



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: March 4, 2025

Subject: 2024 Town-Gown Reports and Presentations

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On February 4, 2025, the Cambridge Planning Board met to hear the annual Town-Gown presentations from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lesley University, Hult International Business School, and Harvard University. Each of these schools had submitted a 2024 Town-Gown report, which were reviewed by the Planning Board and made available to the public.

The Town-Gown reporting process provides information about the educational missions of the universities, their current and future programs, and development plans for the physical campus. The presentations and reports cover topics such as enrollment and staffing, housing, facilities needs, sustainability and resilience, connections with the broader community, and efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion. This knowledge gives the Planning Board a better understanding of how individual projects fit into an institution's broader plans.

After the institutions' presentations and public comment, Planning Board members made observations about the information provided. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Planning Board voted to send the following summary of Board comments to the City Council:

- Planning Board members again showed appreciation to the institutions for their participation in the process, which is helpful in providing context by describing the broad range of campus activities and development that do not come to the Planning Board for individual approval.
- Board members appreciated the thoroughness of the institutions' reports, which provided information that was requested in past Town-Gown discussions, including campus sustainability efforts, spaces that are open to the public, the urban forest, transportation, and engagement with public school students in Cambridge.
- Board members responded positively to the additional focus on collaborations among the institutions and the City, particularly around climate mitigation and purchasing of local goods and services.
- Housing remains an issue that the Board agreed deserves continued attention. Board members commended universities' efforts to increase their on-campus housing, particularly noting MIT's very recently fulfilled commitment to create substantial new

graduate student beds. Board members still expressed concern about long-term trends showing increased pressure from students and affiliates on the off-campus housing market. There was an interest in continuing to gather more information on this topic, including housing costs and affordability (both on-campus and off-campus) and how trends in Cambridge compare to other local communities that are home to major universities. There was also interest in seeing if there is a better way to represent the data to make the issues clearer.

- Environmental issues were a strong part of many institutions' reports and presentations. MIT was commended for identifying and publicizing cool spots on campus. In addition to all institutions providing tree canopy information, Lesley was commended for including information about campus permeable area, which other institutions were asked to emulate. Board members asked if more specific data about greenhouse gas emissions could be provided in the future.
- Lesley in particular was noted for following through on its plans to reduce its land holdings in Cambridge, and was commended for making many of its sites available for future City-supported affordable housing development.
- It was noted that MIT mentioned artificial intelligence in their presentation, which Board members were intrigued to hear more about and what it might mean for Cambridge.
- Finally, Board members noted that on the whole, the upside of having these institutions in Cambridge far outweigh the downsides created by any negative impacts. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss issues of concern to the community, and Board members encouraged the institutions to focus not just on their positive contributions but on improvements that could be made in the future.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



Mary Flynn, Chair.