

Subdivision #2026-00001
411 Clifford Avenue

Application	General Data	
Request: Public hearing and consideration of a request for a Subdivision to re-subdivide an existing lot into two lots with a variation to floor area ratio.	Planning Commission Hearing:	May 5, 2026
	Approved Plat must be Recorded By:	November 5, 2027
Address: 411 Clifford Avenue	Zone:	R-2-5/Residential
Applicant: Teresa Elaine Lustig, represented by Duncan Blair, attorney	Small Area Plan:	Potomac West
Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and recommended conditions found in Section IV of this report.		
Staff Reviewer: Catie McDonald, catherine.mcdonald@alexandriava.gov Sam Shelby, sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov		

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Staff Reviewer: Catie McDonald, catherine.mcdonald@alexandriava.gov
Sam Shelby, sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, MAY 5, 2026: This item was pulled from the Consent Calendar and heard before Docket Item #5. On a motion by Vice Chair Koenig, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to close the public hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Vice Chair Koenig, seconded by Commissioner Lennihan, the Planning Commission voted to approve Subdivision #2026-00001. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

Discussion: Commissioner Lennihan explained she supported the additional density this would create but did not understand architecturally how the second unit would connect.

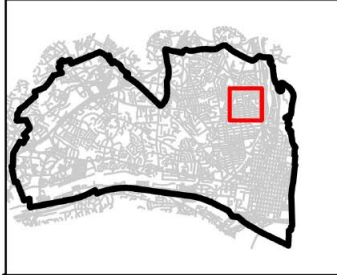
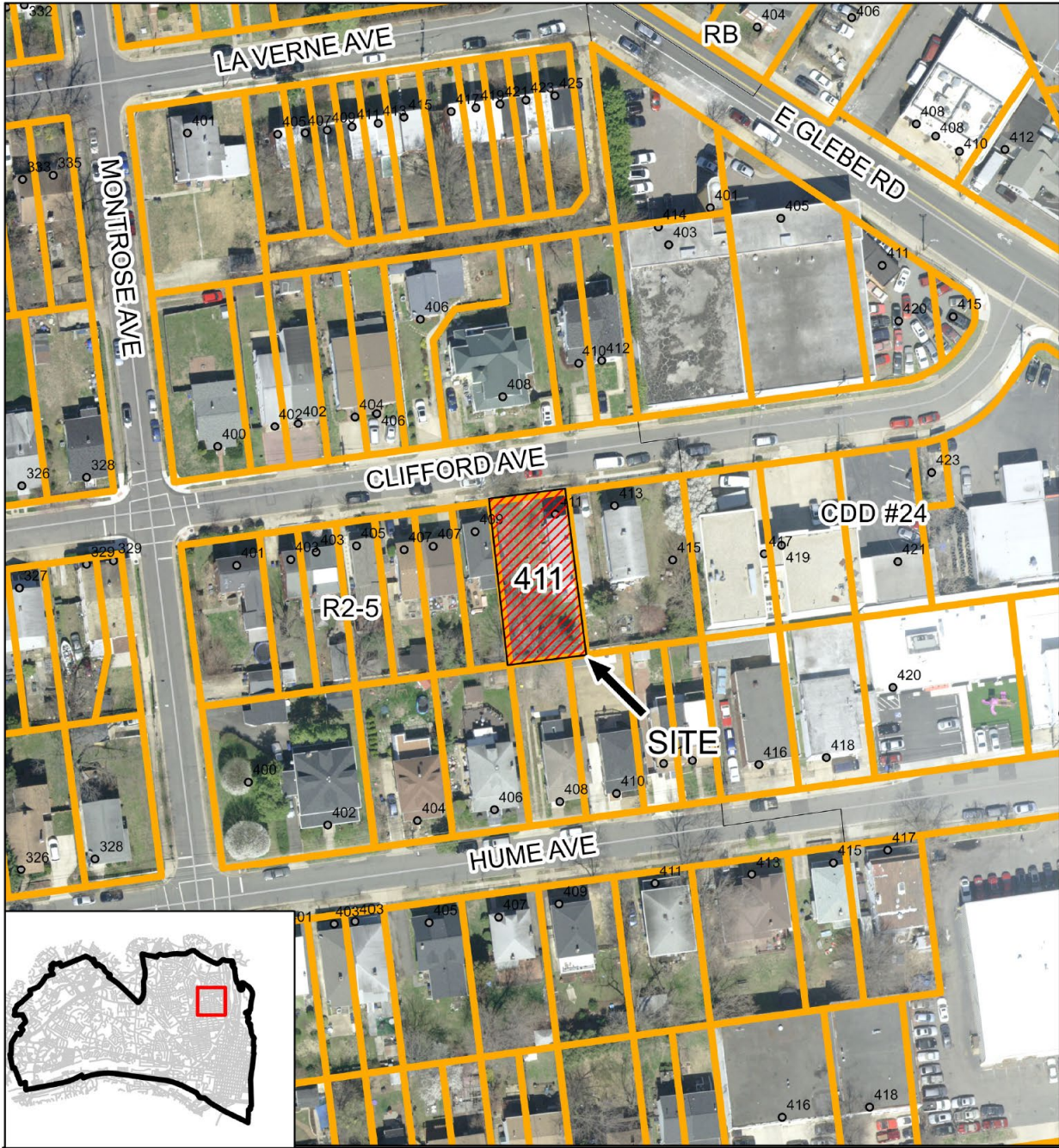
Commissioner Harris asked should the existing dwelling be demolished if the new development would receive the additional FAR as well. Staff clarified the additional FAR would not continue with new development.

