

Jesus and Local Politics



Church, Faith, Life

Growing Up

- A UCC life: father, uncle, grandfather all ministers
- Father: prof. of religion and chaplain at Williams
- Mother: psychotherapist and hostess extraordinaire
- Steady stream of guests: spiritual leader Baba Ram Dass (“ love everyone and tell the truth”), MLK
- Father worked with MLK
- Blacklisted by FBI, phones tapped, harassed by IRS
- An “ open house” childhood

Values

- Role models: Jesus, MLK, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Gandhi
- Empathy, fairness, honesty,
- Each person has a story
- All experiences are valid
- Everyone has good in them if you decide to look for it
- Nothing is ever as bad as it seems
- Every problem can be solved
- Open — “ let us speak of the deepest things we know”

Focus on Local Government

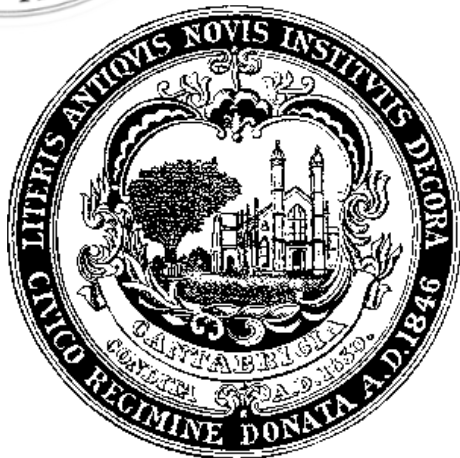
Education / Profession

- Political science major at Bates College
- Washington Semester: worked for the District
