



**G R A N G E**

**September 16, 2020**

**Re: TE18.16. Inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register and Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act - 100 College Street**

**To: The Chair and Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council**

I'm Max Allen, vice president for Planning and Development of the Grange Community Association Inc. The northern edge of our area is College Street, where the Banting Building stands.

**We submit that the only outstanding aspect of the building is its name.**

**CULTURAL HERITAGE.** Various authorities disagree about the cultural heritage value of the building. The City's Senior Manager of Heritage Planning (Urban Design) wants the building designated in a way that will give City Planning and Council nearly unbreakable authority over its future. ERA, which is one of Canada's leading preservation architecture firms, says in an analysis commissioned by the City that the building **does not meet the legislated criteria for protective designation**. I have read all the background expert-opinion material about the Banting Building, and I agree with ERA. The building does not qualify for designation.

**THE BUILDING ITSELF.** The heritage Report forwarded to TEYCC via an August 27<sup>th</sup> Decision Letter by the Toronto Preservation Board would have been an opportunity to describe the Banting Building itself in glowing terms. But rather than suggesting the building is striking in appearance, or was characteristic of a period or place but is now a rare surviving example, or is beautifully or unusually constructed, the Report (pp.15-16) instead gives the impression that the building is pedestrian in every way.[1]

**INSULIN.** The discovery of insulin is the primary focus of the cultural heritage discussion. But insulin was not discovered, or purified, or given to patients in the Banting Building or even on this site. That work was done at Toronto General Hospital across the street plus in a distant building, now demolished, where the U of T's Medical Sciences Building is today. In fact, the Banting Building was built nine years *after* insulin was discovered, and all the research and testing and treatment work **was done elsewhere**.

**THE BEST BUILDING.** A building named for Dr. Charles Best, the co-discoverer of insulin, was later built adjacent to the Banting Building. To an observer on the street it was indistinguishable in style and function from the Banting Building. The Best Building was demolished with City permission this year, and a new building is rising in its place.

**LANDMARK BUILDINGS.** A few steps from the Banting Building at 100 College Street are three notable landmark buildings at three scales: at 88 College, the shapely former Congregationalist church complete with gargoyles (1891); at 87 College, the substantial red sandstone Canadian Blood Services Building (1890); and at 101 College, the spectacularly preserved and integrated 1913 Toronto General Hospital College Wing by architects Darling & Pearson, now part of the MaRS complex. The Grange Community Association respects landmark buildings like these and supports the idea of their preservation as a tribute to the past and an inspiration to the present. In our opinion, **Banting is not a landmark building**.

**GUTTING.** In the filed documents there is reference to discussions about ways to celebrate Dr. Banting, whose name is undeniably magic to many Canadians. Gutting the building and rebuilding its interior to imitate its original layout and purpose does not preserve its cultural heritage, and is not anyway a favoured strategy of Heritage Preservation Services or the Planning Division as a whole. Saving the facade alone – an aptly-named facadectomy along the lines of what was done to the John Lyle studio at 1 Bedord Road and many other old Toronto buildings – is not preservation. And incorporating intact heritage buildings within new structures is rarely feasible, nor has it been shown to be feasible here.

**COMMEMORATIVE STRATEGY.** A better way to memorialize Dr. Banting, one that carries an immediate educational impact, is to commemorate the building and its namesake through a (possibly high-tech) “display” inside or outside a new structure. The discovery of insulin, and the lives of Drs. Banting and Best, are today celebrated by a well-designed (low-tech) installation in the lobby immediately inside the College Street entrance of the MaRS complex, directly across the street from the Banting Building. That installation includes an enlargement of a striking photograph [2] of their lab. An even more daring move might be for the University to name the new structure **The Banting and Best Innovation Centre**, with a subtitle giving prominent credit to the **donors**; or something more elaborate like **The Schwartz-Reisman Innovation Centre honouring the discoverers of insulin Dr. Frederick Banting and Dr. Charles Best**.

