



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 Fax: 617 349 3116 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: hystcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>

William B. King, *Chair*, Bruce A. Irving, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*

William Barry, M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert G. Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*

Shary Page Berg, Joseph V. Ferrara, Susannah Barton Tobin, *Alternates*

August 10, 2015

Anthony Sharon, Deputy Executive Vice President
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Sharon:

This letter responds to your July 24, 2015 letter to Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, relative to the request made by the Commission that MIT and the Commission develop a written protocol for Commission staff review of major changes that the Institute proposes for its properties that are listed on or considered eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places as well as the buildings numbered 236, 264 and 292 Main Street, collectively known the "Kendall Square Landmark Group."

The impetus for a written protocol stems from a variety of factors including the Historical Commission's responsibilities under state statutes and city ordinances, the Institute's evolving needs and programs, and the healthy degree of staff-level collaboration that has developed over several decades between the Institute and the Commission concerning various properties that have important associations with the City's past. That collaboration has been particularly noteworthy during the development of the Kendall Square Master Plan, which includes the buildings in the Kendall Square Landmark Group that the Commission has determined eligible for designation by the City Council as landmarks.

The discussions between the Institute and the Commission have resulted in proposals for integrating the buildings in the Kendall Square Landmark Group into the Master Plan with modifications to be reviewed by CHC staff to retrofit those buildings in a way that maintains their historic appearance, scale, and architectural integrity. The Commission is aware that the Master Plan also contemplates the demolition in a few years of Eastgate, which would then be over 50 years old and would likely be considered "significant" under the City's Demolition Delay Ordinance, but recognizes that the Institute's commitment for preservation and adaptive reuse of the Kendall Square Landmark Group mitigates the potential demolition of that building.

The Commission is concerned that the limited number of properties proposed for consideration under this protocol does not represent current thinking about the significance of buildings on the MIT campus and in the surrounding areas. The Institute's buildings were originally nominated to the National Register in 1978. Significant industrial buildings identified by the Institute's consultants in 2002, for example, are not included. We understand that the Institute is prepared to resume an architectural survey of other MIT-owned buildings as to their eligibility for State Register listing, and that in future the protocol would also apply to buildings that the Institute and the Commission agree would meet this level of significance.

At a meeting of the Cambridge Historical Commission on August 6, 2015 the terms of the protocol summarized in the Institute's letter and in this response, including the commitment to make a further study of significance of other MIT-owned buildings and to have the protocol apply to those found to be eligible for State Register listing, were supported in recognition of the City's interest in having the commitment of the Institute to consider the architectural and historical significance of its properties as it adapts and fulfills its changing needs. The Commission believes that its preservation goals for the Kendall Square Landmark Group will be satisfied by the proposals in MIT's Kendall Square Master Plan and continuing Commission staff input into the implementation of the adaptive reuse of the buildings involved, without the need for formal landmark designation. The Institute's commitment to review with the Commission staff further major changes to its other existing and eligible State Register listed properties was a specifically identified factor in the Commission's decision. Pursuant to the August 6 vote of the Commission, the landmark designation proceeding for the Kendall Square Group will be terminated on the Institute's confirmation of its commitment.

For its part, while the current members of the Commission can neither bind their successors nor ignore the Commission's responsibility to protect significant buildings and areas that are threatened by development or unacceptable change, the Commission affirms that it does not foresee designation of local landmarks or establishment of historic district or neighborhood conservation district status for the properties that are or become subject to the protocol. We trust our staff's experience and expertise in working with the Institute and appreciate the Institute's agreement to refer matters requiring resolution to the full Commission.

Sincerely,

William B. King
Chair