students often seemed scattered, such as the residents of House 5 being split across multiple areas of Burton Connor. Though students had negative feelings about the process, they also qualified that it would be hard to say what it "optimally" could have been or questioned what could have been in "the realm of feasibility."

Every student interviewed immediately reported the community and proximity to community as the most important factors to their housing experience, topping other important issues like being able to cook for yourself. Many interviewees expressed that they had wanted to be a part of their communities as far back as CPW, MIT's Campus Preview Weekend, their senior year of high school, and that they had lived there exclusively since their first semester on campus.

Unfortunately, every student interviewed also said that this factor was damaged, at least partially, by the renovation and relocation processes. Students reported that, while they were able to somewhat preserve community within their house, they had trouble seeing their friends from different houses. Even within houses, community was damaged. In one house, only a third of students from the class of 2019 remained throughout the process and return, and only the class of 2020 was maintained. In one interview a student remarked that one of their closest friends was unable to handle another displacement on top of personal problems and left.

Another student, who had been a resident of one house and a social member of another, claimed that they moved to their social house as a result of renovations. Their original house largely split up rather than move to a mandatory meal plan dorm. Currently that house is largely made of first year students who missed the process. Though this student already had connections

to their current house, they emphasized that they would have preferred to maintain their old balance between houses rather than move, and never would have done so outside of these circumstances.

Generally, residents reported that the way they interacted with friends was dramatically changed, in a manner that negatively impacted their daily social lives greatly. In post-renovation impacts, students also reported that the in-house rooming process was abnormal this fall; more focused on placing all first year students in a bed somewhere rather than trying to find the best fit. It is unclear to what extent this was caused by damage to the community done by relocations, but was reported as such.

Apart from community, another factor that was brought up as important during relocation was effort on the part of MIT staff to address issues that come up in the alternate housing in a timely manner. Students claimed that this wasn't always true for New House's renovation, but that when it did, it greatly improved their quality of life.

In response to a request for their best-case solution for relocation, one student stated that, in retrospect, they believed that House 5 did the best of the displaced students. To their knowledge, House 5 lived in Burton Connor suites connected by staircases. This student also acknowledged that such a solution put undue burden on BC residents. Another student offered that the best solution might have been for New House to all move into New Vassar, if they could have "held out" long enough for construction of that building to complete. Other interviewees also announced support for the use of a "swing dorm."

On the worst case side of the question, students generally answered that this would involved a process of scattering students, making no attempt to reserve blocks of residents, and making no attempt to offer space in cook-for-yourself residence halls. One student humorously claimed the worst case would be placement in one or two specific dining dorms with Tier I pricing. Another student immediately responded to the question with the phrase "getting bexiled."

Unique Concerns or Issues of the Residence

Part of what residents claimed makes New House unique in a relocation process is that the needs of different houses within the dormitory are unique. The houses range in size from 20 to 40 residents, with some houses being double the capacity of others. The different groups have

different needs from their cooking spaces. In some houses residents largely cook on their own, in others members collaborate to feed the entire house at once. There is no "blanket solution" that will accommodate every house, meaning that a relocation strategy can quickly turn into many relocation strategies.

With respect to cook-for-yourself arguments related to relocation plans, they are often positioned less in favor of cooking and more in opposition to meal plans. The biggest problem that students mentioned was the cost; specifically, that one could eat out at every meal for the same price. Students also mentioned a dislike of the food at the dining halls. Many had only tried it as a result of GRT meal passes, not willing to pay for it themselves, but sad that even free, they weren't "impressed." One resident of a cultural house said that they liked the community of their house and that cooking was a part of that, but that their next best option would be cooking only for themself as it offers more variety.

Cooking is also a big part of culture at New House, and can be important to the culture within houses as well. Several residents mentioned that it seems to them that administrators tried to preserve this culture through actions such as renovating some kitchens in the planned temporary housing prior to relocation. One resident mentioned of the design process for the New House renovation that students in their house asked for an additional oven and one fewer dishwasher to accommodate the oven space, as well as additional sink space, and after "a lot of pressing" MIT agreed.

Students reported that all houses suffered from smaller classes of first year students as a result of the renovation. Several houses were unable to take on any new first year students. Houses that stayed in New House during renovations were allowed to house first years, but living on an active construction site made many first years wary and incoming classes were still small. Following renovations, students still report skewed class numbers within their houses, unable to easily readjust.

In terms of geography, few students reported specific resources tied to the physical location of New House. One that was mentioned was that residents typically had a great deal of time spent with the Area Director at New House, but that this was significantly harder to achieve during displacement as a result of the greater distance.

In interviews, students also reported complications associated with the GRT system. GRTs, or Graduate Resident Tutors, are graduate students hired to live with groups of

undergraduates, often floors or houses within residence halls. Many of the New House GRTs were graduating at the time of relocation, and houses often did not undergo the proper process of hiring, in which students may play a major role. Those houses that did move often did not bring their GRTs with them to their temporary housing. One GRT quit after being forced to move so many times as a result of room reallocation when all residents began moving back to the dorm.

Students varied on whether or not they believed that there was significant inter house unity prior to renovations. Those that did argued that it was damaged by renovations. Part of this distance was due to new physical distance between houses. Additionally, while New House government structures were preserved, it often felt to students that numbered and cultural houses had different interests that may have conflicted at times. Efforts were made during relocation to maintain relationships. There was ostensibly a Head of House fund for inter-house socialization. It was poorly advertised to students, who never applied to use it. The New House Area Director would swipe students into Maseeh dining once a week. This process was similar to informal dining trips organized by students in the Hyatt, which did increase unity, but the effect seemed more limited now that students had kitchens.

The greatest source of new divides appears to have occurred during the return to New House. Because the new plan of the dormitory does not align with the old locations of houses, students had to reallocate resources. This led to what was described as a "hunger games" fight for kitchens and other resources. Bad feelings from this reallocation deepened the rifts between houses.

Displacement to the Hyatt

Students displaced to the Hyatt Hotel by flooding opened all discussion of those events with the disclaimer that they were willing to forgive issues in the housing and the process on the grounds that it was an emergency situation with no time for planning. They also voiced a number of complaints that can still offer insight into more formally planned displacement processes.

One issue with the housing was that because the Hyatt is a hotel, it was not set up for socialization. This hurt community among the students living there. Furthermore, kitchens in New House often served as the main social space of the community. This space was lost when students were moved to a hotel. House government structures were preserved during this displacement and the New House government was still able to meet in the first floor of the

dormitory. The student executive team attempted to counteract the anti-social nature of the hotel by holding regular trips to try and encourage social space, but these efforts only worked so well. Because the houses became so dislocated, there was some damage to cross-house unity. However, displaced students were given free meal plans to replace the lost kitchens, and often traveled to dining halls together. Upperclassmen reportedly emailed out at meal times to organize groups such that there were always 10 to 15 residents eating together at a dining hall at a time. Such actions actually managed to encourage some greater inter house unity, even as the displacement damaged it.

In terms of process, students expressed frustration that administrators often seemed at best surprised and "clueless" or at worst outright dishonest. Students' priority during the crisis was to stay together, often at a level that appeared unexpected by MIT. One resident mentioned that administrators had acted shocked by their willingness to move to Tang, a graduate residence, in order to maintain community. More frustratingly for residents, in a mid September town hall, one student asked how they were planning to make sure nothing happened in the future, and was told that these repairs and the resulting displacement would be the last intervention like this. The renovations that followed made it feel to residents that administrators had been dishonest in this earlier meeting.

Displacement from Renovations (by group)

TANG HALL:

I did not speak with any students from House 4, but in my conversation with the New House relocation chair I was offered some information about their housing. According to this conversation, House 4 was housed in Tang Hall, a graduate student residence hall. According to the chair, while the students were mostly fine with their housing, the graduate residents "hated" them. Rumors claimed that graduates called Campus police on the New House students at least once and that graduates generally complained of noise and other issues.