**NEIGHBOURS.** The new Innovation Centre designed by the renowned New York architect Marion Weiss was discussed last year at the Community Liaison Committee (CLC), established by the City to consider university/community matters including, now, the University’s revised Secondary Plan. The five residents associations adjacent to the University – the Grange Community Association, the Harbord Village Residents Association, the Huron-Sussex Residents Organization, the Annex Residents Association, and the Bay Cloverhill Community Association – agreed unanimously about the excellence of the proposed Innovation Centre [3]. During our CLC discussions there was never a suggestion that the existing Banting Building or the recently-demolished Best Building should be preserved. The outcome of the block-by-block College Street Study, which we all participated in, is drafted so that a building like the Innovation Centre can be built on the site to replace the Banting Building. – although **there is no reference to these College Street area specific studies and plans in the City’s heritage report**.

**EDUCATION SPACES.** The present conduct and future organization of university education is cloudy. In the face of an uncertainty that has now risen to new heights, the University is attempting to ensure future operational flexibility by building **flexible educational spaces**. Examples include the addition to the west face of the Roberts Library, the new Engineering Building on St. George, and Ryerson’s recent Student Learning Centre on Yonge Street. They have all been designed with an unpredictable future in mind. The Banting Building does not share this sense of uncertainty; it is a dinosaur with a dark future.

**HERITAGE IN THE GRANGE.** The Grange Community Association takes seriously its responsibility for the preservation of heritage. We supported and contributed to the process that brought about Toronto’s first commercial Heritage Conservation District, on Queen Street. We encouraged the AGO and OCADU to conserve their past. We were leaders in the years-long process to conserve, preserve and revitalize Grange Park. We (alone) kept 424-428 Spadina intact. Alone, and against the efforts of the developer and the City, we persuaded the OMB, on technical grounds, to disallow the ruination (as we saw it) of the historic apartment building at 162 Huron. If we thought the Banting Building really did constitute an important landmark, we would be out with metaphorical **pitchforks** to protect it as it stands.

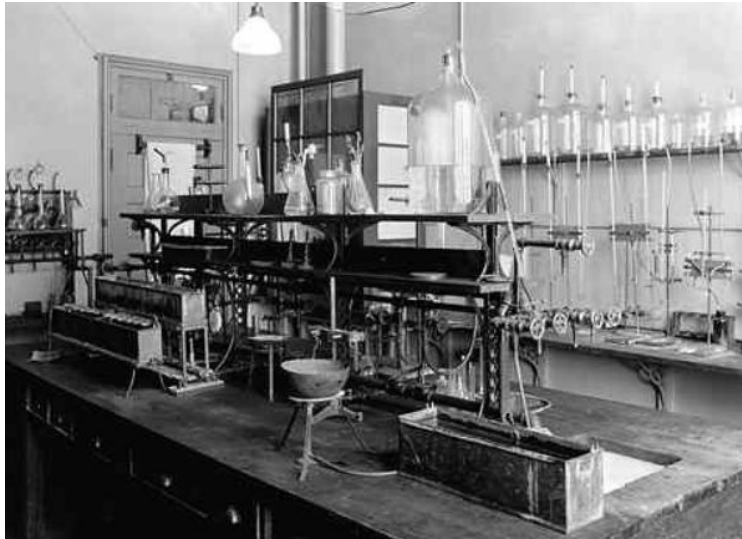
The City’s pitchfork, today, is designation. We think you shouldn’t use it.

*Max Allen*

## NOTES

[1] There is a single exception: the Report notes that the raised basement is said to terminate in a *handsome* roll mould. The other qualitative descriptions which might be considered judgemental are three: “The [university] Administration had mandated that buildings along College be Georgian in character ... the Georgian Revival style introduces *subtle modulations* through symmetry, hierarchy and classical elements • encased by a *richly moulded* stone door surround • large windows for *optimum* lighting in an unadorned space.”

[2] This was Dr. Banting’s laboratory room where he and Charles Best discovered the ability of insulin to control diabetes:



[3] The Weiss/Manfredi-designed Innovation Centre (below) under construction in two phases on College Street. The western section, where the Best Building was, is being built. The eastern section, where the Banting Building is now, will come after the western section is operational:

