

Statement Given by Susan Prindle
Architecture Committee Co-Chair
Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay

at the Public Meeting held on June 26, 2013

Since the early 1980s I have been involved with the architecture of the Back Bay. I feel strongly that developers and residents alike should work within the framework of the historical and zoning regulations that have made our neighborhood such a success.

Fisher College should respect the Back Bay, not exploit it. Rather than ignoring the neighbors' concerns, Fisher should be required to work with them to develop a more acceptable plan that abides by the current zoning and architectural regulations, rather than attempting to evade them, and that minimizes negative impacts.

To me, the proposed 2-story addition at 118 Beacon Street is a particularly egregious violation of the Back Bay's zoning and architectural standards. The building's FAR is already excessive. Such an addition would, in the normal course of events, be regulated by the City's Zoning Board of Appeal. **There has been no instance in my memory in which the Board of Appeal has allowed a substantial addition on a nonconforming property.** Fisher may be pursuing the IMP in part as a way around this difficulty.

The Back Bay Architectural Commission will also have jurisdiction over the proposed addition. The proposed IMP states on page 25 that "the BBAC's comments have been incorporated into the proposed design for the addition." This comment is misleading, at best. Although there may have been a discussion with the staff, the Commission itself has not seen the proposal, much less commented on it.

In fact, the Commission has never, since its inception, approved a 2-story addition on Back Street. One-story garages are common. Patios on the top of such structures are also often granted. But a two-story addition, 25 feet in height, would constitute a precedent for Back Street that I sincerely hope and expect the Commission would deny.

The Back Bay of the last 40 years has been a success story for Boston and for its residents. The City and the BRA have a history of upholding the strict zoning and architectural regulations that have so successfully preserved our district. I urge them to continue to support these standards, and to reject Fisher's IMP.