



Welcome to Kendall Square

The flourishing innovation district takes its place as a destination and a gateway

Cambridge, Massachusetts, the year 2028: You emerge from the Kendall/MIT train station, pausing to orient yourself. Your first impressions are of the interplay of brick and glass,

and a pulse of activity. The kid next to you tugs her father's arm. "There's the museum! Can we go build robots again?" she begs. "I'm just swinging by home between classes," a passing man says into his phone as he halts to make way for a buggy full of toddlers from the nearby daycare. A group of teens and parents follows a purple-haired young woman who makes walking backwards look easy, as she narrates: "I first started working on my company at MIT's

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, next to where we began our tour, but after I graduate this spring we're moving down the road into lab space we'll be sharing with some other startups." You notice a small crowd in the plaza across the street gathering around what appears to be a musical sculpture. It's lunchtime, with workers spilling out of nearby buildings, and the café over there still has a few open tables on its patio, but you decide to get a sandwich to go so you can keep exploring. There's no mistaking this place for anywhere else: You are in Kendall Square—and you are at MIT.

If you visit Kendall now, in 2018, you'll see signs of a different kind of activity: towering cranes, scaffolding, construction crews who are building the foundations of that future scene. Over the course of the 20th century, while MIT grew outward from its original Main Group buildings along Massachusetts Avenue, nearby Kendall Square boomeranged from an industrial powerhouse churning out candy, soap, and rubber; to relative abandonment; to a burgeoning tech hotspot. Now, MIT has broken ground on a new chapter for Kendall Square that will transform it into a true portal to and from MIT.

Meeting the community

"We are creating the interface, the overlap, between the campus and the city," says Hashim Sarkis, dean of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning. Though MIT isn't a traditional enclosed campus, he says, it has been relatively isolated from its surroundings. In the new Kendall Square, campus and city "will be a little bit more blurred, deliberately so—it's the space where MIT meets the community."

MIT already has a strong biomedical research presence on its eastern threshold at the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research and

Artists' renderings, above and opposite: adjacent to the new MIT Museum and graduate residence, open spaces for gathering will be programmed by MIT and open to all.

IMAGES: BYENCORE

the Brain and Cognitive Sciences complex, and through affiliations with the Broad, Ragon, and Whitehead institutes. The MIT Sloan School of Management, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, and MIT Media Lab are among the destinations within a short walk from the Red Line “T” stop. Now, the Kendall Square Initiative will more tightly weave together these elements with new construction including a graduate student residence and childcare center (see page 14) and new homes for the Office of Admissions (page 11), MIT Museum (page 12), and Innovation Initiative (page 20). The plan, seven years in the making, adds lab and housing capacity to the area; incorporates flexible indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, new pockets for retail, and underground parking; and allows for easy passage between the square and the Charles River.

The plan also preserves three of the last vestiges of Kendall’s industrial heritage, including a clock tower erected in 1925; the blocky white Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, which for many years housed the now relocated MIT Press bookstore; and the red-brick 1915 Hammett Building, upon which the new graduate residence will rise. Harmony between old and new was a major design consideration, says Sarkis. Architecturally speaking, the new buildings “are bold statements. Each is unique but respectful of the others.”

According to Sarah Eusden Gallop—co-director of MIT’s Office of Government and Community Relations and chair of the board of the Kendall Square Association (KSA)—respecting historical context was a key topic discussed at more than 100 community meetings MIT has held throughout the project.

Begun in summer 2018, an “MIT Inspiration Station” held weekly at the Kendall Discovery Market in the Marriott Plaza showcases Institute activities for the public.

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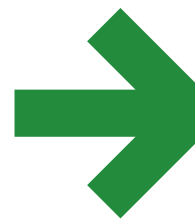
The final plan draws on input from local groups such as the Cambridge Historical Commission and the East Cambridge Neighborhood Planning Team. When construction is complete, the square’s new dynamic is meant to facilitate the kind of town-and-gown intermixing that was once epitomized by the F&T Restaurant. That landmark was long gone when Gallop joined MIT in 1990, but she still hears reminiscences about its heyday. “It was a symbol of openness,” she says. “You could see Nobel Prize winners having lunch at the diner sitting next to anyone—an MIT student or staff member, a Kendall Square employee, or a Cambridge resident.”