NEW HOUSE:

Much like their new first years, the cultural houses that stayed in New House weren't thrilled to be living in an active construction site, for all that they were happy to stay and were willing to make the trade. The main conflict came when moving from one part of the building to

the other during IAP. The move itself was relatively well organized. It kept to its stated schedule and systems were put in place for residents who were off campus at the time. Unfortunately, failures in communication led to many of those residents not knowing about these systems. Additionally, some belongings were accidently moved to the wrong houses; however, students were able to identify these items and relocate them on their own.

MACGREGOR:

La Casa was selected to move out of New House – the only cultural house to do so – as it was the largest cultural house with 28 residents. To move to MacGregor, La Casa had to cut their size to 22 residents, making this choice less clear.

Students from La Casa were moved to MacGregor and were all located on the same floor, but spread across multiple "entries"[16] and separated by other MacGregor residents. As a result, the community lacked a "flowing cohesiveness." One resident reported that the physical distance between entries led to distance in the community such that most interaction occurred with those closest to each other. Interactions were also decreased as a result of the atmosphere in MacGregor, with one student claiming that they knew many residents who did not feel comfortable going into darker hallways, as they believed MacGregor's to be. In order to accommodate the La Casa "meal plan", or cooperative cooking set up, MacGregor kitchens in the areas that La Casa was to inhabit were renovated prior to moving in.

La Casa was able to maintain many of their governmental processes as rooms were allocated to them as a whole, and they were then given complete control over those rooms with respect to processes like in-house rooming. They were also able to take new first year students even though they moved to another dorm. In fact, it had been one of the stated requirements of the community, and was one of the reasons they decided to move to MacGregor. They were also able to take on a few upperclassman transfers as some of their previous upperclassmen residents moved out in between semesters.

Of the entries hosting La Casa, there were a variety of responses to the situation. MacGregor's H-entry invited members of La Casa to their events and was perceived as welcoming, holding mixers and sharing their GRTs. G-entry was seen as neutral, with little

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[16] Much in the way that other dormitories may be divided into smaller floor cultures, MacGregor is divided into "entries," which are assigned a letter, in this case F, G, and H.

interaction, but also few issues. Some conflict was had between La Casa and the residents of F-entry. The conflict lay in the fact that a larger kitchen was created for La Casa's "meal plan," and residents of F-entry also wanted to use it. The two worked out a schedule in order to accommodate the fact that there would be little room left over while La Casa was in the process of cooking for 30 people, as they did every day. One student also claimed that members of F-entry sometimes took La Casa's cookware, leading to further conflict.

The house team - Head of House, House Manager, and Area Director – from MacGregor was perceived as very welcoming and helpful to La Casa. Students felt that they were able to replace some of what was lost from the GRT position, who did not move with the students. Students also reported that they felt comfortable addressing the house team with their issues and one student specifically cited the house team as the cause of most of their positive feelings about the experience.

LAMBDA CHI ALPHA

House 3 was housed in the old fraternity house of Lambda Chi Alpha, which had been suspended on a temporary basis several years ago. The LCA house was off campus and had stood empty for a number of years. House 3 was aware of these facts and willing to accept some hardships, like a greater distance from campus resources, in order to stay together. They were also able to tour part of the facilities during the spring prior to the relocation and make requests for modifications. Among these were changes to the kitchen such as getting an additional stovetop range, more seating, and more shelving. According to the students interviewed, the staff and administrators they spoke with agreed verbally, but they "didn't get it in writing."

On moving into the house, the students faced a number of significant issues. One resident claimed that the only change they say was one freshly painted stairwell. They never received the additional range or seating. They did receive the shelving, but only after living in the house for a month. House 3 had only been able to tour the kitchen ahead of time, but discovered serious issues with student rooms after moving in. Some of the rooms had broken windows, the larger rooms did not heat well, and there was a general size discrepancy between the actual rooms and the floor plans. One student asked for repairs to their heating and was told that it would be impossible to fix and was advised to move. It is important to note that students were originally being charged Tier II pricing for this housing. It was eventually changed to Tier III housing in

response to student complaints, but only after a significant amount of time and campaigning on the part of the students.

House 3 was unable to take new first years during their relocation. They did receive upperclassmen transfers into the LCA house. The residents claimed that it seemed that anyone who needed housing was put with them. The transfers were largely those that had canceled housing and then un-canceled or made otherwise unplanned moves such as one "miserable" first year that had had to leave their original dormitory for personal reasons during the year. Typically transfer housing assignments go through a dormitory's RAC; however, House 3 was not notified until after transfer assignments had already moved in. Furthermore, while House 3 had been aware of the distance from campus and accepted it, a number of international students that were housed there had not realized the housing was so far away and were reportedly "horrified."

Like many of the other houses, House 3 lost its GRT in the relocation processes. Rather than going through the usual hiring process, one was simply appointed to House 3. However, upon learning that House 3 would be moving to a fraternity house, that candidate left the position. In FSILGs the position is typically that of a GRA or Graduate Resident Advisor, who are not compensated as well as their residence hall counterparts. After the first candidate left, a second was appointed; however that one did not come until late IAP and generally did not seem to care about the residents or interact with them.

Though no members of Lambda Chi Alpha lived in the house, as a result of the suspension, former members occasionally turned up in order to look for belongings, both communal resources of the fraternity and personal effects. This was viewed as a comparatively minor annoyance.

Opinions on the Process

Many students felt that they had had a decent amount of input in the renovations process. At the same time, they also reported that they "definitely had way less autonomy" than they did prior to relocation. The New House Relocation Chair said that at times they felt more like a "glorified scheduler" for Jennifer Hapgood-White, the Director of Residential Services. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that it seemed unclear to students how much power over their housing situation Director Hapgood-White had, or how much she knew about the process. Students offered up space in Tang and floors in other dorms. New House residents then got a

survey asking them to rank the choices and give their priority of staying with their house or following their rankings. During the actual displacement, smaller problems compounded. Students reflected that, as a result, it was important that all issues be resolved in a timely manner. This was often untrue for the New House renovation, but residents agreed that when it did, it improved their quality of life. Students were, however, largely unhappy with the process overall. They made some allowance for the fact that it would have been difficult no matter what happened, unless everyone moved all together to a new dormitory. Ultimately, the effects were negative and students report that they are still recovering from the damage of displacement.

Every student interviewed took the opportunity to offer sympathy to administrators in making difficult decisions and make allowance for some hardship. They were appreciative of solutions that were found in short timeframes and spoke negatively of hypothetical students that might take personal attacks against someone who was just doing their job. However, the tension between administrators and students was their biggest frustration. Most students echoed a sentiment that they "felt like [administrators] thought they were trying." All agreed that administrators did not understand the dorms and responded to most student concerns with exclamations that they "had no idea" that those were student preferences.

Students felt negatively about how the situation was handled. One resident said that they felt renovations had deeply damaged their community and claimed that New House Administration played a negative role in that. Another resident reported that it like student concerns weren't taken seriously by administrators or by the architects. With respect to the latter, they specifically referenced the design of kitchens being made for cultural houses with lots of open storage and communal space, even in numbered houses that in past renovations had received different designs to suit their needs. By and large, students reported that the process felt like a fight of them versus "the admin." One resident, when discussing that the New House government had been preserved said that they didn't have much interaction with the executive team, and mostly stayed within their house, but then claimed that the executive team "stood up to the admins, which was good." This despite the fact that this resident was more forgiving of administrators than other interviewees. What was telling was that several residents, unprompted, brought up the recent issues students have been having with the Department of Student Life related to changes in the in-house rooming process, illustrating a deeper distrust of DSL that permeates other issues.

