

From: sandy kasten [aldebki@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, July 18, 2004 9:11 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Cc: aldebki@yahoo.com
Subject: July 20 City Council meeting

To: Berkeley City Council

Re: July 20 City Council meeting
2104 & 2108 Sixth Street
Appeal of Gary Feiner from Landmarks Commission
decision

I am writing in support of the Landmarks Commission's decision to include the property located at 2108 Sixth Street in the newly created Sisterna Historic District. I am an owner of the residence at 816 Addison Street, which is also in the Sisterna Historic District. I believe that the appellant, Gary Feiner, has no rational basis for his appeal other than his desire to convert the single family homes at 2014 and 2108 Sixth Street to duplexes, with extensive modifications to the existing structures.

The Sisterna Historic District includes a group of buildings that were constructed in the 1880s and 1890s, located at the northern end of the block bounded by Fifth, Sixth, Addison and Allston. Although there are other remaining examples of late 19th century buildings in west Berkeley, the Sisterna Historic District is unique in that a group of contiguous homes are still standing. One can still walk around the northern end of the block and see what the neighborhood like a century ago (and I urge you to do so).

The buildings in the Sisterna Historic District exemplify a variety of styles, reflecting their owners' and occupants' circumstances. Several of the homes near the corner of Sixth and Addison Streets were constructed by the family of Wilson McVay, a constable. The house at 2104 Sixth Street was built in 1892 for his daughter Clara, perhaps upon her marriage to George Ballard, an engineer. Clara's brother Edward married Isabel Moore, a granddaughter of Rosario and Carmen Sisterna, who owned a dairy farm in west Berkeley.

The house at 2104 Sixth Street is located between a larger and more elegant Victorian to the north, in contrast to the small, "working man's cottage" to the south. The working man's cottage at 2108 Sixth Street

was built in 1888 and was occupied by Frederick L. Edwards, a silver burnisher. The exterior of this home has been modified and is in poor condition. The Landmarks Commission voted to include only the site in the Sisterna Historic District.

The house at 2104 Sixth Street is in good condition and some of the original architectural detailing on the exterior remains. The Landmarks Commission voted to include the structure in the Historic District. We believe that the building meets several of the criteria specified in Berkeley Municipal Code section 3.24.110 A. It is an architectural example "worth preserving for the exceptional values [it adds] as part of the neighborhood fabric. It is a structure associated with the evolution of "social and economic developments of the City". It is worth preserving for its "usefulness as an educational force". It is part of an area that embodies and expresses the history of Berkeley. There is no reason to overturn the decision of the Landmarks Commission, which considered a lengthy and detailed written application and heard extensive testimony about the history and architectural merit of the structure and the neighborhood.

We in the neighborhood believe that the Sisterna Historic District is a valuable and important historical resource. As nearby neighborhoods evolve and change, it is important to preserve a bit of the past for future generations. We envision a day when walking tours of the Sisterna Historic District will be included in Berkeley tourist information. If any part of this historic resource is lost, it can never be recovered. It would be a tragedy to exclude a building in good condition from the Historic District because of one person's desire to make a profit.

Please uphold the decision of the Landmarks Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Kasten