Chair McMahan agreed with staff analysis and explained the proposed lots would be in character with surrounding development. She also explained that while parking challenges brought up by Mrs. Preston were not pertinent to the subdivision application, she understood the issue and asked staff to speak to parking and traffic control in this area. Director Stoddard responded that he would follow up with Department of Transportation and Environmental Services as well as SUP staff to understand what is being and can be done to address these issues.

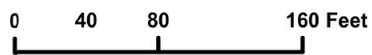
Commissioner Ramirez recommended the City also look into the impact the new metro station has had on street parking and the residences nearby.

Speakers: Ashley Preston, 409 Clifford Avenue, spoke in opposition of the request. Her concerns surrounded the limited street parking and traffic congestion in the neighborhood. She mentioned an adjacent business with an SUP whose workers use street parking instead of the lot. She also explained people will park on the street and walk to the metro to commute to D.C.

Duncan Blair, attorney, represented the applicant. He explained the general nature of the request and mentioned that the applicant will provide off-street parking for the additional unit that is intended to be added.



Subdivision #2026-00001
411 Clifford Avenue



I. DISCUSSION

The applicant, Terese Elaine Lustig, represented by Duncan Blair, attorney, requests approval to re-subdivide the existing two lots and one partial lot into two lots with variation in one lot's floor area ratio (FAR). Staff recommends approval of this request.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property, featured in Figure 1, below, contains two lots and one partial lot of record, all rectangular in shape, addressed 411 Clifford Avenue. The property has a total parcel size of 6,562 square feet and a frontage of 62.5 feet. Single and two-unit dwellings, as well as commercial properties surround the subject parcel. There is currently a single-unit dwelling occupying the property that was built in 1915.



Figure 1 – Subject Property

SUBDIVISION BACKGROUND

On April 6, 1894, the St. Elmo Subdivision was created, consisting of multiple blocks containing generally rectangularly shaped lots with 25-foot frontages; see Figure 2, below. Existing Lots 220, 221, and 222 were created with the original subdivision; the subject property consists of all of Lots 221 and 222 and half of Lot 220. Note that Ashby Street was formerly named Braddock Avenue.



Figure 2 – Original 1894 St. Elmo Subdivision (subject property in red)