BURTON CONNOR

During the 2018-2019 academic year it was announced that Burton Connor would be undergoing renovations after the opening of the newest undergraduate residence, temporarily dubbed New Vassar. Planning for this process and the resulting relocations is ongoing.

Constraints

Without input from administrators it is hard to say for certain what constraints exist for housing students during the Burton Connor renovation. What follows are the constraints as communicated or implied to Burton Connor's president, Alice Zhang.

The largest group that students can move in is a group of 8 to 10 residents. There seems to be some possibility that this number is flexible, but very little. The reason this relocation will not move larger groups may be that this process proved difficult to organize during the New House renovation. In meetings with the Burton Connor president, Director Hapgood-White mentioned that moving those groups was a hassle to manage and disrupted the other dormitories and their communities. Zhang emphasized that administrators were largely and genuinely interested in keeping students together where feasible.

BC residents have been told they will have first priority for housing next year. It is unclear what would happen if every resident said they wanted to move to New Vassar given that DSL has taken a hard stance against using New Vassar as a swing dorm.

Burton Connor is unlikely to get new first years or upperclassman transfers during renovations. This would only really be possible if BC residents were moved to New Vassar, where the community could be kept together, and where there would be space for new members.

At the moment, it appears that the Department of Student Life is willing to let Burton Connor maintain its student executive team, GRTs, and house team. At the time of interview, Zhang was uncertain of where that house team would live during renovations. Additionally, it seems students may also be allowed to organize activities during MIT's residence exploration period (REX) and campus preview weekend (CPW).

Students and administrators briefly discussed the idea of creating a space on campus for the community, much like was done for the former residents of Bexley in Pritchett Hall.

However Burton Connor residents in interviews suggested that they were uninterested in such a space, arguing that BC is more of residential community than a social one.

Residence Priorities & Personal Effects of Displacement

Based on interviews, the primary concerns of Burton Connor residents are that community and culture be preserved and that students be able to cook for themselves. Secondary concerns that residents have about renovations include the fate of the student murals in the dormitory, the individual costs associated with temporary house such as Tiers and meal plans, and maintaining existing communal spaces in the building. Some upperclassmen students mentioned that they would likely move off campus during renovations for their final year or years. Despite the fact that these students would not be around for the return to Burton Connor and the reformation of community, they still expressed deep concern that floor cultures would not survive the process as well as sadness that the strength of community bonds would be lost.

When asked for their best-case scenario for relocation, students suggested moving all residents to New Vassar without requiring them to purchase a meal plan. On the reverse side, their worst-case scenarios involved being forced into the housing lottery with no efforts to group students whatsoever.

Unique Concerns or Issues of the Residence

The suite style of living was cited as a dramatic departure from the sub-communities of other dormitories. Residents are generally in favor of the system and support continuing suite-style living in the dormitory post-renovations. Suites range in size from 4 - 12 residents, with eight being the average. It is hypothesized that this is the reason for moving students in 8-10 person groups. Students often reported that residents tend to care more about socializing with other members of their class year and friends within their floor. Floors range from 40-50 residents, with the sizing differing in the Burton and Connor buildings. Residents generally believe that the idea of moving them in eight person groups is misguided, as suites are less important socially within Burton Connor than floors, even though students enjoy suite-style living.

One concern interviewees cited was that residents may all try to move to residences "similar" such that there will not be enough space in those dormitories to accommodate everyone,

forcing some students elsewhere. For example, many students are concerned that there will not be enough space in cook-for-yourself communities for all those that do not wish to be on a meal plan.

Burton Connor is a cook-for-yourself community and residents appear to often strongly dislike or even hate the meal plan system. They complain that the cost of the meal plan is too high, but also say that they simply enjoy cooking. Burton 2 also features suites that keep kosher. I was unable to hear from these students, but was told by the president of Burton Connor that her impression was that many students who keep kosher find that they cannot use the dining halls effectively or use large, messy communal spaces and cookware. The cook-for-yourself option is, therefore, important to their ability to properly feed themselves.

Other concerns about the process relate to annual events and storage space. Annual events held by Burton Connor include, among others, the BC Formal, an apple bake, and parties held by Burton 3 as part of an old tradition. Zhang is hopeful that such event may be able to continue throughout the renovation process. Moving creates issues related to storage, both due to the need to find storage for communal items in the dormitory and the loss of summer storage options for students.

Generally students felt that the only important geographic feature of Burton Connor is its location on "dorm row" near most other dormitories and students. On an individual level, students discussed the potential hassle or benefit of an increased or decreased distance to classes depending on where any particular student is placed.

Opinions on the Process So Far

The announcement that Burton Connor would be renovated in 2020 came over email. A forum was held within BC the next day to address student concerns. Students were upset by what they viewed as a sudden change and a last minute forum. Many residents were upset to learn that New Vassar was no longer being considered as a swing dormitory for renewal processes.

A small transition team consisting of the Burton Connor president and a few underclassmen was formed to plan for the renovation. This team works with Senior Associate Dean of Housing and Residential Services, David Friedrich, and Director of Residential Services, Jennifer Hapgood-White. Residents are to pass on their concerns through this group, and the team has been engaged in active efforts to collect that input. The bulk of conversation

between students and administrations occurs with this group working on this specific purpose, rather than the executive team.

Residents are upset and unhappy with the current process, both because of existing distrust in administrators and because of issues with the current process. In addition, students don't entirely understand the process, which seeds further distrust. Zhang referred to this problem as a cycle that worsens existing issues. Residents also don't understand why New Vassar cannot be used as a swing dormitory or why they cannot move in larger groups given that it appears to them that some dormitories may have space for larger groups, and given that students from New House were able to do so. These compound with a generally opaque planning process that was perceived as hastily announced to create a process that is fueling student distrust and fear of the coming renovations.

EAST CAMPUS

Administrators have tentatively informed students that at some point in the years following Burton Connor's renovation, East Campus will undergo its own renewal. No exact timeframe currently exists for the project, but residents are already beginning to consider options for both renovation and relocation plans.

Residence Priorities & Personal Concerns About Displacement

Students reported that housing has been very important to their MIT experience overall. One resident said that they felt the community really helped students transition from their high school friend groups because residents really welcome you to their family in un-superficial ways. They also emphasized that this welcoming feeling lasts long past the residence exploration period and never feels forced.

Residents also often reiterated that there is often little need for peer mentors as a result of the housing system. Upperclassmen are right there interacting with younger students and giving advice. One student was able to major a decision in declaring their major based on conversations they had had with older students on their floor. They also said they felt, that with a peer mentor, they would have been too nervous to really discuss the subject past a surface level.

When discussing their first impression of East Campus as a first year student, one interviewee said that while they had been in places before that were accepting of their identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, they had never been in a "queer space" on the level of East Campus. They followed by saying that they have never experienced violent homophobia anywhere at MIT, but argued that this was "another level."

Most students mentioned cost as a main priority of theirs, both in terms of meal plans and tiers, especially as East Campus is one of only two Tier III dormitories. The other, Random Hall, has room for only 90 or so students total and would not be able to accommodate all East Campus residents who wished to move there. Several students explicitly cited this fact as the reason they believe they would move off campus as a direct result of renovations, unable to afford to live elsewhere on campus.

Another issue that students mentioned was location. East Campus is located among the academic buildings and is far closer to class than many of the other residence halls.

The most important factor to living in East Campus, according to every interview, was the people and the community. One resident referred to the importance of people over facilities by saying that they could live in most conditions, describing past residences with one bathroom for six people, no heating, air conditioning, or insulation, and more. What was more important, they said, was the community support that East Campus provided them. Many students claimed that advice from the upperclassmen in their dormitory had proved more useful than any formal advising program at MIT. They also said that the community they live in is helped them to continue their education at MIT and their life in general through great difficulties, and that without this supportive environment, they would have had a significantly harder time at MIT. According to one resident, East Campus and the housing system in general were not why they came to MIT, but have proven to be the "defining experience of my time here."

