

FSILG Village & Conditions Assessment

Summary

In October – November 2104, at the request of the Chancellor and Dean for Student Life of MIT, we conducted a survey of student and alumni leaders of MIT's FSILG community to gain insight on the FSILGs' interest in relocating to an on-campus Greek Village. In addition, in order to provide more context about the condition of each FSILG, a number of survey questions sought information about the organization's membership, finances, governance, and other metrics of chapter health. In all, 218 survey responses were received from 146 alumni/ae and 72 current students, representing 35 of 36 active FSILGs; Fenway House did not submit either a student or alumnus response. (When multiple responses were received from the same organization, the FSILG's alumnus/a and undergraduate presidents' responses were prioritized; only one alumnus/a and one student representative response was used per FSILG.) Survey responses were also received from the alumni presidents of 4 currently inactive chapters: Alpha Tau Omega, Delta Upsilon, Fiji, and Lambda Chi Alpha.

With regard to the key question of whether the FSILG would be interested in relocating to an on-campus Greek Village, a high percentage of alumni and about half the students support having a conversation about relocation: 32 alumni organizations (84% of the respondents) and 17 student organizations (50% of respondents) expressed interest in seeing the project studied. But when asked directly whether their organization would move, the response was cool: only the alumni of Student House and Theta Xi expressed a great deal of interest in the project (ATO, Fiji, and SAE also expressed high interest). Another 4 alumni organizations indicated it was somewhat likely they would move. Support among current students was even weaker: only 5 of the 35 student representatives indicated that their FSILG was very or somewhat likely to relocate. These responses suggest that many groups may be sitting on the sidelines, waiting to see if there is a serious proposal put forth. Several members of the AILG believe that if the Greek Village is seen becoming reality or the Boston municipal situation deteriorates, some additional FSILGs may become more willing to consider a move.

The three primary reasons the alumni offered for opposing a move to campus were, in diminishing order: tradition, assumed MIT ownership of the building, and Institute oversight. The students are especially opposed to MIT ownership and oversight (72% and 78%, respectively). Tradition, independence, and (lack of) Institute oversight were major decision drivers for most groups. Conversely, both students and alumni saw proximity to campus as a positive feature of the Greek Village. Alumni were strongly in favor of preserving an ownership / management model that allows for independent FSILG facility ownership and management. This suggests that a Green Hall model — where MIT owns and maintains the property — will not be well received. Neither students nor alumni saw proximity to other FSILGs as a major decision driver.

The survey asked questions about general satisfaction with their housing arrangement and neighbors. The responses indicate a significant degree of optimism about their current situation: 9 out of 10 student and 8 out of 10 alumni representatives indicated they were somewhat or very satisfied with their FSILG's present status. Large majorities of both student and alumni representatives indicated that they had positive relations with MIT, the AILG, and their immediate neighbors. Alumni expressed some concern about the municipal environment, with only 42% of the alumni organizations reporting their relations with the larger community (i.e., the municipality) as being positive. These responses are somewhat inconsistent with evidence gathered by the AILG during its strategic planning process, which indicated a degree of pessimism among the alumni about the long-term sustainability of their FSILG's housing situation.

The survey also asked a number of questions about each FSILG's organizational condition, including various metrics on chapter health. There was a "Lake Wobegon effect" to the responses: all FSILGs

perceive themselves as above average. Large majorities of both alumni and students rated their organizations as excellent or good in all of the criteria we asked about except two (service / philanthropy and alumni relations). We suspect these responses may reflect some concern about how the survey data will be used by MIT; many respondents may have had a desire to put their organization in the most positive possible light.

Despite the optimism of the responses, the survey results on organizational health do provide useful information. With regard to occupancy, the trend is positive: the overall occupancy rate has increased from 69% to 74% of available beds between 2011 and 2014. But 5 of 35 organizations reported occupancy rates of less than 50%; the Institute and AILG should continue to monitor the health of these organizations. With regard to facility conditions, 66% of alumni and 75% of student representatives report their house to be in excellent or good condition. In finances, 68% of alumni and 78% of student representatives said their FSILG's finances were good or excellent, but the reported financial data are a concern: 6 chapters had less than \$50,000 in total savings and reserves, and 57% of the total had reserves of less than \$250,000. The average estimated deferred maintenance backlog is \$240,000, implying that 57% of chapters have reserves that are inadequate to cover even an optimistic estimate of current maintenance needs. Given that analysis performed during the AILG strategic plan suggests that the typical FSILG should be reserving about \$60,000 per year for capital improvements, these data suggest that, despite the optimistic responses about house conditions, deferred maintenance in the FSILGs is a large and growing concern. (Some FSILGs have been successful at soliciting funds from alumni for needed repairs, but alumni donations are not an assured revenue stream.)

26 FSILGs own their houses. Reported net asset values of the properties were widely divergent, with 2 FSILGs stating their property was worth less than \$2M and 4 reporting an asset value in excess of \$5M; 4 were uncertain what their property was worth. The median reported value is about \$3.2M, implying that the total value of the alumni-owned housing stock at MIT is about \$83M. If the FSILGs chose to move to a Greek Village, this equity presumably would be available to invest in the project.

Respectfully submitted,

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