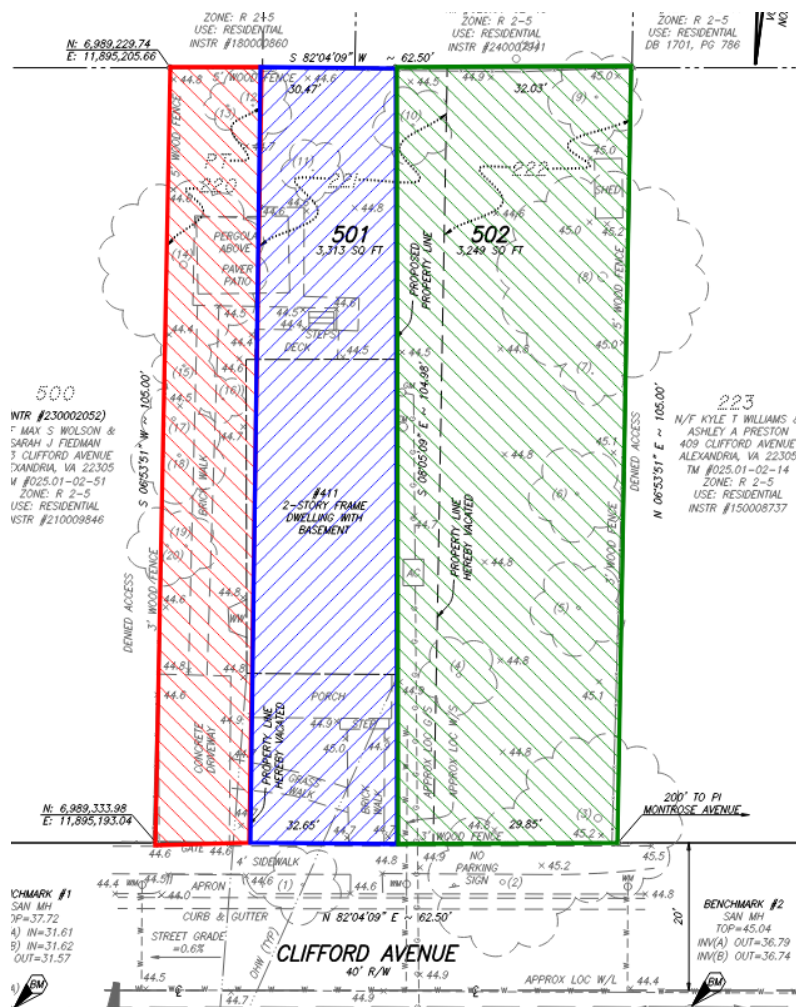
Planning Commission has approved several re-subdivisions within the original subdivision area, including lots in the blocks surrounding the subject property; see Figure 3, below.



Figure 3 – Re-subdivisions of St. Elmo lots surrounding subject property (subject property in yellow, re-subdivisions in orange)

PROPOSAL

The applicant requests approval to subdivide Lots 221 and 222, and partial Lot 220, into two lots. Both lots would be rectangular in shape. Proposed Lot 501 would provide 32.65 feet of frontage and would have a lot size of 3,313 square feet. Proposed Lot 502 would provide 29.85 feet of frontage and would have a lot size of 3,249 square feet. The existing dwelling at 411 Clifford would remain, with the new lot line running along its west wall. Maintaining the existing dwelling on Proposed Lot 501 would put the structure slightly over the permitted FAR for the R-2-5 zone with a ratio of 0.49 instead of 0.45. Therefore, the applicant is also requesting approval for a variation in FAR for Proposed Lot 501. The applicant plans to develop the new lot with one unit of a semi-detached, connecting it to the existing house. Existing and proposed lots are shown in Figures 4 and 5, below.