The priority, all interviewees said, was to keep as many of the displaced residents together as possible and to allow the community to take on new residents from first year students if at all possible. First year students are often referred to as the "life-blood" of the community. It is also difficult to correct imbalances in class years, meaning that a year with no or few first year students can take at minimum four years to correct, but may take even more since incoming classes during those years will also be out of balance in order to fill capacity.

Many students were careful in responding, saying that they knew some solutions would necessarily hurt other communities, which they did not want to do. That being said, if an area in another residence happened to be somewhat empty or otherwise had the space, this could be of great help. In the case of there being space for larger groups in other residences, students suggested informing first years that that area was designated for this other community and then giving them the option of selecting that area and that community during REX. Such a plan would necessitate changing the housing survey and in-house rooming process.

Students also argued for "self-determination" in a "best-case" process, or in other words, having the rooming process in temporary housing be largely student run, with displaced students having their own Room Assignment Chair, or RAC, as residence halls typically do. Also included in this "self determination" was making effort to keep floors together so that those sub-communities could maintain their governing structures, though students acknowledged that this could be logistically difficult. One resident even argued that delegating some responsibilities to the students would be better for students and administrators alike. This process necessarily makes more work for administrators, and so, this student argued, it is to their benefit to have students organize part of the rooming. For the students, having a greater role in the process helps with concerns surround the distrust of housing and student life departments.

The East Campus president, Adriana Jacobsen, offered her best case scenario, which involved renovating one "parallel" at a time and housing the other in the nearby Senior House dormitory.[17] This plan has been supported by a number of current and former student executives in East Campus as well as the former Head of House, Rob Miller. By the time of the East Campus renovations, former residents of Senior House will have long since left MIT, such that there is no competing undergraduate community. In this plan, as many displaced residents as possible would be moved to Senior House, which in their estimation could fit two thirds or perhaps three quarters of residents assuming that some decide on their own to move off campus. Some departures from campus, the president says, are to be expected no matter how well the displacement is handled. More residents, she says, could be housed if students are willing to live in doubles to keep the community together. For the rest of the displaced students, the aim would

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[17] East Campus is comprised of two long rectangular buildings parallel to one another and connected only by one hallway in the basement.

be to keep smaller groups, potentially friend groups, but floor communities if possible, together as much as could be done without tearing up pre-existing communities in other dormitories.

The main problem associated with this plan is that students reported that administrators worry about a contemporary housing crisis for graduate students. A former East Campus president, Tesla Wells, who also supports this plan, offered a solution. Currently, MIT offers some housing in graduate residences to individual juniors and seniors over the age of 21 in order to account for a current lack of capacity for undergraduates, who are guaranteed housing on campus for all four years, provided they never cancel their housing plans.[18] They therefore suggest that MIT stop offering this option and consolidate all those spots into the beds they offer in Senior House to East Campus.[19]

The advantages to this plan are numerous. The majority of residents would be housing in only two buildings that are extremely close to one another. East Campus would be able to take on new first year students. Students would still have kitchen access. Such a plan is generally more affordable for students. It would be significantly easier to maintain "traditions" of the dormitory such as clothing optionality and cat ownership, both of which existed in Senior House in the past. Residents could potentially still host events in the East Campus courtyard, provided they do not interfere with construction work. Splitting a two-year renovation in half would also mean that one year was spent renovating each parallel, which is relatively convenient.

Wells offered that the true best-case solution to an East Campus displacement would be to move as a group into a "swing" dormitory. The next best option, they argued, would be to move large "blocks" into non-dining dormitories in a manner as least disruptive to those existing communities as possible. The third next best option would be off campus housing. The last

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[18] This is based both upon interviews with student leaders and my own experience receiving emails enticing me to consider that option during my last year on campus.

[19] It may seem bizarre that the suggestion is that a graduate community be displaced to make room for an undergraduate one. However, it is important to note a few facts. Firstly, MIT does not guarantee on-campus housing to graduate students, but instead lotteries those apartments every year. Even a graduate student who receives housing one year may not be guaranteed that spot in the future. Secondly, graduate residences generally do not exhibit strong communities. In informal conversations with such students, they often remark that no one "hangs out" in the dorm, with the rare exception of organized events that are not well attended. Finally, as of the date this study was submitted, according to DSL's housing website for 70 Amherst St. (the address of Senior House), the site is guaranteed as graduate housing only through the fall of 2020 and may be used for alternate purposes afterward: https://studentlife.mit.edu/housing/graduate-family-housing/graduate-residences/70-amherst-street.

option they believed MIT should take would be to scatter students across the dormitories in groups smaller than thirty.

Generally speaking, students all claimed that the worst-case scenario would involve scattering all residents through a lottery. One interviewee followed this statement by saying the only they could imagine that would be even worse would be kicking everyone out of MIT housing completely.

One student who has been involved in conversations about the renovations process offered a detailed example of both a more "reasonable" worst-case scenario – i.e. one they believe may actually happen – and a "nightmare" scenario that is even worse. The former begins with administrators not informing residents about anything ahead of time, and "springing" the announcement on East Campus immediately after graduation, giving residents no time to preserve student murals or other physical representations of memories. This shortened timeline would also leave no room to organize keeping residents together, instead scattering them randomly across campus in groups of 6-8 students, which would be especially hard on students that don't feel particularly associated with a small group. Also included in this "reasonable worst-case scenario" was that no measures would be taken to improve the affordability of the temporary housing and that East Campus would not be allocated resources (or allowed to keep existing ones) to come together as a community. Examples of these resources included funding sources, the current East Campus house team, a community gathering space, and the ability to organize events during CPW and REX.

The nightmare scenario, they claimed, would be a combination of dissolutions of Bexley Hall and Senior House. They specified that this would involve actively trying to separate former East Campus residents, and even erasing the East Campus name. They also claimed their perception was that the relationship between the Department of Student Life and East Campus was not bad enough to warrant such actions or suspect they might be taken.

Unique Concerns or Issues of the Residence

Several students brought up the fact that East Campus residents often change the spaces they live in. This involves artistic expression, such as mural painting, as well as building lofts or modifying other aspects of rooms. Such activity would be difficult in a Tier I dorm, and may be distressing to any house manager unused to such behavior. In fact, multiple interviewees referred

to positive relationships with East Campus' house manager and expressed gratitude for his patience in dealing with students and allowing them to maintain current activities.

Students' ability to paint murals extends to a broader ability to paint their own walls whenever they please and generally make changes to their space. To name this as one resident did, this is East Campus' "metric for self-determination," or in other words, "We act like we own the building." Residents on occasion even fix their own plumbing. One interviewee remarked that someone else should be doing this, but that it does offer the benefit that residents learn not to be "helpless" in managing their living environment or solving problems.

According to one resident, "We have concept of culture and care of defining it," which they explained by saying that the culture of East Campus is very strong, but subject to change as students are aware that this culture serves them, rather than the opposite, and that it is changed when the desires of students change. They argued that this is visible in the projects East Campus builds in a very public way during REX, something that often offers MIT good publicity and that is marketed by the admissions department. They also argued that such accomplishments take a monumental amount of effort and would not be possible without a cohesive community.

This "care of defining culture" can extend into the way students manage house issues. In interviews, students suggested they believed that East Campus residents, or colloquially East Campers, would be more likely to get angry about any issues. That part of the culture of the dorm involved loudly having opinions, such that this is how conversation and formal government processes occur. Students expressed that this may cause issues with hosts who operate under different expectations for conduct. They also argued that this could be positive as well, since East Campers may be more likely to care about building relationships with any hosts rather than coexisting silently.

