

Off-campus Housing Resources and Information

Overview:

Between dealing with COVID-19, moving to a new place, and joining a new community, figuring out a housing arrangement for your first semester can be very difficult. This document is meant to be an informal guide from students in the department to help prospective and incoming students understand what off-campus housing may be like, the challenges and benefits, and resources that can help with the process.

Pros and Cons of Off-Campus Housing

Pros:

- In many cases, is a bit cheaper than university owned housing
- Provides more choices over the locations one can live
- Opportunity to live with those not apart of MIT, and easier to interact with those not apart of MIT (friends in your bubble)
- Provides opportunities to be see and interact with people outside the MIT community more often (get outside the “bubble)
- May have cheaper parking options
- Certain apartments have basements that make bike storage a bit safer
- Depending on Landlord, may have more flexibility and control over decorating and making changes to the apartment
- Large majority are happy with their off-campus housing situation (see final chart)

Cons:

- Bad Landlords can make life miserable and lead to unfixed issues
- Requires more responsibility and taking care of issues that arise
- Less resources immediately available to you as a result of being on campus
- Harder to deal with noisy and problematic individuals in your building or surrounding area
- Often has a longer commute time (may need to bike, drive, or take public transit)
- May not be situated close to a grocery store
- Buildings are often older/less taken care of than university housing, which may result in undesired issues with things breaking and infestations
- May need to deal with a broker/realtor who you’ll need to pay
- Ultimately requires more time and effort upfront to find roommates and a good place that will meet your needs

Advice from Current Students:

- Most off-campus housing requires a broker, meaning you might as well use their services when looking for a place. About 70% of online listings are not real or severely misrepresented by their pages (e.g. on Zillow or Apartments.com).
- Cheaper places further away from Boston proper (e.g. Somerville).
- Green line sucks. Red line good.
- Most places will not allow dogs, a decent amount allow cats.
- XFINITY sucks but will probably be your only option.
- Look into online resources MIT provides for off-campus housing as they are actually quite helpful once you figure out the site.
- I didn't get on-campus housing in the first round (likely due to COVID limitations), and at first I was kind of upset; however, I'm actually glad I didn't get it, because my off-campus apartment is cheaper than a lot of the on-campus options.
- I used the 'contact' feature on apartments.com/zillow/etc to inquire about specific listings, and found that most of the time the listed apartment wasn't actually available and the broker in charge of it would instead suggest other places. It ended up working out, but that was the case both for this apartment and my apartment from last year, so I suppose I would caution that that will probably be the case if you use these types of websites, and as such you will almost always end up paying a broker fee regardless of what the initial listing says.
- Brokers always make things seem more pressing than they are. Don't tell them you don't know what you're doing and be firm.
- Priority should be finding a roommate or roommates, especially during a pandemic like this! It will lower your cost of living per month and give you some much needed socialization/a buddy who can share your experiences as a first year or n-th year. It's also easier living with another person who can help out with small things (key issues, need some ingredient, help with house chores, etc).
- With COVID, public transportation is not as reliable (for me and the area I live in) be sure to look at in detail what the options are and how they are running NOW.
- Determine which neighborhood you want to live in first, helps narrow search and makes it more manageable.
- I don't think it's worth paying the broker's fee. It's a renter's market right now because leases aren't filling up fast enough so there are more options than usual. Furthermore, COVID19 policy really varies from apartment to apartment. My place is fairly lax once I'm inside the apartment and we all get tested routinely or have already been vaccinated. I know other apartments that are much stricter. Campus housing itself is quite strict, so it's worth figuring out what you prefer.
- ApartmentList is a very helpful website. Some apartments are offering 1-2 months free which can make a usually very expensive apartment more affordable

Online Resources:

Info on Neighborhoods in Cambridge:

<https://www.cambridgeday.com/about-cambridge/the-areas-neighborhoods-and-squares-of-cambridge/#:~:text=City%20government%20says%20there%20are,Cambridge%20Highlands%3B%20and%20Strawberry%20Hill.>

Somerville Neighborhoods:

<https://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/assessing-neighborhood-assessment-districts-map.pdf>

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/104497653829223042/>

MIT Resources:

<https://studentlife.mit.edu/housing/offcampus-housing>

<https://www.mitoffcampus.com/> *

*Note: Provides both listings of local off-campus apartments as well as a roommate finder option.

