



**Fenway Community
Development Corporation**
Improving Lives and
Building Community

May 16, 2025

City of Boston
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Northeastern University's 2025-2035 Institutional Master Plan

Dear Chief Shen and President Aoun,

On behalf of Fenway Community Development Corporation, I offer our comments on Northeastern University's 2025-35 Institutional Master Plan. Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Northeastern Task Force and engage in this review process.

Fenway CDC is a 52-year-old nonprofit affordable housing organization with over 1,000 members. We own and operate over 550 homes for more than 800 people of affordable housing and engage residents in efforts to improve life in our community.

Housing

One of the most often cited issues discussed in Task Force meetings and public meetings alike during this process has been Northeastern's impact on housing availability in adjacent neighborhoods. In fact, this issue was the priority in the last IMP. Yet again in this IMP Northeastern's role in contributing to the affordable housing crisis is concerning and insufficiently addressed. Residents are unable to compete with students for rental housing, given students' ability to afford higher prices, which drives up rents, and displaces low- and moderate-income residents. According to the City's own analysis, in neighborhoods with a high density of students, rents are higher by \$200/month.

We appreciate that Northeastern responded to advocacy for more students housed on campus without further expansion, such as through no additional master leases or purchasing residential buildings. While the University acknowledged that the initial goal of 60% of undergraduates housed on campus was too low, the updated goal of 65% of undergrads on campus is still not enough. Student housing supply has been a long-standing issue that Northeastern has not remedied, and so **we respectfully request Northeastern to increase its goal and house 75% of its undergraduates on campus by 2035.**

Like Northeastern's last IMP, we request that the project sequencing prioritize the two proposed student housing projects.

We applaud the University's openness to explore commercial-to-residential conversion opportunities to reach its housing goals. Fenway CDC's real estate team is willing to partner with Northeastern and assist in that process however we can.

Enrollment

While the undergraduate enrollment increases at a moderate rate, we are concerned about the drastic increase in graduate student enrollment over the next ten years and the impact it will have on the neighborhood's housing availability.

Northeastern's undergraduate enrollment over the last decade was unprecedented and not properly projected. Moving forward, the University and City must take steps to ensure that Northeastern does not over-enroll.

Community Benefits

Thank you for investing in the Co-ops in Service to our Neighbors program. We have benefited greatly from the additional capacity from co-ops at Fenway CDC for the last 5 years and are grateful that Northeastern covers their wages. Residents consistently share that they appreciate when students get to know the neighborhood and give back; we hope that similar programs can continue to build these critical bridges between students and residents.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Fund was created to address Northeastern's over-enrollment during the pandemic and will assist first-time homebuyers in the Fenway, Roxbury, and Mission Hill. We hope that Northeastern will make a long-term investment into this fund by committing \$1M a year, annually, for the 10-year IMP period. As of this comment submission, the Task Force has been assured that an amount is being negotiated, but we have not received the final amount yet. Therefore, we reserve further comment.

In the Task Force we discussed Northeastern opening its amenities to the neighborhood. Residents have appreciated being able to access the library and gym, but are frustrated by the constraints and lack of clear communication. We're grateful that Northeastern is committing to clarifying its policies and examining other areas that it may be able to offer to neighbors.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We look forward to supporting the implementation of this plan and our ongoing work together to make Boston affordable and livable for all its residents.

Sincerely,

Cassie White (she/her)

Director of Policy and Community Organizing

Cell: 857-217-4370 | cwhite@fenwaycdc.org

70 Burbank Street, Boston, MA 02115



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