Care of defining culture also extends into individual floor policies. East Campus residents argued that they may value strong floor cultures more than other residences; however, other aspects of this study have determined that sub-communities in at least some other residences are also quite strong. These cultures have, however, created a number of traditions and policies that would be difficult to maintain in temporary housing. For example, a number of floors are fully clothing optional and nudity is allowed. Public spaces in the dormitory such as Talbot Lounge, the stairwells and the basement, but not individual floors are "topless," or shirt, optional for gender parity reasons. One resident claimed that casual nudity was more embedded in the social

process of the residence. Students argued that there could be a "reasonable" solution to this problem, but acknowledged that it may be difficult to outright impossible to maintain this policy unless floors were given an entire section of a building. The current impression given by the Burton Connor renovations is that such temporary housing will not be possible. A similar issue exists for "cat halls" where some residents own cats that are allowed to range the floor. While cats can be kept in a single dorm room, many are significantly less happy in such conditions. Furthermore, unlike for clothing optionality, it would be difficult for student to adjust to a complete end to the policy as they would be forced to re-home their pets.

East Campus is currently one of only two Tier III dormitories. Several interviews suggested that residents may not have the resources to move to higher tiered residences or to pay for a meal plan. Even for those that do have the resources, students were adamant that meal plans were not cost effective. One resident kept personal records of their food spending during their first year and found that a meal plan would have been roughly three times as expensive as cooking for themself had been. Students often joke that the meal plan fails the test of the "chipotle diet," meaning that you could eat at Chipotle for every meal at a cost lower than that of the dining halls. Multiple interviews claimed that they could not think of any upperclassmen that they knew to be on a meal plan. Every interview indicated that students believe eating in dining halls to be expensive at best and cost prohibitive at worst. If it is otherwise unavoidable, some students indicated that they will pay in order to stay with their community, but do not want to, and may still avoid eating there despite having paid. Others indicated that they would be forced to leave their community or even campus housing altogether, and both they and the students who would pay expressed fear that mandatory meal plans could force the community to fragment in this way.

According to the president of East Campus, the Department of Student Life has told them that no one would be forced to purchase a meal plan. Jacobsen was skeptical of this claim, saying, "I don't think that's possible." In a separate conversation, a student pointed out that approximately 300 beds in cook-for-yourself dormitories were lost in the closings of Bexley Hall and Senior House. When a cook-for-yourself residence goes offline for renovations, even fewer "non-dining" beds exist for students to choose from. It seems unlikely that if all, or even a large majority, of those students wish to move to cook-for-yourself facilities, they simply will not have the space for them among the current undergraduate dormitories. Furthermore, this will also

reduce the number of "non dining" beds available to first year students, which could further skew class numbers of not only the dormitories that were displaced, but also the residences they move to whether that is in groups or individual students.

Mandatory meal plans are an issue with students for reasons other than pure financial concerns or values of personal freedom. Students with allergies reported that they had trouble eating in dining halls. Food was often unlabeled, such that they either had to risk a bad reaction or ask staff what ingredients every food item contained. Often, they said, staff would not know the answer. Many knew large numbers of classmates who had had allergic reactions or other food sensitivity issues as a result of eating in one of the dining halls. One interviewee reported that 10% of their floor has a food allergy. Even if these students are housed in dining hall and forced to buy a meal plan, several of these residences also have a communal kitchen space. This, residents argued, is not the same amount of access. There is no comparison, they said, between a kitchen for 40 residents and a kitchen for 400. These kitchens are harder to keep clean, and more significantly, allergen free. In one interview a student remarked that New Vassar might have been great "once upon a time," when it could have been a cook-for-yourself dormitory or had both dining halls and kitchens. The student even claimed that they would have been happy with "just kitchenettes," rather than only a microwave.

Finally, there are issues associated with displacing residents from East Campus as a "queer space." Students were quick to reassure that they would not want to imply that other residence halls are discriminatory or repressive against trans and queer students. However, living in East Campus gave them a chance to live somewhere they aren't assumed to be straight and don't have to keep coming out or answering "stupid questions" about their personal experiences. Students claimed that living in another dormitory would be "fine," but that they would lose the feeling of not having to be in the vast minority. Queer students opposed solutions such as making a large group of queer students and moving them together. They expressed that students often feel closer ties to their floors, which would necessarily be broken up in this process. Such housing would also "out" any students who moved there. Queer students also often have no desire to be separated from their cisgender and straight friends. It is true that East Campus has a higher population of queer and trans students and that this "queer space" is valuable to them, but it is not true that they have no ties to the other members of their community.

Trust and Buy-In to a Future Process

Students appeared tired and frustrated during conversations about the trust between students and administrators. They often interjected that they were trying to be optimistic or to think of positive things to say. One member of the executive team said that they didn't want to get too negative because they'd found that being "jaded" wasn't "productive" in a government position. Students also often exhibited faith that administrators genuinely want to do well by them and always have their best interests in mind. The problem, they said, was that administrators have different experiences to those of residents, which makes it rare that they have enough context to know "as well or better than [students]." Several residents also claimed that housing decisions routinely used top down planning processes, rather than involving residences in the decision making process, and that even though staff may have good intentions, they felt disrespected by past processes.

Though they believed staff had the students in mind, some students also believed that administrators were sometimes unwilling to take actions that were not also in their own self-interest. Financial concerns, they said, have often been cited as the reason for not supporting decisions favored by students, such as making New Vassar a cook-for-yourself community rather than a dining dorm. "This is MIT. Should money be the biggest problem?" they asked. True, housing may have a separate allocation of funds, but the student wondered if administrators could not campaign for even temporary changes to the financial structure that would benefit these situations.

The distrust caused by past processes is clear. In the course of conversations about a potential renovation of East Campus, students brought up frustrations from the Burton Connor renovations, the planning of the East Side Festival in the past two years, the recent redesign of the in-house rooming process, the changes to the planning of New Vassar, and the closing of Senior House. Each of these cases was mentioned as an explanation for why students are so nervous about future interactions with the Department of Student Life. One interviewee argued that though a "healing process," may force the department to confront mistakes or resurface past harms, DSL has done enough to destroy students' trust, that they need to push through any discomfort in order to try and heal. Without such actions, they say, students will only grow more wary and protective.

Given this distrust, it may be difficult for students to "buy-in" to a process from DSL, or be reasonably comfortable with it. Residents said that though a small number of students think the renovation is a conspiracy to "destroy culture," the majority agree that it is needed, even as they are reluctant to move. Above all, students say, the department should start with a firm commitment to keep communities together through displacement.

One step that students say is necessary is for the Department of Student Life to demonstrate understanding that finances are a big deal to residents. Returning after renovations to what will then be a Tier I residence will necessarily force some students to leave. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to get buy-in from all students on any plan that forces them out forever. More generally, students ask that administrators make effort to understand why a given issue may be important to residents. They argue that it can be difficult to understand East Campus if you don't live there.

Residents also argued that MIT needs to take real strides in listening to and following up on student input. Rather than instituting a "top-down" process, they need to really integrate student feedback into the planning. One resident complained that administrators often communicate their desires from student input rather than their hard constraints. They said that they have found in their professional work that it is "almost universally the case that a client is wrong about what they want." If administrators adjusted soft constraints based on student input, the two may be able to collaborate to create a better solution.

Finally, several students suggest that the department create principles for relocation processes. The first one, they say should be to keep communities together. They also emphasize that the principles should be specific and tangible in a way that makes it easy to determine whether or not they were upheld in any given process.

DORM RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

The Dorm Renewal Working Group (DRWG) consisted of five student representatives from Dormcon, the Undergraduate Dormitory Committee. These representatives were chosen in the spring of 2018 and included the president of La Casa, students who were later elected the 2019 presidents of Burton Connor and East Campus, the Simmons Rooming Assignment Chair (RAC), and the Dormcon dining chair. This meant that there was a student from New House,

which had just been renovated; one each from Burton Connor and East Campus, slated for renovation; and one each from Simmons and Maseeh, two relatively new dormitories. They were also largely chosen to be underclassmen rather than seniors, so that they could continue into the 2018-2019 academic year.