That inclusive ethos is what Jessie Schlosser Smith, recently hired by MIT for the new role of director of open space programming, will seek to recreate in the areas between buildings. “Programming with a quirky, playful vibe does a lot to welcome people in,” says Smith. She will look for unexpected ways to showcase MIT’s strengths, ranging from science and technology to the performing arts, as well as introducing the MIT community to the inspiring activity beyond its doorstep. In the process, she hopes to prompt the kinds of unscripted encounters that feed innovation. Just as two people might have struck up a conversation at the F&T, a space designed for lingering can lead to “connecting with somebody you might have met once, but then you run into each other as you’re grabbing a coffee or watching a performance. You reinforce that relationship and maybe have a conversation, and

a new concept or solution could potentially come out of that.”

What about those not already in the fabric of the innovation ecosystem? Gallop says that since the KSA’s 2009 founding, the Kendall community has increasingly turned its attention to issues of workforce development, aiming to spread the benefits of Kendall’s growth among its neighbors. Two job training centers, which will assist Cambridge residents in identifying and developing skills useful in the innovation economy, are set to open in the area next year, one to be created by MIT and another through a collaboration among several local organizations.

When the MIT Museum moves into its new Main Street home in 2021, Cambridge residents will



enjoy another perk: free admission year-round. John Durant, the Mark R. Epstein (Class of 1963) Director of the MIT Museum, describes this new policy as good citizenship. “We are part of the Cambridge community. And we would like to make what MIT represents as meaningful and as relevant to our immediate neighbors as we can.” To encourage repeat visits, the museum has already increased turnover of special exhibitions and programming related to content in the galleries. For example, this fall, an exhibition about MIT nautical engineer Nathanael Greene Herreshoff 1870 is accompanied by a workshop on boat design, complete with the opportunity to 3-D print a hull. But current facilities can’t fully meet the demand for such experiences. In addition to larger galleries, Durant looks forward to tripling the museum’s programmatic square footage, including a larger public makerspace called the Idea Hub. He’s also eager for the day that the annual Cambridge Science Festival, spearheaded by the MIT Museum, can finally be hosted on its own indoor and outdoor premises.

In all of this, Durant cites a guiding principle: “Museums should be first and foremost about what you do when you’re there, rather than what you see.”

Meeting the world

“In one sense,” says Durant, the dramatic new digs are “not a change for this museum, in terms of our mission: making research and innovation accessible to all.”

He really does mean “all.” Currently, 50% of the museum’s more than 169,000 annual visitors—a total expected to jump by at least 60% in the new space—come from outside the region. Some are tourists; many others are in town because a family member dreams of attending MIT. They may begin their visit at the Admissions Office, then round out their image of the Institute at the museum next door. Both admissions and the museum will utilize an adjoining 200-seat forum for presentations. There is a huge public appetite for engaging with MIT students and faculty, observes Durant—himself a faculty member in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society—and for access to “this extraordinary world of discovery, invention, and problem solving that MIT represents.”

Until now, visitors to MIT have tended to experience a single iconic gateway: 77 Massachusetts Avenue. There is nothing quite like climbing the steps toward the century-old doorway framed by grand pillars and getting your first glimpse through Lobby 7 down the Infinite Corridor. But Sarkis

suggests that the growth of the campus requires multiple entry points. He sees this multiplicity of entrances as consistent with the diversity of MIT at large. “The notion of diversity in education is very strong at MIT. It has to manifest itself in spaces, as well.”

The reimagined Kendall Square will offer a metropolitan entrance to campus, with accessibility and amenities that increase what museum folk like Durant call “dwell time.” Gallop’s office did extensive research on what makes innovation ecosystems successful, “and we were pleased to see that Kendall knocks most of the elements out of the park: transportation system, diversity of industry, research presence.” The planners zeroed in on developing a less tangible ingredient: sense of place. It’s the feeling you are in a distinctive destination where collaboration can and does happen—“the concept of a civic living room, where ideas are shared that are going to allow all of us to address the world’s greatest concerns.”

As construction progresses, MIT is poised to welcome the world into its living room. When Smith began her job, she was inspired to hear about recent “Open House” events that celebrated the campus’s centennial with insider views behind Institute walls—a powerful example, Smith thought, of “turning MIT inside out.” In the new Kendall Square, MIT can do this every day by “bringing those incredible discoveries out into the public, into a place where you can stumble upon it. You don’t even have to open a door. You just walk by, and there it is.” —Nicole Estvanik Taylor

An artist’s rendering of the soon-to-be-realized view down Main Street. From left: the graduate residence rising from the 1915 Hammett Building, the preserved Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, and the new MIT Museum.

IMAGE: BYENCORE

Architects

Childcare, Graduate Residence, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, MIT Forum and Admissions Office: NADAAA (design architect); Perkins+Will (architect of record) / MIT Museum: Perkins+Will (base building architect of record); Höweler+Yoon (museum interiors); Weiss/Manfredi (base building design architect) / Open Spaces: Hargreaves Associates