- Thesis on proceedings of Lewiston, ME City Council
- Summer internships working for local gov't
- MBA at BU in public management
- Organizational behavior
- City of Boston — 8 years
- MIT — 27 years

Personal Drivers

- Love politics
- Fascinated by people and their personalities
- Intrigued by strange bedfellows
- Understanding the back story (there always is one)
- Enjoy sorting out complex situations
- Developing consensus among disparate parties
- Bias for action
- Delight in challenging team projects

Context: MIT's Town Gown Relationship



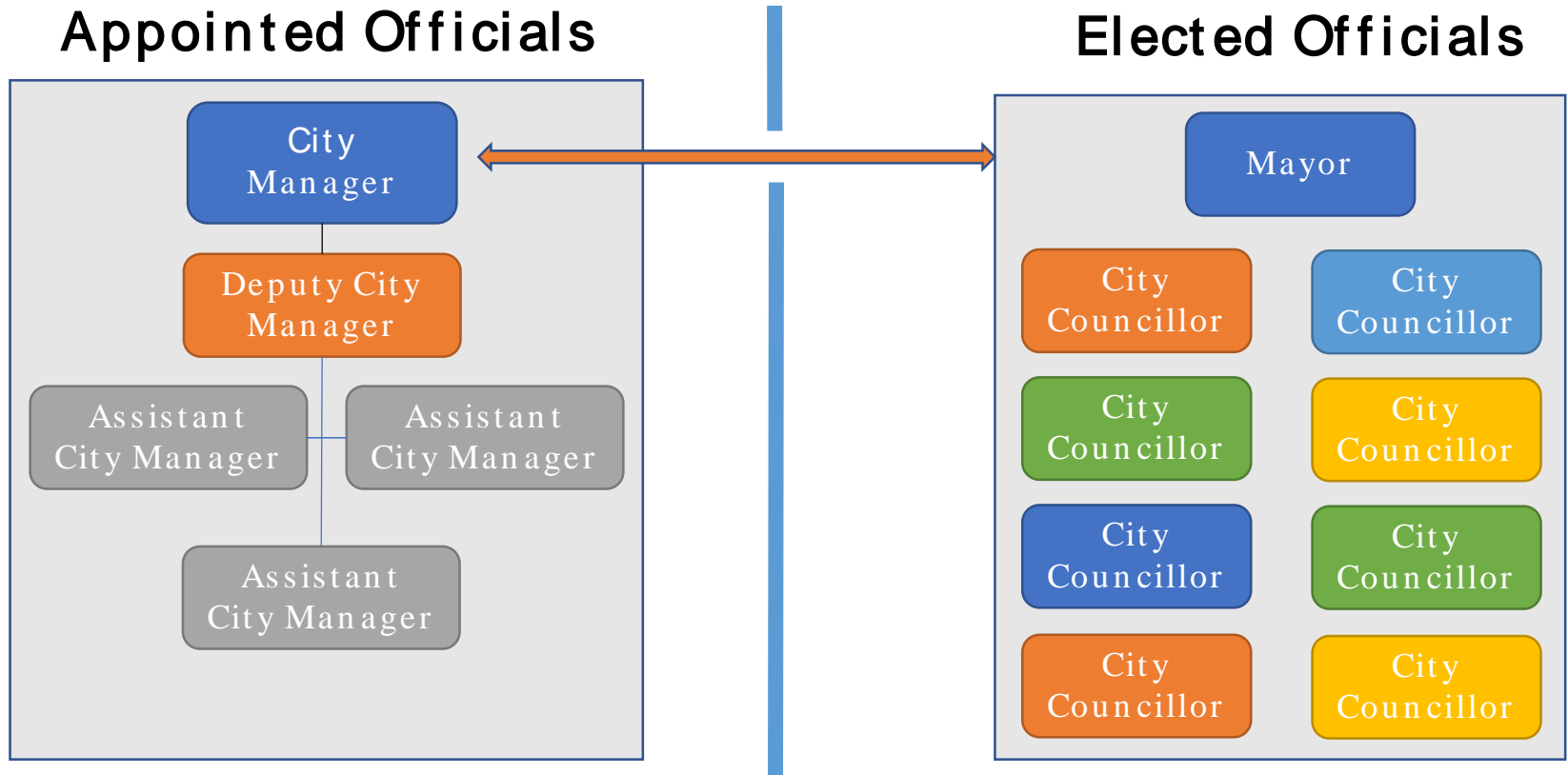
- Ubiquitous dynamic
- Tax exempt status, PILOT, taxes
- Zoning, land use, development
- Perceptions and expectations
- Economic/opportunity gaps
- Parallel, yet sometimes conflicting missions
- Inevitable politics ➤ friction, hostility
- University impact on the community,
City impact on the university
- View of citizenship and subsequent responsibility

The City of Cambridge



- 2nd most densely populated city in state (110K in 6 sq. miles)
- Well- resourced, large \$\$ reserve
- Very low residential tax rate, subsidized by commercial taxes
- Two world- renowned universities
- Highest per pupil expenditure in state
- Extensive social services

Plan E Form of Government



Voting Method

Boston Mixed Plurality

- Nine district and four at-large seats (13 total)
- Individuals need to a majority to win
- Candidates curated through primary

Example: Boston District 1 2017

Last election: 13,064 ballots cast

Candidates: 2

Winner required 6,532 votes

Typical in American Elections

Cambridge Proportional Representation

- Nine at-large seats; candidates are rank-ordered
- Candidates need a limited number of votes to win, based on turnout
- No curation or primaries; anyone can run

Example: Cambridge City Council 2017

Last election: 22,509 ballots cast

Candidates: 26

Winners required 2,251 votes

Typical in European Elections



Office of Government
& Community Relations

City Council



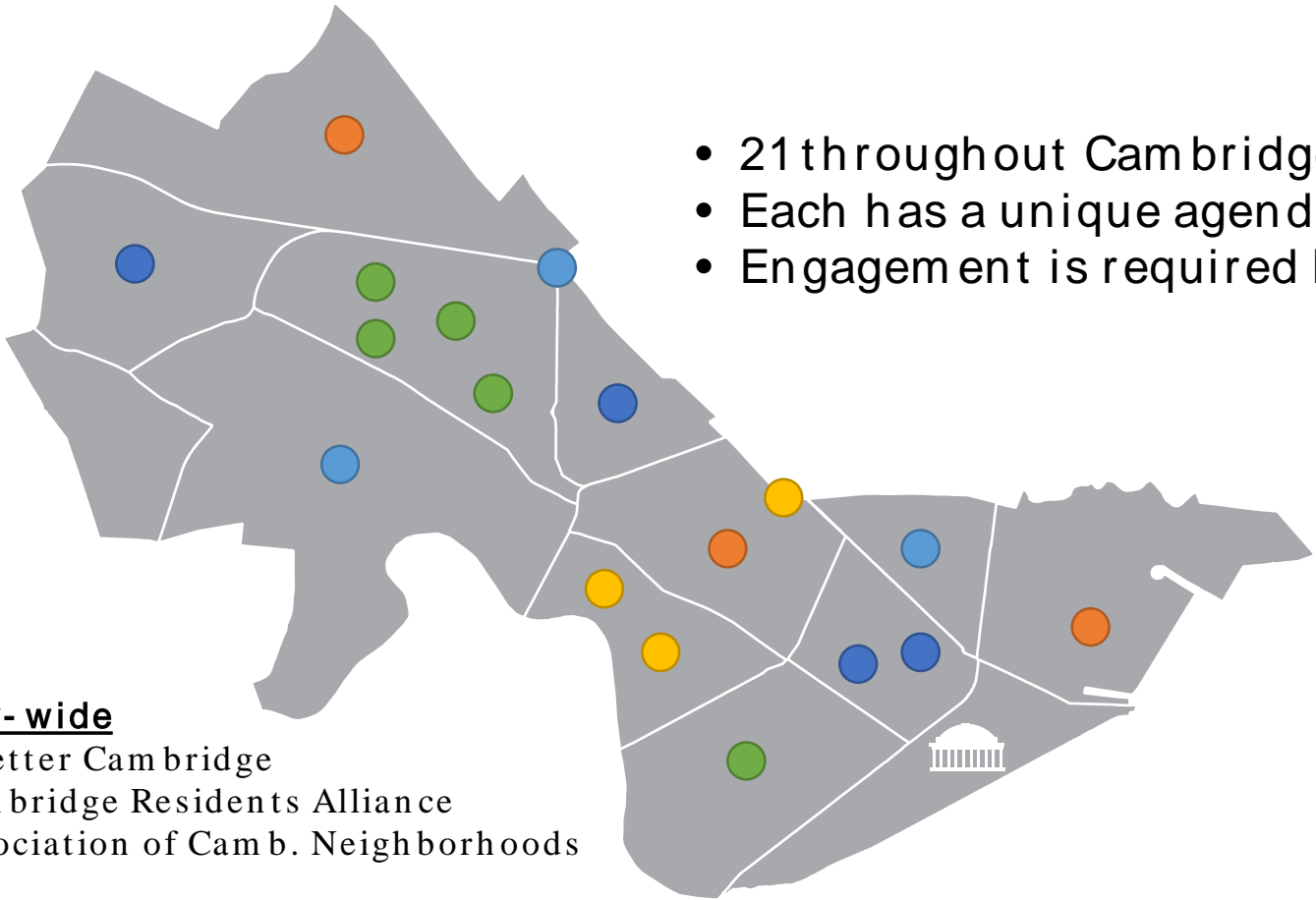
- Two year terms result in nearly year- round campaigning
- Only need to keep about 2,000 voters happy
- Must find a way to stand out from others with similar constituencies

Cambridge's Political Demeanor



- Progressive
- A desire to be first in the nation (rDNA regs, gay marriage, net zero)
- In competition with Berkeley, CA (first with soda tax, plastic bag ban)
- Supports active citizen participation
- Values e- x- t- e- n- s- i- v- e process
- University- bashing is good sport