DRWG was also associated with the Undergraduate Housing Working Group, a committee containing all the members of DRWG as well as Dean and Vice President of Student Life Suzy Nelson, Associate Provost Krystyn Van Vliet, Senior Director of Special Projects Jagruti Patel, Senior Associate Dean of Housing and Residential Services David Friedrich, Director of Residential Services Jennifer Hapgood-White, and Senior Campus Planner Amy Kaiser.

According to representatives of DRWG, they met three times, once each in May, November, and December of 2018. The perception of the representatives was that the Department of Student Life expected that DRWG's work was in preparation for the announcement of Burton Connor's renovation, and would end afterward. At that point, each dorm had its own renewal working group and there may have been a conscious shift toward working with them rather than DRWG. The presidents of these dorms also continue to work together and meet informally.

The representatives that were interviewed all spoke of a general confusion about the purpose of the group. None of them seemed to be sure of what they were supposed to do as a working group. DRWG researched a lot of information related to the issue of student murals in residence halls. They reached out to students, and administrators. They spoke with the admissions department about how MIT is advertised. Generally, the students put a lot of effort into their work in DRWG even when they were unsure of what was being asked of them. These representatives also spoke to a frustration with the results of those efforts, claiming that they were often simply told what would happen, rather than giving input. Multiple representatives mentioned being repeatedly told, "We decided this before the group got started." In interviews, one representative rhetorically demanded, "Why [were] we [there], just to relay this depressing info to our constituents?"

SECTION VI: ANALYSIS

Issues that were repeated across many, if not all, interviews have been pulled out here to synthesize the main points of student consensus across dorms. More specific student concerns have been left in the findings section, but are still important to the planning process of any specific dorm, may be referenced in the recommendations and conclusion, and should be read in full.

Positive Housing Experiences:

      Students across the residence halls spoke very positively of the housing experience at MIT. Residents spoke of feeling welcomed as far back as the residence exploration period, or even MIT's Campus Preview Weekend. Many of these residents had lived in their community for the majority of their time at MIT and spoke of it as their home. Residence hall house teams – consisting of faculty in the form of the Head(s) and Associate Head(s) of House, graduate students in GRT positions, and the Residential Life Area Directors – were often reported as invaluable to students during the displacement. So too were student executive teams and government structures.

      Students agree that their communities have helped them through their studies and provided support in advising that was unparalleled by more formal structures, even when they did praise those other systems. In fact, many of the benefits that students ascribed to this informal advising could not be supplied by formal structures. Often students claimed that the reason that they were able to receive this advice was because they were already comfortable speaking with their neighbors and therefore were able to discuss extremely personal topics that then tied into their academic goals. Such conversations would be difficult, if not impossible, to facilitate from the perspective of a faculty member or a peer mentor that is nonetheless a stranger to the student.

      Informal peer support is also not limited to academic advising. Included in discussions of the ways that their community supported them through MIT were stories, not only of course selection or tutoring, but also of personal problems such as financial trouble, family matters, and questions of identity. The space to discuss these sorts of difficult situations with someone they trust is invaluable to students.

It is unquestionable that MIT should be proud to have cultivated such a supportive environment for students. That undergraduates living on campus feel such a connection to their living space is a remarkable achievement that should not be understated. These findings are aligned with that of the 1999 Bacow Report, which argued that MIT's goals for its undergraduate residence system should be to provide and maintain house, home, and community. The strength of the housing system is also what makes the issue of displacement planning worth consideration. Given the findings of Fried's *Grieving for a Lost Home*, a greater sense of home and tie to their dormitory communities and sub-communities may lead to greater grief reactions resulting from displacement.

Repeated Concerns:

Students in cook-for-yourself communities feel strongly negatively about the campus meal plans. No student interviewed indicated that they would purchase a meal plan unless forced. The most positive reaction was that of one student who claimed that they would want to be on the meal plan if it were not so expensive. Every other student said either that they would purchase a meal plan if that were the cost of staying with their community or that they would move off campus.

Some of students' complaints about dining centered around the quality of the food. Most comments were about the costs of the plan. Students that could afford to eat in dining halls claimed that it still would not be economically responsible. Many students indicated that they, and many of their peers, could not afford a meal plan. If displaced residents are forced to purchase meal plans, the costs will necessarily force many of those students to move off campus. Most worryingly, several students indicated that allergies, food sensitivities, and other dietary restrictions make it unsafe to regularly eat in campus dining halls. This is an issue of accessibility that should be addressed by campus dining structures; however, until students again feel safe eating in these facilities, there must be accommodations in place to allow these students to cook for themselves in clean facilities. Efforts should be taken to assist these students in not being separated from the rest of their community whenever possible.

Every single student interviewed claimed that community had been the most important factor of their housing if not their overall MIT experience. Students referred to the ability to select where to live, and thus, who they would live with. They also often expressed that the

people that they lived with were more important than any services offered by the dormitory, with the caveat that cost could prohibit living in certain communities. The quality of services never seemed to outweigh the community in students' priorities, but the cost could bar students from living with their community during displacement.

Every single student interviewed also expressed fear that their community or their personal ability to stay a part of that community would be damaged in a renovations process or already had been. No matter what question was asked, nearly every topic of interviews would eventually relate back to the issue of community. The only exception to this rule was cost concerns. Even then, many cost discussions would later circle around to the way in which residents' disparate abilities to pay costs could separate communities. Dormitory communities and sub-communities were also the area of student life that students most often said administrators did not understand. This, they said, has had a negative impact on relocation planning.

Prior Outcomes:

Using our case studies, this work is able to examine some of the effects of displacement from undergraduate dormitories on students at MIT. The effects of this displacement are unquestionably negative. To an extent, these effects may be countered by the benefits from renewal, and the need for major maintenance and renovations in these buildings is also unquestionable. What is most important is what the negative impacts were so that areas for improvement can be determined.

As shown in the literature review, several MIT reports by committees and faculty have determined that student involvement in policy processes and autonomy in their self-government should be encouraged and maintained by institute offices and administrators. Residents of New House reported that they had less autonomy as a self-governing community during the displacement. This is mirrored by student concerns in the ongoing Burton Connor renovation planning and the disorganization of the Dorm Renewal Working Group. In all cases, students reported that they felt disempowered by the process and that changes to procedure were strictly negative.

Every student that had been through a displacement process reported that it hurt their community significantly. Students in Random Hall no longer find their community to be

damaged; however, many of them struggle to think of how that displacement could have been better handled, and argue that it was an emergency situation where little could have been changed. They also still believe the displacement to be an extremely negative experience that had dramatic and harmful impacts on the Random community for the duration of the displacement. This case and that of the New House flood demonstrate that short term emergency situations can be damaging, but if handled well may not have too many long term impacts.

The New House renovation displacement is an entirely different case. New House residents all reported that the community is still trying to recover from displacement nearly a year after it ended. Residents also did not seem confident that a full recovery was likely to be soon. Burton Connor residents already seem defeated and burnt out by a process that is still in the planning stages. It is difficult to assure students worried about future renovations that their communities will not dissolve, given that a year out from a renovations process that only lasted one year, housed students in facilities with kitchens, and kept sub-communities together in most cases, residents of that dormitory report that they are still struggling. If this is our prior outcome, what will happen to communities displaced for two years and split into groups of only eight students each?

Distrust:

Distrust of staff and administrators in the Departments of Student Life and Residential Life and Housing was pervasive throughout interviews. To be clear, many students were defensive of administrators and spoke positively of them. They expressed genuine belief that administrators are trying to do what is best for students in dealing with particularly difficult situations. However, even these students were often still critical of certain actions and spoke warily of future processes.

