LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

June 8, 2026

Agenda Item #:	3
Project Title:	113 Ely Place - Land Division in the University Heights Historic District (District 5)
Legistar File ID #:	93071
Prepared By:	Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner
Members:	Present: Richard Arnesen, Ald. John Duncan, Molly Harris, Katie Kaliszewski, and Jacob Morrison Excused: Edna Ely-Ledesma and Maurice Taylor

Summary

Nicole Hemkes, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Robert Quintana, registering in support and wishing to speak
Aaron Gary, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Ron Rosner, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Lara Collier, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Heinrich, Marie & Alexandra Schnoes, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Timothy Smeeding, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Kurt Stege, registering neither in support nor in opposition and wishing to speak
Diane Bless, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Jean Parks, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Katrina Forest, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Suzelle Tempero Knisley, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Jonathan Knisley, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Susan Thibeault, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
David Yang, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Roger Maes, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Hildegard Neujahr, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Monica Messina, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Susan Eichhorn Jordan, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Shiva Bidar, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Jessica Giffey, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Joshua Giffey, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Robert Russell Heffernan, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Nicholas Davies, registering in support and not wishing to speak
Ruth Kearley, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Chamond Liu, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Jeffrey Chandler, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Ronnie Hess, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Tim Mathison, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Molly Fields, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Thomas McGhee, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Alex Saloutos, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak

Also present: Ald. Regina Vidaver (D5)

Kaliszewski opened the public hearing.

Hemkes, Gary, Rosner, Collier, Schnoes, and Smeeding spoke in opposition. Stege spoke neither in support nor in opposition. Quintana, applicant, spoke in support, saying that the new lot will remain largely open, and they have no intent to develop it.

Ely-Ledesma left at 6 pm, during public comment for this item.

Bailey provided background information on the proposed project. She explained that a parcel is a tax designation and a lot is a legal description based on a platted map. The historic preservation standards talk about lots, not parcels. The applicant has not filed a subdivision application that would be reviewed by Planning staff and Common Council, but that application would require more details about the dimensions of the lot and flagpole portion, which is already there. She added that concerns about lot access, water issues, or whether it is a developable lot are not standards that the Landmarks Commission has a legal basis to enforce.

Ald. Vidaver asked about adjacency and lots vs. parcels. Bailey said that for the general lot development pattern of the historic district and whether it is compatible with adjacent lots, it is a mix of lots and parcels, which is complicated. If this were grossly out of scale, it would be considered incompatible. However, in her analysis the adjacent lots are pretty comparable in size. She said that some parcels are large and hold different legal lots of record, so we have to look at lots and also consider parcels. Vidaver asked about slide 4 in the staff presentation. Bailey said the map on the left shows parcels with the grand totals of square footage of all the lots they contain, and the map on the right shows parcels and the legal lots they contain. She said there were a mix of sizes without much regularity, and asked the commission to consider whether the proposed 4,001 sq. ft. plus the panhandle was grossly out of scale. Vidaver asked if staff's professional opinion about the terms "adjacent" and "lot" would allow for this division even though the parcel size is not completely congruent with the adjacent parcels, and Bailey said that was correct.

Morrison said that in the ordinance, there is no defined metric that says what compatible means or requires it to be within a certain amount. Looking at the maps, he said that mere square footage is not at issue here because there are lots within the historic district that are approximately this size. He said that there is also no metric that dictates the shape. He said the only thing giving him pause was the lack of frontage, which is the only difference between this lot and every other lot, which all have a house facing the street and defines the character of the historic district. Because this would be unique and different from that configuration, does it adversely affect the overall character of the historic district?

Harris said she was not as convinced about the size and compatibility with adjacent lots. There was further discussion about the compatibility of lots and parcels. Harris said that coming into this, she thought the newly created lot was incompatible with adjacent lots and the pattern of the historic district, especially toward the top of the hill. In reference to slide 4 of the maps, she asked if they should be looking at the green or blue lines in terms of adjacency, and Bailey said they should be looking at both.

Arnesen said that lot compatibility is not an issue for him. He asked if the commission would review a new house proposed for this potential lot, and Bailey confirmed that new construction within the historic district would require a Certificate of Approval from the Landmarks Commission. Regarding Morrison's comments, he said that they aren't looking at whether a house would be compatible with the neighborhood, but rather if the lot being created is generally compatible. In terms of adjacency, he thought it was compatible with lot 3.

Harris said that she did not think the proposed lot is compatible with adjacent lots sizes and lot size patterns of the historic district.

Kaliszewski closed the public hearing.

Action

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Duncan, to Approve the request for the Certificate of Approval because the proposed lot configurations do not adversely impact the historic character of the historic district, are compatible with adjacent lot sizes, and maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district. The motion passed by the following vote:
Ayes: 4 - Richard Arnesen, John Duncan, Katie Kaliszewski, and Jacob Morrison
Noes: 1 - Molly Harris
Excused: 2 - Edna Ely-Ledesma and Maurice Taylor