



Brandeis University

Statement of Brandeis Interim President Lisa Lynch at the Waltham Historical Commission Public Meeting, March 14, 2016

Thank you, members of the Waltham Historical Commission, for giving us the time to present our plan for Usen Castle, a much-loved building on the Brandeis University campus. I'm Lisa Lynch, interim president of Brandeis University. Our team here tonight includes Jim Gray, Brandeis Vice President of Operations; Dan Feldman, Brandeis Vice President for Planning; Rob Dickey, the university's project manager from Leggat McCall Properties; Greg Doelp, structural engineer from Simpson Gumpertz Heger; and Grady Ward, Brandeis Undergraduate Student Representative. Two other members of the team who were not able to attend this evening include Mike Connors, local counsel, and Maureen Cavanaugh, historic preservation consultant.

First as part of Middlesex University and then after the campus was acquired by the founders of Brandeis University, the Castle has been a familiar sight in Waltham atop Boston Rock with its distinctive turrets and crenellations. The Brandeis campus literally grew up around the Castle, and generations of students, faculty and staff have considered it an icon.

Unfortunately, the Castle was both poorly designed — without the benefit of an architect or engineers — and inexpensively constructed as it took shape during the Great Depression. Despite our maintenance over the years, the Castle is reaching the end of its useful life.

After carefully weighing all the possibilities with the help of a first-rate team of experts, we have developed what we believe is the most responsible plan for the Castle's future. Under this plan, Towers A and B, which are in marginally better condition and encompass the Castle's most iconic and visible parts to the Waltham community, will be retained as is for now. These towers include the popular student hangout, Chum's Coffee House. With the exception of Chum's, which we plan to keep open, these sections will be unoccupied while the university further analyzes options and fundraising opportunities for their future.

Our petition before this commission explains our plan to construct a new residence hall to replace the student housing that is currently part of the Castle complex. The new residence hall will house considerably more students than the current housing does, thus helping to house more students on campus. Equally important, a new building will also provide full accessibility and modern energy efficiency, which the Castle currently does not.



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Developing our plan was a difficult decision involving many in our community. We did explore the costs of a complete preservation and renovation of the entire Castle complex. Our analysis showed that option would be prohibitively expensive — on the order of \$80-\$90 million dollars. It would have resulted in spending nearly four times as much per student bed for 60 percent fewer students than the option we are choosing to follow.

Such an extreme cost was impossible for us to justify.

We have a responsibility to spend our scarce resources on our core mission. As a top-tier research university, our highest priority is to invest in educational excellence — by continuing to attract the very best faculty and by increasing financial support so that no exceptionally qualified student who is offered admission at Brandeis, including many from Waltham, is precluded from attending for financial reasons. We must also fund the pressing maintenance and renovation needs of the 100 other buildings on our campus, many designed by some of the greatest architects of the 20th century.

As beloved as the Castle is, even the student newspaper has voiced support for our plan. In a January editorial, *The Justice* newspaper said, "While the Castle holds a place in the hearts of many in the Brandeis community, this alternative is both a way of saving an important aspect of the Castle, ensuring student housing and prioritizing student safety."

We hope that, after careful consideration, the distinguished members of this commission will come to the same conclusion. I thank you for your time and consideration.

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