Non-MIT Resources:

<https://www.apartments.com/cambridge-ma/>

<https://www.zillow.com/cambridge-ma/apartments/>

https://www.trulia.com/for_rent/Cambridge,MA/

<https://bostonpads.com/blog/renters/apartment-hunting-101-college-grads/>

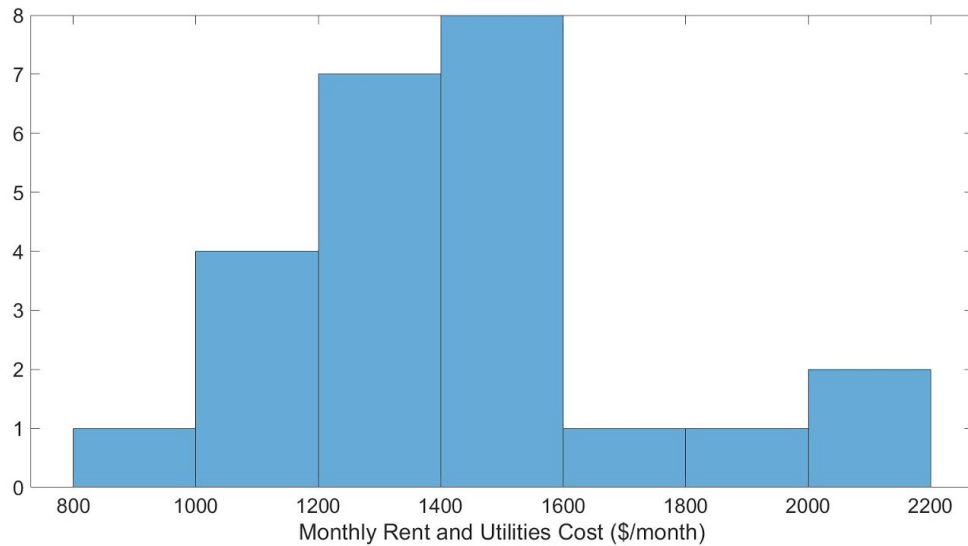
Common Neighborhoods to Live in Near MIT:

- [Central Square](#)
- [East Cambridge](#)
- [Inman Square](#)
- [Kendall Square](#)
- [The Port](#)
- [Wellington Harrington](#)
- [Somerville](#) (city just north of Cambridge)
- [Back bay](#) (Boston)
- [Fenway-Kenmore](#) (Boston)
- [Beacon Hill](#) (Boston)

Survey Results:

Asked about experiences and logistics of MIT Chemical Engineering graduate students who decided to live off-campus.

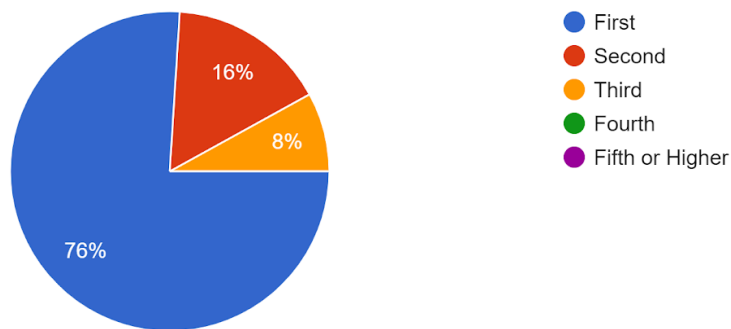
Average Rent and Utilities per Month:



***Note:** Mean = \$1,382; Median = \$1,375; Standard Deviation = \$300; Low = \$920; High = \$2,100

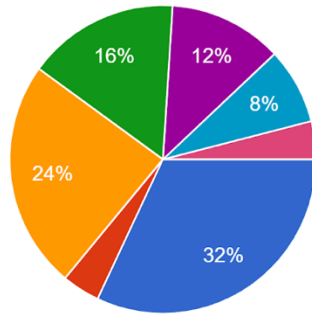
What year are you?