Cambridge Neighborhood Associations



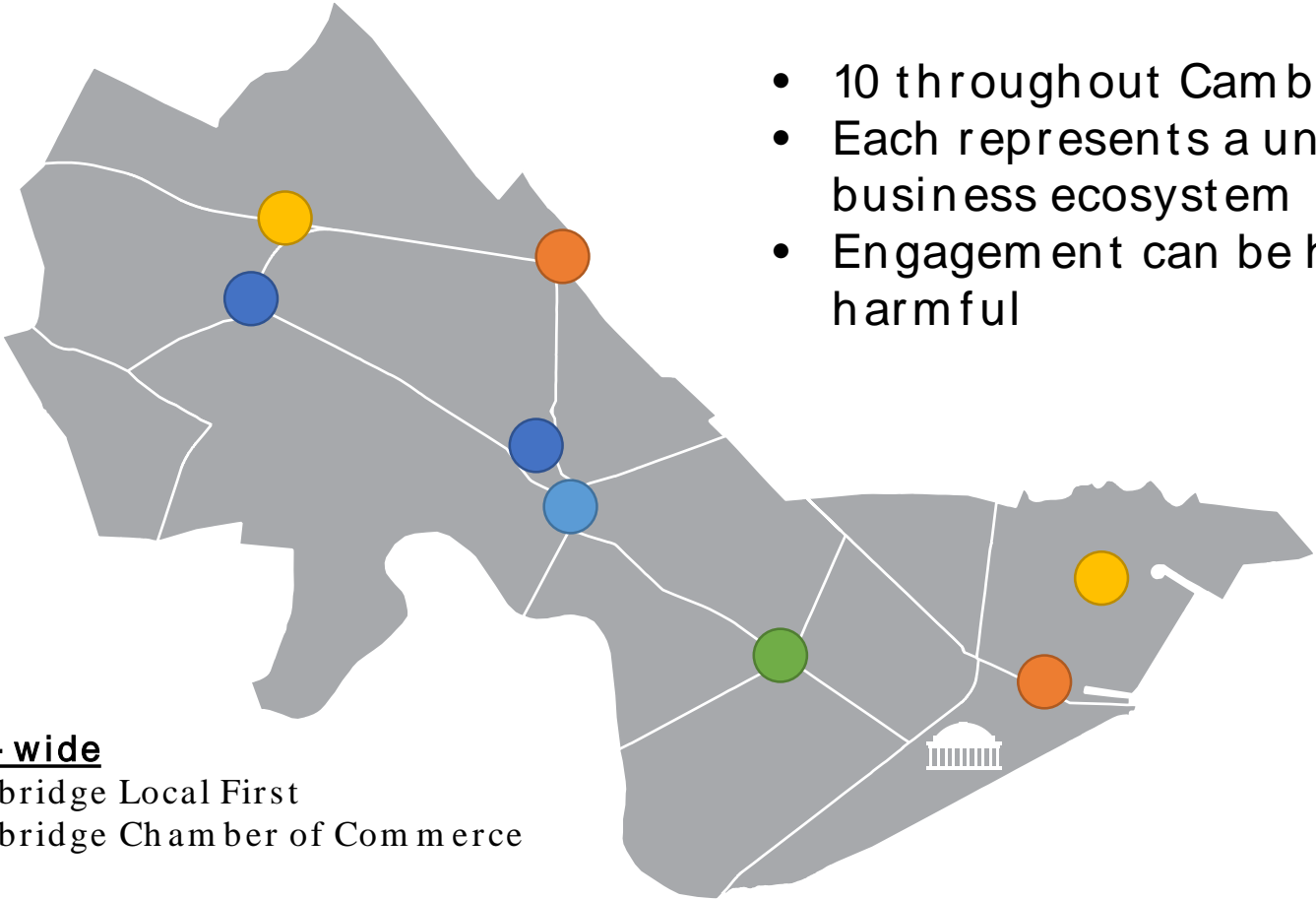
- 21 throughout Cambridge
- Each has a unique agenda
- Engagement is required by City

City-wide
A Better Cambridge
Cambridge Residents Alliance
Association of Camb. Neighborhoods



Office of Government
& Community Relations

Cambridge Civic Associations



- 10 throughout Cambridge
- Each represents a unique business ecosystem
- Engagement can be helpful or harmful

