come very institutional and, for a lot of people, unpleasant places to be. America being America, most of us have grown children and grandchildren all over the world,” Lorsch adds. “It’s probably true that this is a way of relieving the responsibility of that younger generation to take care of their parents, and of giving older people an option beyond just relying on their kids. This is an alternative to both those things.”

More than 250 people showed up at the Cambridge group’s launch party in October, and about 300 have joined. “We can provide referrals for everything from 24/7 care with nurses to someone who comes by for three hours a week to check blood pressure, or helps put the groceries away,” says executive director Kathy Spirer. (There is a fee structure for services beyond those covered by the basic membership cost.)

Board president Steven J. Stadler ’48, who has lived in his Mount Auburn Street condominium with his wife, Ingrid Stadler, Ph.D. ’59, for more than four decades, says about 40 people went on an October trip to Yale’s art museums. The social component of the program is critical to many seniors, he says: “We’re hoping to facilitate those bonds through exercise classes, walks, yoga, bridge groups, trips, and political luncheons.” So far, he notes, the membership includes a fair number of Harvard affiliates—a big draw

**Unique Senior Housing**

**During** the last five years, MIT’s former director of planning, Robert Simha, MIT president emeritus Paul Gray, and a core group of other Harvard and MIT leaders, including Harvard Graduate School of Design professor Carl M. Sapers and professor emeritus Charles W. Harris, have devised an unprecedented, cooperative housing development in Cambridge. The project, University Residential Communities at 303 Third Street (URC), is now under construction and consists of two buildings—one with market-rate rental apartments, the other with units available for sale primarily to members of the Harvard, MIT, and Massachusetts General Hospital communities. (Visit www.facultyrealestate.harvard.edu for details.) Those units are geared to seniors—and anyone else—desiring a cooperative community while maintaining ties to academia and to the cultural benefits of urban life.

Designed and being built by Extell Corporation of New York, the URC project (offered in partnership with the Beal Companies of Boston) also provides physical and programmatic features to enable its older residents to “age gracefully in place,” Simha says. These include 24-hour concierge service; a swimming pool, hot tubs, and a flexible fitness space; a common meeting room with a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, and bar service; a large courtyard for events; and a 4,000-square-foot dining “club.” Home healthcare, housekeeping and shuttle services, and access to the nearby MIT medical department will also be available.

A cooperative board will govern the URC building, Simha explains, because “that is the only model in Massachusetts that ensures that members of the university community are not priced out of the housing market in the future.” Intergenerational and mixed-income use is planned. Twenty-one of the units have been set aside as part of the Cambridge Affordable Housing Program and will go to applicants through a lottery based on income guidelines. The remaining 147 units will go to people of any age, at prices ranging from $465,000 to $1.4 million. “The goal is to create a residential community of a diverse group of people with an affinity for university life,” according to Simha. “One of the main reasons people don’t like assisted living or continuing-care facilities is that there are too many old people there.” Such places, he adds, also tend to be built in isolated, suburban towns where people cannot walk or take public transportation to movies, concerts, lectures, or restaurants. URC, in contrast, is located one block from the Kendall Square subway station and across the street from a planned multi-stage performing arts venue called the Constellation Center.

About 40 units have already been reserved, including those belonging to Simha and Gray.

This “enables us to live in our homes a lot longer than we’d otherwise be able to do.”