With regard to recent renovation and relocation planning, certain themes emerged around the topic of distrust. First was that these processes are often riddled with failures of communication. Students are often either misinformed on a topic or left completely in the dark, such that they must rely on rumor. Many students expressed a desire for greater transparency in planning processes, asking to be made aware of the true constraints of a project or to be told when certain decisions change immediately after it happens. Students also agree that these departments often do not understand their [students'] priorities, citing examples where

administrators were surprised by their input and claiming that they need to do a better job of listening when students explain their experiences.

Among student leaders, a common complaint was that students were not given meaningful opportunities for input. While residents might be asked to give feedback on a plan or help design a process, they would often be told that most decisions had been made prior to soliciting input. Every such student leader I spoke with, at one point or another quoted administrators using the phrase, "We decided this before [the opportunity for student input]." If we looked at this using McDowell's Civic Design Framework, as outlined in the literature review, we might interpret this to mean that though students were being engaged in the process, they were not being involved in all the phases of civic design, limiting the actual significance of their involvement.

In interviews, students were never prompted to speak about specific processes outside of the reason they were contacted, unless they brought up those processes first.[20] Despite this, students often referenced the processes of other displacements as well as processes outside the topic of relocation entirely. Students that were particularly worried about or upset by renovation and relocation processes frequently made reference to the closings of Bexley Hall and Senior House, using language like "bexiled" to refer to the process of scattering displaced students through the housing lottery. Every student referenced New Vassar at one time or another, and many expressed disappointment with how its planning was handled, specifically referencing personal anecdotes or else the Tech article written by Lilly Chin. Students also referenced planning processes by Housing or DSL that had little or nothing at all to do with relocation, such as changes to the meal plans offered, the recent re-design of the in-house rooming process, and the planning of the East Side Festival.

What this last category of references represents is that students will inevitably carry distrust from previous interactions with administrators into future conversations. Rather than express confusion as to why a student might mention changes to "mutual selection" in a conversation about renovations, administrators must be prepared for such reactions and

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[20] Students from New House and Random Hall were asked to speak about the specific displacements they underwent. Students from Burton Connor were asked about the current planning process. Students from East Campus were asked about the potential future renovation of their dorm. Students from DRWG were asked about their involvement in that working group.

acknowledge sources of distrust from past actions. Whether or not these sources of distrust represent errors in planning is subjective and almost entirely incidental. Simply acknowledging the mistrust that exists and where it stems from may do much toward facilitating conversation. Furthermore, just because one individual, community, or organization believes that distrust is not warranted, does not mean that the distrust will disappear. It must be acknowledged in order to heal for future processes.

Student Recommendations:

Students from Burton Connor and East Campus had a number of recommendations for future relocations. Many recommendations had to do with costs. One student asked that MIT ensure that anyone displaced by renovations be able to move back after their completion. They elaborated to say that either the residences should be of the same financial tier post-renovation or students should be offered financial subsidies where needed to return. Several students suggested that MIT grant exceptions to rules mandating the purchase of meal plan in dining dorms for displaced students. Another student suggested that MIT offer institutional support for displaced students interested in finding off campus housing. Earlier findings suggest that many students may be effectively forced off of campus due to cost constraints. Cambridge is seen as a gentrifying community and students report that finding housing nearby, especially within a lower price range, is difficult.

Outside of individual costs, there are also community financial costs. For example, one suggestion was that students be given storage space somewhere on campus, and preferably in or near the residence being renovated. This space might include some personal belongings, but also the communal belongings of floors or suites, or the dormitory as a whole that would be expensive to replace.

Many students suggested that administrators and communities collaborate to find ways to get first year students involved with displaced communities even if they don't with them. Events would also be useful is preserving the bonds of the community. The president of Burton Connor floated the idea of creating student social chairs that ensure that traditional events are able to continue during displacement. Another suggestion was that Area Directors be maintained throughout displacement and that students continue to have access to those funds in collaboration with the Director to plan events for the community.

One interview focused on the spread of rumor and conspiracy. That student said that, given past process, they did not find it unreasonable that conspiracies existed, though they did not believe them. Accordingly, they suggested, anything that the Department of Student Life and Housing can do to prove that such conspiracies do not exist and that they [DSL and Housing] care about East Campus and its concerns (this student specifically referred to murals) would be prudent.

Swing Spaces and New Vassar:

In nearly every interview students explicitly referred to using the New Vassar dormitory as a "swing" space for displaced students in their best-case scenario plans for temporary housing, and in every interview students referred to the use of some sort of "swing" dormitory, including New Vassar, Senior House, and unnamed hypothetical empty dorms.[21] Students were not prompted to consider these solutions and suggested them independently without exception. It is troubling then, that administrators have taken such a hard stance against the use swing spaces in future renovation planning.

Furthermore, absolutely every student interviewed also described being "scattered" as the worst possible outcome using language such as "scattered to the four winds," "lotteried off," and "bexiled." In some cases, students intended this to mean that no effects are taken to keep any number of residents together. In others, students were including divisions of small groups as "scattering." Groups of 8-10 students necessarily break up even sub-communities like floors. It is true that there are, on average, eight students in a suite in Burton Connor; however, students have said that they are often closer to other residents of their sub-community than the other residents of their floor. Even those students that did feel that they had a close group of friends at that size expressed significant distress at the loss of the rest of their community. Other students did not feel that they had such a group to move with and felt that such a process would isolate them.

If administrators truly feel that it is too logistically difficult to move residents in larger groups or that moving such groups hurts the communities that host them, these smaller groups may not be far from students' worst-case scenarios. Residents of dormitories scheduled for

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[21] A detailed student proposal for housing residents of East Campus in Senior House, which has been supported by two East Campus presidents as well as the former Head of House, is included in the Findings Section on pages 61-62.

renewal also feel betrayed by this change in policy, given the effort that was put into keeping the New House communities together. From New House students, it is also clear that, though the houses were hurt by displacement and though inter-house unity suffered, many of the house communities were better able to survive renovations and provide mid-displacement support to their members as a direct result of remaining together. Throughout interviews, students from multiple residence halls expressed regret that these plans create burden for other communities and repeatedly claimed to want to avoid such an outcome as much as possible. Though hosting the New House students put a strain on the other residences, ultimately those communities have also survived. Is it truly better to force displaced students to bear the full consequences of renovations? What if the residences that do host students agree to the plan? In the case of the New House renovation, many of the hosting residences did, in fact, agree to house communities out of sympathy for the situation. In lieu of clear and significant negative consequences, why was this policy possible two years ago, but not now? Especially when the opening of another undergraduate dormitory has increased capacity on campus. If the policy is possible, but simply not preferred because it is difficult to plan, then either a clear priority is being placed on simplicity over the impact on students or residents' overwhelming preference for community is being ignored.

Strangest of all, using New Vassar or some other space as a swing dorm would eliminate most of the concerns outlined above. New Vassar has yet to open, and therefore has yet to establish a community. Many undergraduates, especially those in Burton Connor, are confused and distressed by the perception that hypothetical concerns over harm to a hypothetical community that does not currently exist are being prioritized over real, imminent harm to a community that does and the students that make it up. New Vassar does not need to be entirely devoted to housing these students, since it has a higher capacity than many other dormitories on campus. In time, when displaced students return to their renovated residence, the initial population of long-term New Vassar residents can be increased to fill capacity. At that time, it would no longer be appropriate to continue to use the residence as a swing space. Using it in such a manner in the first year or two that it opens does not mandate that it be used that way forever. Furthermore, students would be unlikely to protest that change in policy once there is a community to worry about harming. In the meantime, it seems prudent to prioritize helping displaced students over creating a community from scratch.

