

A PROPOSAL FOR COED LIVING
IN BAKER HOUSE FOR FALL 1974

March 12, 1974

This report is a brief expression of Baker House's plans to become coed. Members of the coed committee have formally met twice with the women interested. On Feb. 27, the possibilities were explained to the women, and then a tour of Baker House was given; one week later on March 6 when we again met with the women a reasonably concise living plan was agreed upon. During the past few weeks each of the women has been contacted personally and has spoken at great length with atleast one member of the committee. It is therefore fair to say that this report is as much an expression of their feelings as it is of those of the men of Baker House.

The sections of the report that follow explain 1) Why Baker House should become coed, 2) The actual floor plans and room priorities arrived at, 3) The alterations necessary within the rooms and bathrooms of the coed areas, and 4) Modifications in the house government to equally represent the women next fall. All of these were reached at meetings in conjunction with the women who have been very enthusiastic.

The enthusiasm, ofcourse, is not only theirs. A survey distributed to each resident of Baker House (see Appendix B) has been compiled, showing that 91% of Baker House residents support coed living, 94% would give up certain room priorities within the coed areas to make the experiment work, and 98% of Baker House men are in favor of women bringing other male guests to parties (a problem currently being encountered in Burton House where the men seem to be acting possessively).

Coed Living: The Advantages of Baker House

Baker House has for 5 years studied, thought about, and tried to go coed. If it weren't for a lack of tact 4 years ago, or lack of numbers of women since then, we would already be coed. It looks like our thought, discussions, and efforts will finally come to fruition.

Why should Baker House go coed? The reasons are numerous. Coed living has been proven as a desirable and workable living arrangement here at M.I.T. A coed environment offers men and women the opportunity for close, informal, interpersonal contact during the "educational experience" of which the college dorm is a fundamental part. It gives men and women the chance to meet each other, to learn from and about each other, to develop relationships other than the standard "dating" relationship, to form lasting friendships, to be part of the big family that is Baker House. Many of the stereotypical assumptions of M.I.T. men and women about each other will disappear, an obvious advantage. One of the biggest complaints about M.I.T. is the lack of contact with women, except for dates. Many ascribe a lot of the "pressure" they feel (and blame on M.I.T.) to this situation. Coed living in Baker House would alleviate this problem, and ^{serve} to release some of the pressure.

In light of the advantage mentioned above, Baker's high degree of interaction among the residents makes it ideal for coed living. Baker's high level of interaction in the house has been substantiated by the 1972 CSE statistics on coed living. Because of Baker's notable architecture and room assignments

policy, people from all over the house get to know each other and are free to choose their friends from all over the house. This is in contrast to the floor, entry, and suite priorities of the other houses. The big advantages of coed living in general lie in the exchange of ideas, the breaking down of stereotypes, and the growth experience of living together. These advantages would best be felt in Baker, where more people know each other and hence interact than in the other houses.

Baker is able to offer considerable diversity to the M.I.T. living group system. ~~We~~ offer men and women the interaction in and the other advantages of a large house, as opposed to living units the size of suites, entries, or floors.

Moreover, Baker's being coed would tend to balance the desirability of individual dorms within the system. This would seem a reasonable goal to work for wherever possible.

Coed living is currently perceived as an advantage, and a desirable option in lifestyles. Baker and MacGregor are the two remaining all-male dorms. If MacGregor goes coed, all the advantages will be stacked against Baker. This is especially difficult when it comes to R/O week. MacGregor has no problem getting first choice freshmen, while Baker can barely half the number it needs. People do not realize all the advantages until they actually live here, since many of these are intangible. But, facilities (kitchens for example) are a very tangible and easily perceived advantage. Making MacGregor coed would only compound our problem. East Campus can offer singles and coed living, Senior House can

offer coed living; McCormick, Burton, and MacGregor have the facilities; Burton is already coed. This is not intended to be bitter, but merely to point out that it is more reasonable to have a well balanced system, as far as possible. We offer this possibility.

Concerning Freshman R/O Week, Baker anticipates a very strong R/O program for the next few years. Many residents return early to become actively involved in this program. We feel we will have little problems in recruiting Freshmen women because:

-We expect that upperclass women will return early to become as enthusiastic about R/O Week as Baker House upper class men.

-We offer a unique style as far as coed living goes, optimizing the contact and interaction between men and women.

-Several Freshmen women now on our list said they would have preferred to live in Baker this past year, had it been coed.

Finally, we enumerate some of the more specific features of the house, relative to its desirability for women. Note: The following list is directed at a specific comparison between Baker and McCormick, and hence does not include such advantages as dark room, computer terminal, or laundry facilities.

- 1 Rent. Baker's rent will be \$150-200 less than McCormick's.
- 2 Much more flexibility (compared to McCormick and MacGregor) for fixing up, remodeling, and redecorating rooms.

- 3 A large house budget, with considerable money for new projects and ideas.
- 4 Slightly larger rooms, most with a view of the river.
- 5 Sinks and medicine cabinets in every room.
- 6 Dining Hall, serving commons. (This is important in terms of Baker's interaction.)
- 7 Games area. (pool, ping pong, pinball)
- 8 Much sign out sports equipment at the desk.
- 9 Weight and exercise room.
- 10 TV room, with large color TV.
- 11 Electronics Lab.
- 12 Snack Bar.
- 13 Many more social activities.
- 14 Room assignments policy - flexibility in allowing for blocks of friends who want to live together.
- 15 A purely democratic, town-meeting form of government, with every resident having an equal say in the decisions of the house.
- 16 A noted architectural work.

PLANS FOR THE COED FLOORS

The proposed plan balances the desirability of a broad base of contact for the women, with the need for them to maintain some sense of community, particularly during the first few years. Upperclass women will be in single rooms on the center and east ends of each floor. They will also have the option to choose nearby "front doubles" which many current residents consider extremely desirable. The hallways in nearby areas provide the opportunity for many lounges, which are already popular. Although it calls for approximately eight upperclass women per floor, the plan is very flexible and allows for expansion (or slight contraction) without affecting the social structure of the floor.

Freshman women will be in back doubles and triples and all will be close to upperclass women; men and women will generally be interspersed. This experiment fits well into the current social structure of Baker House. Individual areas of the floors are likely to remain cohesive but the spread of women across the floor will provide a greater overall sense of floor unity than now exists. The free flow of people throughout the house has always fostered interactions among residents, and we expect that residents of other floors will mix easily in the coed areas. Furthermore, women will not be "trapped" in the coed areas, and will find it easy to form close contacts with people from around the house. This is particularly important as they will have no say in choosing

their male neighbors. We foresee that men and women would eventually be treated equally by room assignments, and women would move about the house freely. The following section examines in detail the development of the plan, the alternatives considered, and the specific advantages of the proposal.

The immediate coed area would be approximately half male and half female. No undue hardships will be placed on any residents (male or female) because of lack of, or distance to, any facilities such as lounge space and bathrooms. We also attempted to formulate a proposal that while integrating women into the house would not place either the current male residents or the new female residents at any significant advantage or disadvantage in room assignment priority.

In addition to the previously stated goals, it was assumed that 1) the number of women occupants would be approximately 30-15 upperclass and 15 freshmen, 2) freshmen women and upper class women can live in close contact, and 3) the number of freshmen women and upperclass women would be about equal on each coed floor. It was the general consensus due to the numbers of women involved that sections of 2 floors should be included in the plan.

Three basic plans, west end, east end and central, have emerged of which one, central, was selected as the most desirable. Throughout the following proposals, it will be beneficial albeit necessary to consult the attached floor plan. It should be noted that while one plan was selected as having fewer drawbacks, all three plans were deemed workable. All three plans are now presented in some detail so as to

show the evolution of the preferred plan.

The west end plan would have interspersed upperclass women in front doubles (x15-x20) and also in the adjoining central couches (x21-x26). Freshmen women would have been placed in about half of the west end back doubles and triples (x01-x06). This plan was deemed less desirable for a variety of reasons.

First as each floor houses approximately 60 occupants and has 4 bathrooms (3 of which have shower facilities) it would stand to reason that 15 women residents would be allocated 1 bathroom with showers. But if either the central or larger west end bathroom was to be allocated for women, this would mean a large number of both men and women residents would live some considerable distance from the nearest bathroom and shower facilities for their sex. West end back doubles and triples are almost exclusively freshmen rooms, thus no assignment or priority problem would be created by this plan. Front doubles are normally sophomore rooms with center couches going to juniors and seniors. Due to the number of front doubles normally involved and the number of upperclass women, some of them would be placed at a disadvantage in room priority. More importantly in this plan a large number of upperclass women would in effect be forced to live in double rooms. There was nearly unanimous disapproval at the prospect of upperclass women (especially 3rd and 4th year students) being forced to live in doubles.

The east end plan existed in two variations. In the first, freshmen women would be placed in the east end triple (room x46) and the five east end coffins (x42-x45 & x47). Upperclass women would be interspersed in east end pies and couches (rooms x41 to x26). There was again several disadvantages. First, there was again a bathroom problem. Secondly, east end coffin singles are normally sophomore and junior rooms but they would be assigned to freshmen. Thirdly, all freshmen women would be in a block fairly removed from the mainstream of the floor.

The second east end plan would place freshmen in x46 and x47 and the central back doubles x07 and x08. Upperclass women would be interspersed as above. Two objections previously stated still hold; the bathroom problem and the separation of the freshmen women at the far end from the floor as a whole.

The central plan was the most favored and the most adaptable. This plan places freshmen in the central back double(s), x07 and x08 and the west back double and triple, x05 and x06. Upperclass women would be interspersed in front singles (rooms x21 to about x34). It must be noted that the use of central back doubles dictates the choice of coed floors. Floors 3, 4, 5 are the only floors having central back double rooms.

This arrangement has several advantages. There are no room assignments or priority problems. According to the questionnaire, few residents in these areas have expressed the

desire to exercise squatter's rights. Each spring when room assignments are made, any resident may claim and be guaranteed his current room for the next year. The entire house has been surveyed as to who will exercise squatter's rights and we have thus determined which rooms will be unavailable. This proposal has been written, with this information so that no current resident would be asked to give up anything he had implicitly been guaranteed. Furthermore, the rooms to be used by freshmen women have typically been used by freshmen. Similarly those rooms to be assigned to upperclass women have been for upperclassmen.

The central bath would be designated for women. This will cause a minimum of inconveniences for all residents. There is also a small center lounge on each of the floors. This proposal provides for the integration of women into the floors and the maximum flexibility in that it can expand in either direction, eastward to provide more upperclass singles and westward for front doubles and freshmen rooms.

We foresee no major changes to the floors involved. There are, however, several minor additions and changes which must be made in order that Baker not represent a compromise in lifestyle for the women. These are presented briefly in the section that follows.