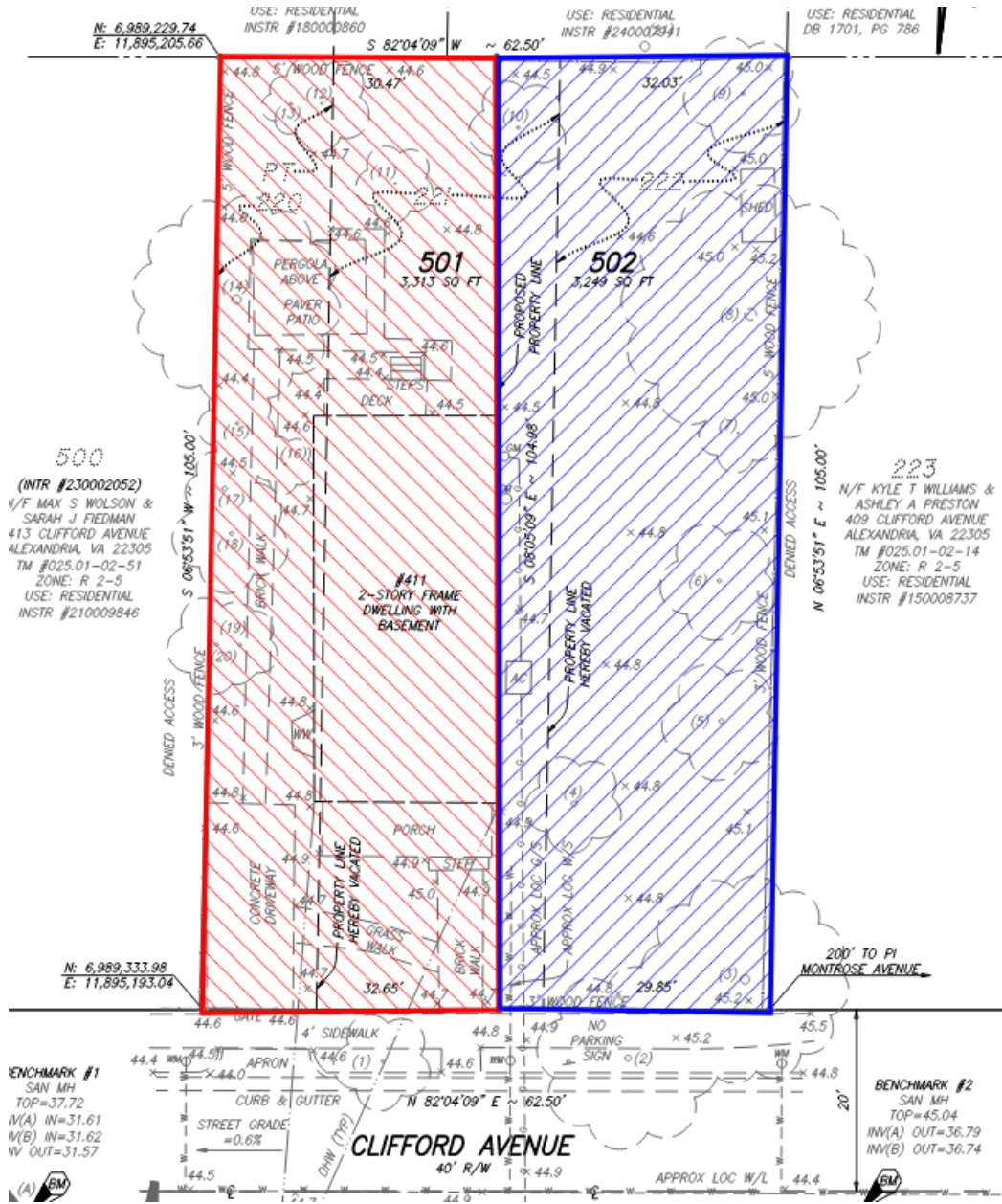


Figure 4 – Existing Part Lot 220 (red) and Existing Lots 221 (blue) & 222 (green)

Figure 5 – Proposed Lots (501 in red, 502 in blue)

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is zoned R-2-5, Residential, and both proposed lots would comply with all lot requirements for a semi-detached two-unit dwelling except that the existing dwelling at Proposed Lot 501 would be over the maximum permitted FAR for the zone; see Table 1 below. Any future redevelopment would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the most current Zoning Ordinance.

Table 1: R-2-5 Zoning Requirements

	Required/Permitted	Subject Property	Proposed	
		Existing Lots 221 and 222 and Partial Lot 220	Lot 501	Lot 502
Lot Size	2,500 Sq. Ft.	6,562 Sq. Ft.	3,375 Sq. Ft.	3,375 Sq. Ft.
Width	25 Ft.	62.5 Ft.	25 Ft.	25 Ft.
Frontage	25 Ft.	62.5 Ft.	25 Ft.	25 Ft.
Front Yard	20 Ft.	22.75 Ft.	22.75 Ft.	Future development required to comply with all bulk and open space provisions.
Side Yard (East)	7 Ft., 1:3 ratio	10.83 Ft.	10.83 Ft.	
Side Yard (West)		30.16 Ft.	0 Ft.*	
Rear Yard	7 Ft., 1:1 ratio	39.5 Ft.	39.5 Ft.	
Floor Area	0.45	~0.25	0.49**	

*Side yard not required with addition of second semi-detached unit

**FAR variation for existing dwelling requested

The Planning Commission may only approve a subdivision that would create a noncompliance in a dwelling's FAR if they also approve a variation from this requirement. Zoning Ordinance section 11-1713 establishes the variation procedure and criteria as follows:

- (A) The commission may, by vote of a majority of its members, authorize specific variations from the provisions of this section 11-1700, when the commission finds that (i) strict adherence to such provisions would result in substantial injustice (ii) the use and character of the resulting lots or parcels in such a subdivision would not be inconsistent with the use provisions of the zone in which the property is situated and with the existing development in the immediate area; and (iii) one or more of the following special circumstances exists:
- (1) Extremely rugged topography.
 - (2) Irregularity in shape of parcel preventing conformance with normal lot area or frontage requirements.
 - (3) Insufficient frontage on existing street where the interior of the tract can be served only by a street substandard in width when not serving more than five lots, provided the street is not less than 30 feet in width. If only a single lot is served, the width may be less than 30 feet. A turn around area may be required.