Throughout interviews, students constantly reiterated the importance of first year students in a community. First year students were often referred to as the "life-blood" of a community. These residents are younger and new to MIT, which may help them to act more positively in the face of an environment that can wear at students and contribute to the "culture of suicide" described earlier by Allan Ko. Upperclassmen frequently referred to themselves as "jaded" during interviews, not only with respect to issues of housing, but also to their work at MIT in general. Older students also enjoy sharing the unique aspects of their community with people that are so genuinely excited to experience it for the first time. First year students may also have more time to dedicate to cultivating community while they take general requirements on a grading system that either records their classes as "passed" or does not record them at all.

Part of the reason that students are able to receive advice in their academics and life from their neighbors is that undergraduate housing at MIT is not segregated by class year. Upperclassmen live in close proximity to underclassmen and interact with one another as members of the same community. Some students have described this process as "sophomores teaching the freshman," since first year students are often more comfortable at first with students closer to them in age. Over time, students interact with members of all four class years. For this reason, it appears critical that all class years be present in a community and balanced as best as possible. If one class year is missing in a larger group, that may make it harder for the class years immediately surrounding it to socialize, due to the larger gap in age. Furthermore, it will take, at a minimum, four years for an imbalance to be corrected when the non-standard sized class to graduate. Since other class sizes may have been adjusted to maintain capacity even with one non-standard class, all the class sizes may become slightly dissimilar in size. The result may cause it to take even more time before the class sizes again balance out.

In order for a displaced community to take new first year students, there must be some sort of signifier that these students are members of the community. Inherent in this idea is a physical space of some kind in which community members can interact with one another. This space may be transient or non-fixed, though a fixed space may better facilitate regular social interaction. From the interviews with Burton Connor residents, it appears that students are wary of such a space being separate from their direct living environment, as dorms are often better described as residential communities than social ones. It also follows, then, that for first year students to best feel a part of the community, they too must live with it. This is not to say that in

the absence of such a possibility there is no value in actions that incorporate non-resident first year students in community events such as those during REX or CPW. If first year students cannot be join a displaced community through their physical housing, it then becomes important to introduce them to the community in other means. However, if physical residence is one of the largest contributors to the formation of community, it is then valuable that first year students be able to reside with the displaced community. The addition of first year residents will increase the size of that community, meaning that this option is only possible if space is available for students of a large group, such as in a "swing dormitory."

Interestingly enough, using part of a new residence like New Vassar as a swing space may help it to establish its own class year balance. If a large dormitory attempted to fill all of its beds from scratch with a so-called "founders' group" it may struggle to find enough upperclassmen willing to move. As established, students often have strong ties to their living group. Maintaining an even class distribution would mean finding enough upperclassmen willing to transfer residences to fill three quarters of the empty space. Anything less and the dormitory will have a disproportionate number of first year students, who receive their placement through a lottery system. If, instead, only part of a new residence is designated to the original founders' group, the number of upperclassmen transfers required for even distribution will be significantly smaller. When the displaced students leave, the rest of the dormitory can be filled in, again with a comparatively smaller number of transfers. Given that any decrease in size will help the distribution to become more even, the founder's group would not necessarily have to be small to accomplish this plan. For example, devoting half of the residence to students from the founders' group and the other to displaced students could prove effect in helping both the development of New Vassar and the mitigation of community separation by housing a plurality of displaced students, or even a majority if the community is small enough. The exact divide is better decided when knowing the particulars of the number of students to be moved, and the ways in which their community would prefer to be divided.

SECTION VII: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

The following are recommendations for best practices in renovation displacement. The overall tone of the recommendations is that the diversity of MIT's undergraduate housing options is one of the residential system's greatest strengths, and that preserving this diversity will require planning for diversity in relocation strategies. Many of the suggestions are for new policies, but several may represent policies already in place. Financial and logistical constraints may limit the number of recommendations that can be instituted.

Recommendations for Community Support

1. The goal of keeping communities should guide every aspect of the planning and process of relocation.

2. Displaced communities should be allowed to invite first year students to join them. Relocation plans that allow first year students to live in these communities should be prioritized. In lieu of actual co-residence, these communities should be enabled to hold events during periods such as REX and CPW for first year students to become familiar with them.

3. Whenever possible, the renovations process and building occupants should be divided into two distinct sections, in order to limit relocation to one half of the population. This strategy was valuable in the renovation of New House. The next two dormitories slated for renovation, Burton Connor and East Campus, are particularly easily divided this way into Burton and Connor and the East and West Parallels respectively.

4. Whenever possible, spaces that are without existing communities and that are large enough to house a majority or plurality of displaced students should be used for relocation planning. If such a plan removes beds from graduate housing, these beds should be made up by offering fewer rooms in graduate residences to juniors and seniors.

Recommendations for Individual Student Support

5. A Dean from Student Support Services should be assigned to the displaced community. If a majority or plurality of displaced students is housed in the same location, this dean

should hold regular office hours in that building. This program has been employed in previous years in Senior House and East Campus.

6. Mental health resources should be increased in preparation for a strain on the system.

7. The Departments of Student Life and Residential Life and Dining should examine students' concerns about the safety of eating in campus dining halls with respect to food allergens and sensitivities and other dietary restrictions. There is a severe perception of inaccessibility to these dining options despite existing protocols and options. If that perception is accurate, this is matter of serious import.

8. Displaced students should be allowed to bypass meal plan requirements or otherwise offered financial subsidies in purchasing these plans.

9. One or more staff members should be dedicated to the task of helping students who struggling financially with the move – either as a result of dining costs or a dearth of lower tiered housing or both. If at all possible, this staff member should be able to offer plans or subsidies to help with the rise in living expenses.

10. Programs should be instituted that offer assistance to displaced students in finding private housing off campus. Some residents will necessarily be pushed out of campus housing by renovations and many may need help in navigating a complicated and expensive housing market.

11. Cat owners should not be forced to rehome their pets.

Recommendations for Facilitating Trust

12. Departments engaged in the processes of renovation and relocation must publically acknowledge past mistakes, shortcomings, and lessons learned from past processes, and detail efforts being made to change future processes. This is necessary for healing from these processes and reducing distrust going forward.

13. These departments should also communicate constraints clearly and consistently to students. Allowance may be made for necessary confidentiality, but the more information is granted to the public, the more meaningful its input and engagement can be.

14. Transparency should be prioritized in all other aspects of the process as well in order to reduce mistrust in the process and aid in healing from contentious past processes.

15. Administrators should make space in the process for meaningful student input. Students and administrators operate in different time horizons, since students will graduate after a handful of years. However, this does not mean that their input is not valuable. To make decisions that account for the full context and meet the needs of future students, students who may not live on campus by the time of the process, might need to be involved in its planning.

16. Students should be involved in most or all of the phases of design from framing the issue to selecting a plan and monitoring its implementation.

17. A relocation plan with resident approval should be established prior to confirming the starting date of any renovation or construction work.

18. Student governments and elections in residence halls should be maintained throughout their displacement. Displacement inherently leaves students feeling disenfranchised. Representation is therefore critical in this juncture.

Conclusion

Years of deferred maintenance policies have forced the institute's hand, and the dormitories must undergo serious renewal. I am firmly of the belief that everyone involved in the process of planning for renovations, administrators and students alike, is at all times focused on the goal of finding the best possible solution for residents. My primary hope in this thesis was to provide these persons with a wider context of the issue through which they can determine future practices. It is my sincere desire that the institute perform more research of a participatory manner and involve students more heavily in all aspects and phases of the processes that determine where they live.

Given that MIT is home to one of the finest academic departments of urban planning in the country, if not the world, it has always been surprising to me that more of an effort is not made to engage faculty and students from that department in conversations about institute policy or to seek feedback from members of the department when creating that policy. There is a wealth of literature in the study of displacement and a wealth of experience in DUSP in the field of community engagement. My secondary hope in this thesis was to encourage interest in urban planning pedagogy among those responsible for creating new institute policy and processes as

well as to encourage the DUSP community to take a greater interest in the goings-on of its wider institution.

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