25 responses



How did you find your apartment

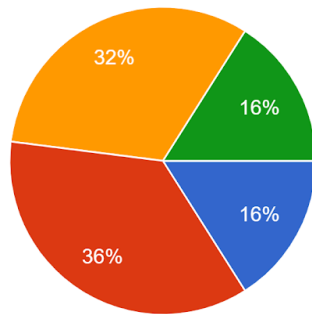
25 responses



- Online search
- Social media
- A Dedicated Site to Searching for Apartments
- Through a friend or acquaintance
- Through a Professional Service (Real Estate Agency)
- Through MIT's Off-Campus Website
- contacted by realtor on Facebook MIT-Harvard housing page, he guided us t...

How many roommates do you have?

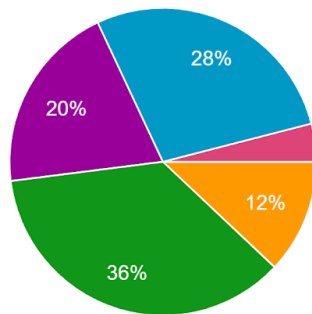
25 responses



- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+

Roughly how long is your commute to campus?

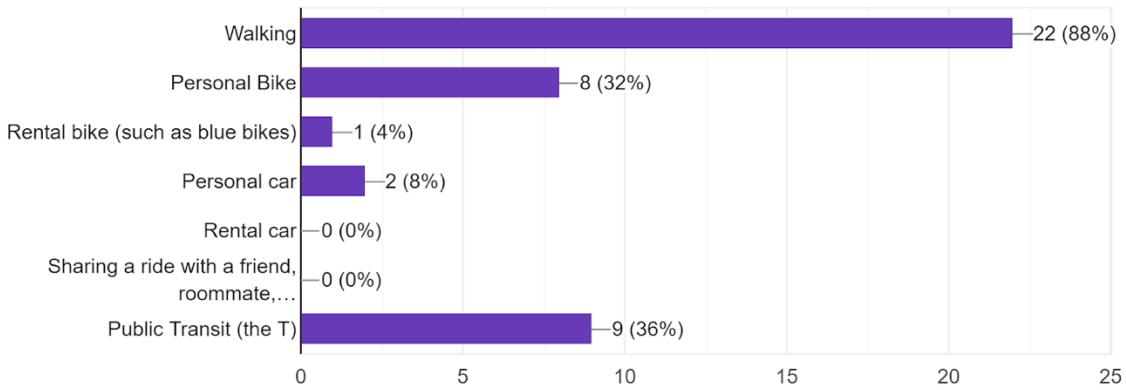
25 responses



- Less than 2 minutes
- 2-5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- 15-20 minutes
- 20-30 minutes
- 30+ minutes

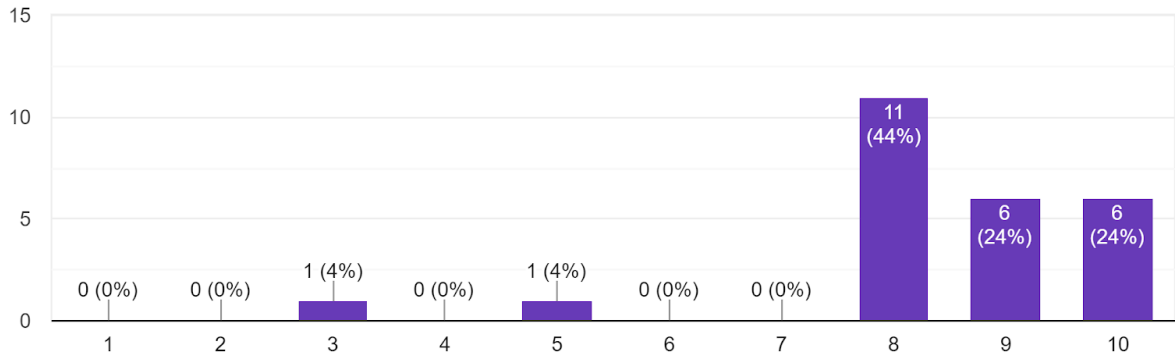
Which modes of transport do you or have you routinely used to get to campus?

25 responses



How satisfied are you with your off-campus living situation?

25 responses



***Note:** 1-10 scale with 1 being “very dissatisfied” and 10 being “absolutely love it”

If given the chance, would you rather switch to on campus housing?

25 responses