City-wide
Cambridge Local First
Cambridge Chamber of Commerce



Office of Government
& Community Relations

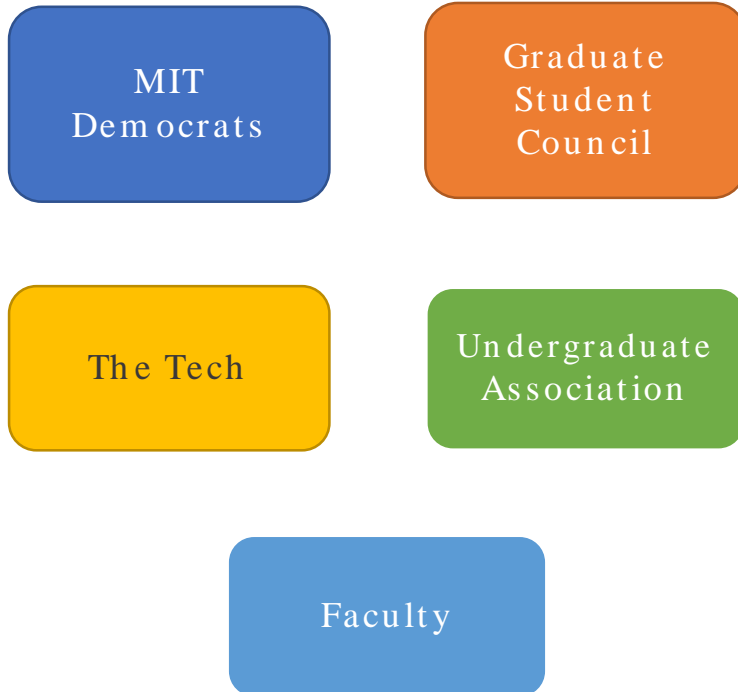
Cambridge Nonprofit Organizations



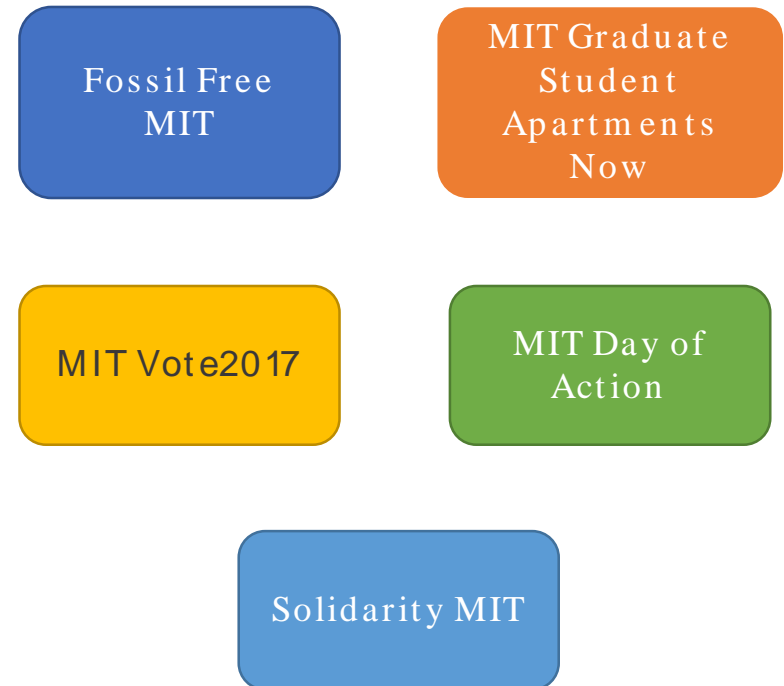
- 975 501c3s in the city – 2nd to Boston's 3,000 in MA
- Provide basic services and build community
- 130+ nonprofits supported by MIT
- Expectation that MIT will generously support their programming
- Often become leveraged in political discussions

MIT's Community is Politically Engaged too

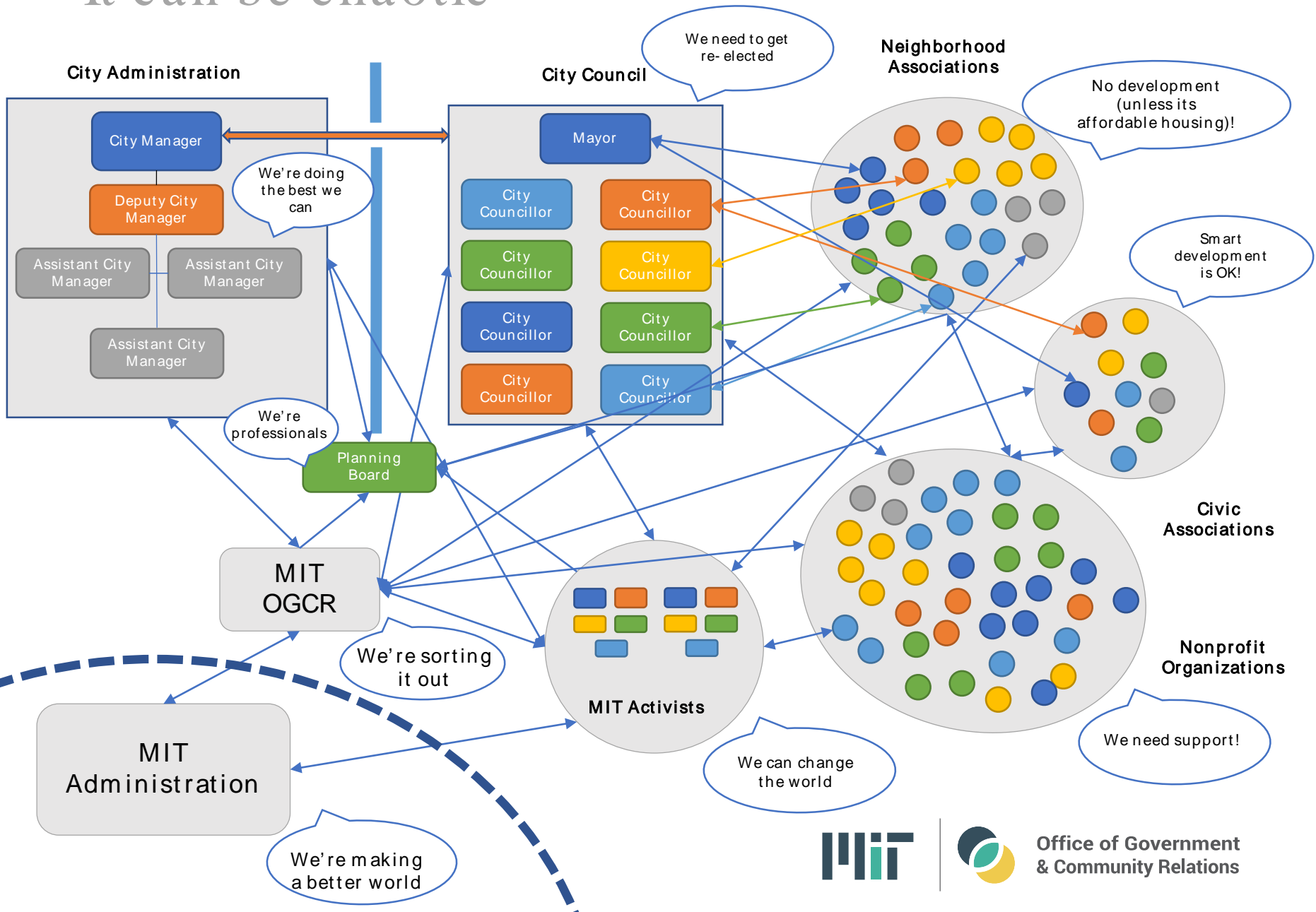
Steady State



Ad Hoc



It can be chaotic



Approach: Steady Engagement

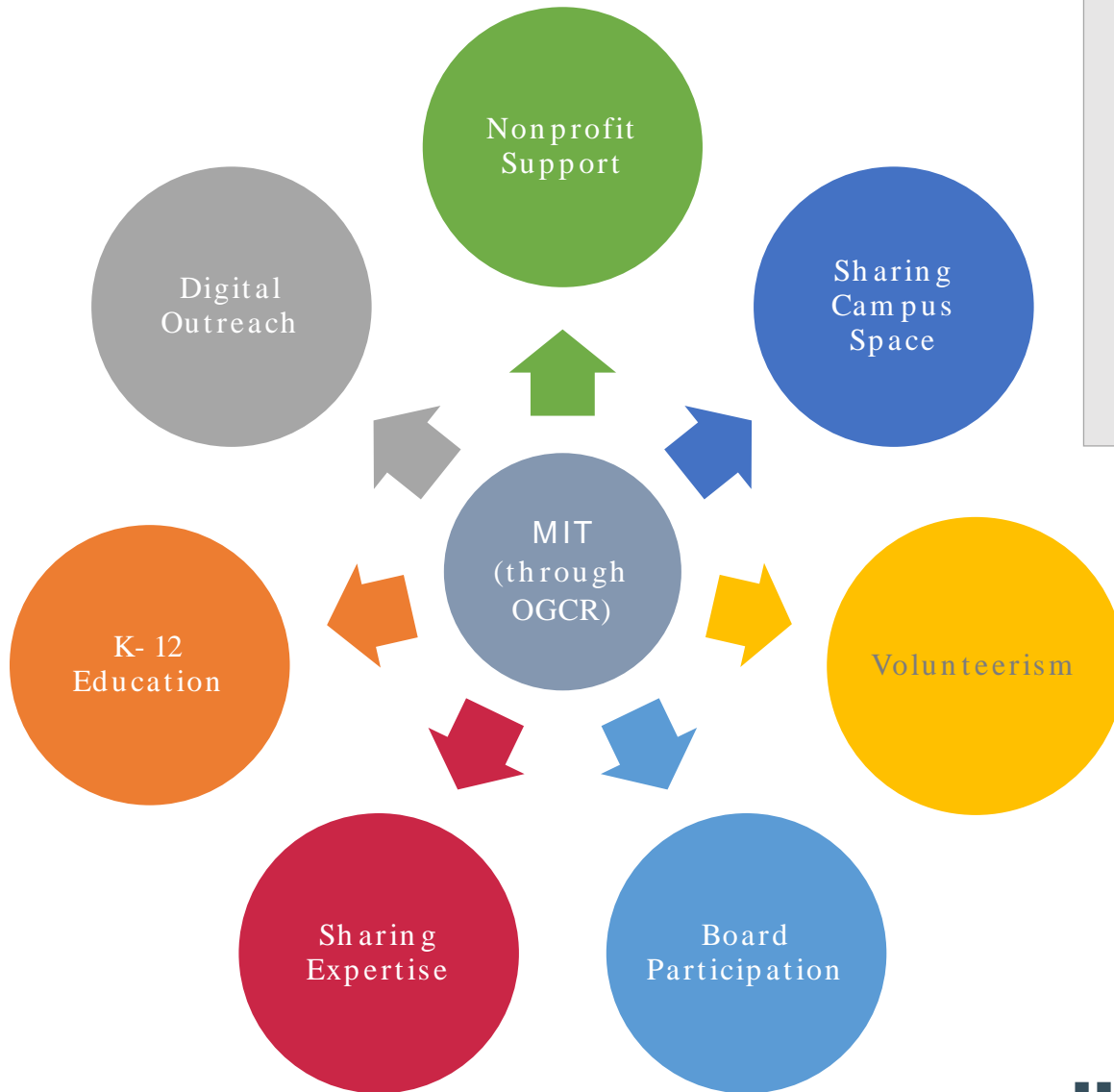
Goals

- Advance MIT's mission
- Build a foundation of goodwill
- Be a good neighbor and citizen
- Obtain needed permits, licenses, and approvals
- Implement mechanisms that work so we may co-exist respectfully and productively, not necessarily peacefully
- Create positive perception of MIT

How we achieve them

- Work closely and openly with all parties
- Anticipate the politics
- Consider everyone an ally
- Plan A, B, C...
- Be honest and responsive
- Engage in creative problem-solving
- Break down perceptions of arrogance and elitism
- Maintain credibility in/out
- Strive for mutual understanding

Approach: Active Collaborations



- Nurture connections
- Increase visibility
- Tell MIT's story
- Build consensus
- Share information
- Grow trust
- Help the community

WWJD?

Common Challenges

- Because MIT is viewed by some as elitist, rich, big, anonymous (pick your adjective), a dynamic of public criticism is prevalent
- Questioning the fundamental mission and presence of the Institute

Channeling Jesus

- **Accept** the reality of this steady state — it's age-old and can't be changed
- **Teach and re-teach** the public about MIT's role in science and research: health issues, technology, climate change, poverty, food, clean energy and water, etc...

WWJD?

Common Challenges

- For political expediency, some will feign a lack of knowledge (and therefore *shock!*) about MIT-related topics
- In the course of negotiations, some will grandstand around expectations of MIT (that usually involve a lot of money)

Channeling Jesus

- **Listen and be patient — explain it again**
- **Consider thoughtfully**
- **Decide judiciously**
- **Respond respectfully**
- **Never humiliate**

WWJD?

Common Challenges

- Because it's sport, speaking disrespectfully (or inaccurately) about MIT is commonplace
- Personal attacks because I represent MIT (e.g. "You're a disgrace to women")

Channeling Jesus

- **Honor** the person
- **Preserve** the relationship
- **Turn the other cheek**
- **Actions speak louder than words**

- **Acknowledge** the frustration and anger
- **Offer** something constructive with the hope of a future cracked-open window
- **Forgive and learn**

WWJD: Summary

Public
criticism

- Accept the reality

Question
mission

- Teach and re-teach

Feign
ignorance

- Listen, be patient, explain

WWJD: Summary

Grand-standing

- Consider thoughtfully
- Decide judiciously
- Respond respectfully
- Never humiliate

Disrespect

- Honor the person
- Preserve the relationship
- Turn the other cheek
- Actions speak louder than words

Personal attacks

- Acknowledge the feelings
- Offer something constructive
- Forgive and learn