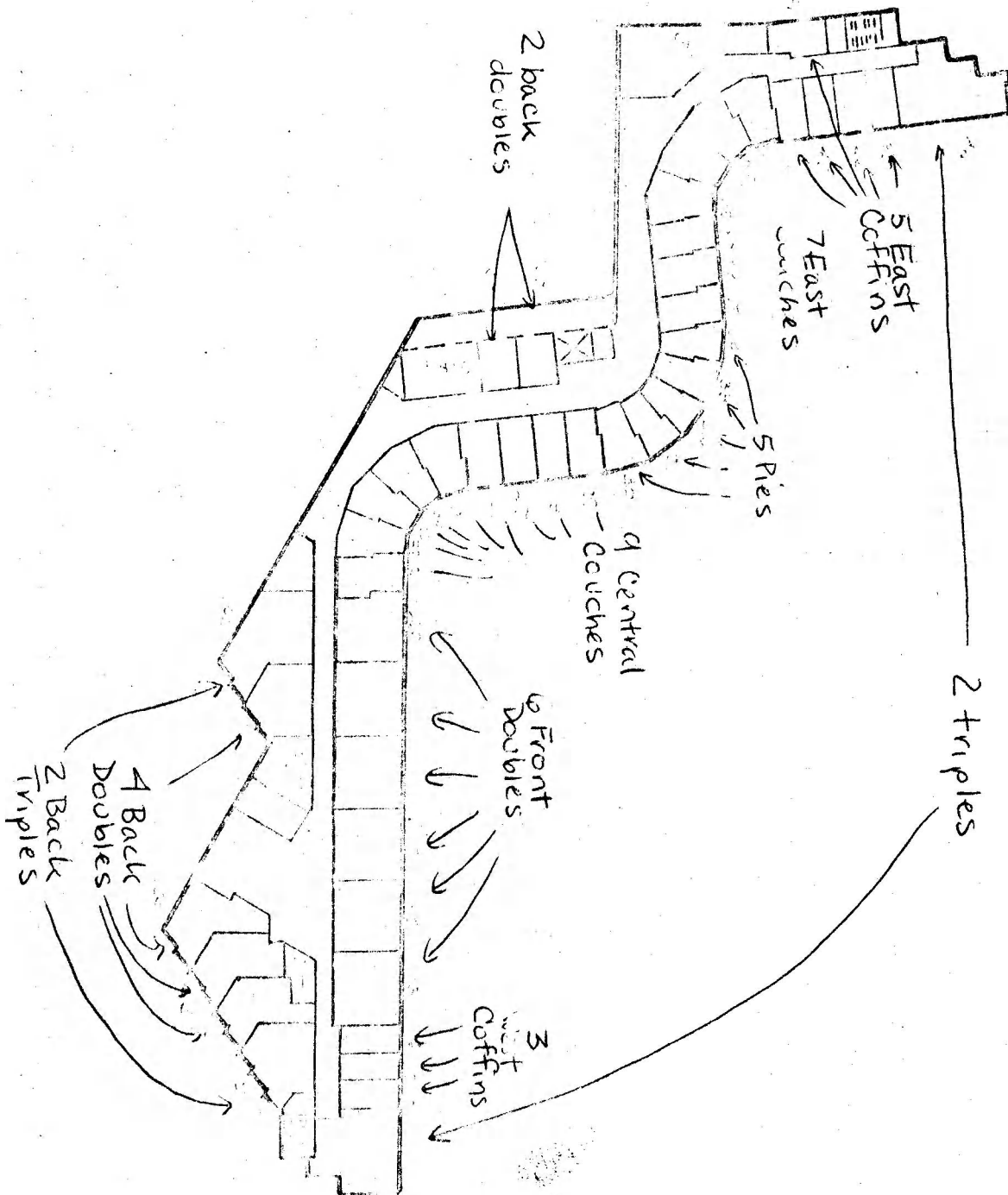
BY _____ DATE _____

SUBJECT _____

SHEET NO. _____ OF _____

CHKD. BY _____ DATE _____

JOB NO. _____



Governmental and Physical
Modifications

Coed living in Baker House will necessitate changes in both the physical and governmental structure of the dorm. Such diverse issues as access to bathroom facilities and the representation of the women in Baker government must be resolved in a manner acceptable to all, if the experiment is to succeed.

Looking first to the government, one proposal would be to have a Women's representative on the Baker Executive Council during the first term of coed living. During this time, the Women's representative would function in a manner analogous to that of the Freshman Representative, by serving a constituency that had had no voice in the selection of the other officers, simply because they weren't domiciled in Baker during the spring elections. After the first term, this post would be eliminated, and women would be eligible to run for other positions on the executive council. Another position would also be established for women on the Baker Judicial Committee. This, however, would be a permanent position, since it would be necessary for the Judicial Committee in the future to deal with problems among the women in the house as well as among the men. To make the women feel more comfortable as a minority within the house, there will be at least one female tutor or tutor's wife within the coed area.

Modifications will be made in the furnishing of women's rooms, in the form of additional dresser space, and the installation of some full-length mirrors. The exact nature of these changes has not been decided upon, but in any case, provision must be made for their implementation, financial and otherwise. Fortunately, all these problems are easily resolvable, and their exact details can be worked out in a cooperative effort with the future women residents.

Conclusion

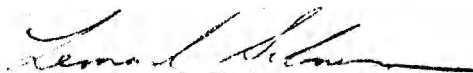
Due to an overwhelming sentiment on the part of both the residents of Baker House and the women interested, it is now the time for Baker House to become coed. The advantages, as previously indicated, are enormous and should result in the desire of many freshman women to live in the house next year.

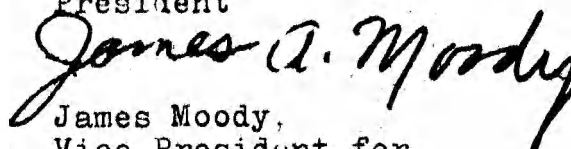
The friendliness, openness, and fraternal feelings between residents will result in the optimum advantages for a coeducational environment.

On the practical side, implementing coed living in Baker is quite feasible, as specified earlier in this report. There will be representation for the women in the house government, which should make it easy to implement ideas and requests from the new residents.

As a result, Baker has the greatest potential for being a successful coed living group. Therefore, Baker House hereby respectfully requests the permission of the Deans' Office to become coeducational this coming fall.

Signed,


Leonard Schneeman,
President


James Moody,
Vice President for
Institute Relations


Mark Crane,
Coed Committee Chairman

A List of Women Committed to Living in a Coed Baker House

- 1) Gretchen Megowen
- 2) Kathy Roggenkamp
- 3) Katrina Wooton
- 4) Leslie Carey
- 5) Patty Binon
- 6) Judy Leider
- 7) Debbie Hoover
- 8) Sue Litvin
- 9) Jill Kurfirst
- 10) Marie Mease
- 11) Cindy Koelker
- 12) Lisa Jablonski
- 13) Joan Pendleton
- 14) Janice Bestul
- 15) Eileen Schaffer

A List of Women Seriously Interested in Living in a Coed Baker House, But Who have not Finalized a Decision

- 1) Caren Penso
- 2) Debbie Rubin
- 3) Kathy Medish
- 4) Barbara Wilson
- 5) Debbie Gross