Submitted by Students Against Institutional Discrimination

Short Title:
Should Northeastern give residents of surrounding neighborhoods final decision-making power (when supported by a majority of the affected neighborhood’s constituents) in University development and community projects?

Question Type:
A Call for Northeastern Administration to Act

Introductory Clauses:
WHEREAS, Northeastern University was established as a regionally-focused commuter school with a sense of “commitment to the city and its neighborhoods,” rather than as a “Global Network” [1] [2];

WHEREAS, data suggests that urban universities catalyze gentrification and factors related to gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods [3] [4];

WHEREAS, Northeastern sits squarely on land that, less than sixty years ago, was primarily home to Black residents of Boston [5];

WHEREAS, Northeastern’s 2013 Institutional Master Plan (IMP) states, “At the conclusion of the IMP review process, Northeastern will work with a representative council to address problems and future opportunities of cooperation with adjoining communities” [6];

WHEREAS, Northeastern created the Institutional Master Plan Advisory Group (IMP Advisory Group) and Community Advisory Board to fulfill this promise [7] [8];

WHEREAS, these committees can “engage [Northeastern] in dialogue” and “provide feedback,” but have no formal decision-making power in considering how Northeastern’s development projects will impact their communities, whether through IMP amendments or otherwise [8];

WHEREAS, this denial of decision-making power grants Northeastern the ability to disregard the stated interests of affected neighboring communities;

WHEREAS, Northeastern continues to amend its 2013 Institutional Master Plan to initiate new development projects or modify existing projects in ways not specified in the original IMP [9];

WHEREAS, several adjacent communities have voiced abject opposition to Northeastern’s latest development projects, including the expansion of Northeastern’s planned Burke Street dormitory, to no avail [10] [11];

WHEREAS, Northeastern is not yet in accordance with a number of the stated goals of its 2013 IMP and Community Benefits Agreement (including but not limited to women- and minority-owned business procurement targets), thus exacerbating community concerns [8] [12];

WHEREAS, Northeastern is “committed to staying deeply invested in regards to Boston urban life” [8];

WHEREAS, one of Northeastern’s stated goals is to serve as “a national model for community engagement in the neighborhoods surrounding [its] campuses” [13];

Operative Clauses:
THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Northeastern gives residents final decision-making power regarding community-facing Northeastern initiatives, provided the decision is accompanied by signatures from the majority of constituents of the neighborhood(s) potentially impacted by any given initiative;

RESOLVED, that, to fulfill this responsibility, Northeastern either create a new council consisting of -- or amend an existing council to include -- community members that have been nominated and confirmed by residents of their own neighborhoods, rather than by Northeastern, the Boston Planning & Development Agency, or the mayor.

Sources