- (4) Streets along border of the subdivision where the subdivision borders on unsubdivided land and the remaining street width will be provided from adjacent land.
 - (5) Resubdivision of lots in subdivisions of record as of January 1, 1952, where, because of existing structures or gross area of land involved, the subdivided lots would not conform to all of the requirements of the zone in which the subdivision is located.
- (B) As used in this section, "substantial injustice" means that the strict application of this ordinance would create an unreasonable burden on the development, use and enjoyment of the property which outweighs the land use or land development purposes served by the specific zoning provision or provisions of this ordinance at issue.
- (C) The applicant shall have the burden of establishing each element required for the grant of a variation.

The property is located within the Potomac West Small Area Plan chapter of the Alexandria Master Plan, which designates the property for low-density residential uses consistent with the R-2-5 zoning regulations. The proposed lots would comply with the Potomac West Small Area Plan as they would be suitable for low-density residential uses.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff recommends approval of the applicant's request for a subdivision with a variation. The proposed re-subdivision of the lots would comply with all the subdivision requirements except [Section 11-1710\(B\)\(3\) and 11-1710\(D\)](#). These provisions require new lots to comply with the R-2-5 zone's maximum permitted FAR. The applicant requests a variation pursuant to section 11-1713 from these provisions. Staff found that the applicant's request also meets the variation criteria. Analysis follows.

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBDIVISION REQUIREMENTS GENERALLY

Staff determined that the proposed re-subdivision would meet all subdivision requirements established by section 11-1710, except the provisions which require proposed lots to comply with FAR requirements. Both lots would be suitable for residential uses and structures permitted by the R-2-5 zone. The proposed lots would meet the minimum lot size, frontage, and width requirements and proposed Lot 502 could be developed with the second half of a semi-detached two-unit dwelling that complies with the zone's bulk requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBDIVISION CHARACTER REQUIREMENTS

The interior, residentially zoned lots on the 400 block of Clifford Avenue are used for the comparison. The proposed lots' characteristics are consistent with similarly situated lots in terms of lot sizes, widths, and frontages; see Figure 6, below. These similarly situated lots are discussed in additional detail under the Lot Analysis section.



Figure 6 – Area of Comparison and Similarly Situated Lots, blue; Subject property in red

LOT ANALYSIS

The lot analysis for proposed Lots 501 and 502 includes the 15 lots outlined in Figure 6 above. These lots were included because they are: in the original subdivision, zoned R-2-5, and interior lots on the same block of Clifford Avenue as the subject property. Table 2 below shows how the proposed lots compare to the similarly situated lots within the area of comparison in terms of width, frontage, and area.

Table 2 – Lot Analysis

Address	Width	Frontage	Area
Existing Lot	62.5 Ft.	62.5 Ft.	6,562 Sq. Ft.
Proposed Lot 501	32.65 Ft.	32.65 Ft.	3,313 Sq. Ft.
Proposed Lot 502	29.85 Ft.	29.85 Ft.	3,249 Sq. Ft.
402 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.

402 A Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
403 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
403 A Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
404 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
405 Clifford Avenue*	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
406 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
406 ½ Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
407 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
407 A Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
408 Clifford Avenue	75 Ft.	75 Ft.	6,998 Sq. Ft.
409 Clifford Avenue*	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	2,625 Sq. Ft.
410 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
412 Clifford Avenue	25 Ft.	25 Ft.	3,000 Sq. Ft.
413 Clifford Avenue	62.5 Ft.	62.5 Ft.	6,562 Sq. Ft.

*substandard lot

The proposed lots would be substantially compatible with established neighborhood character as required by 11-1710(B). The proposed lots and existing dwelling, with the variation, would comply with the R-2-5 zone requirements for semi-detached two-unit dwellings. The R-2-5 zone's minimum lot size, width, and frontage requirements, as well as the yard requirements, for semi-detached two-unit dwellings ensure that properties within the zone are suitable for low-density residential uses as required by the Potomac West Small Area Plan Chapter of the City's Master Plan.

Further, the proposed lot dimensions for Proposed Lots 501 and 502 are closer in size and shape to the similarly situated lots than the existing configuration of the subject property. Therefore, the proposed lots with the variation would not only comply with the zone's lot, width, and frontage requirements but would also be more compatible with similarly situated lots.

VARIATIONS

Proposed Lot 501 would exceed the R-2-5 zone's permitted maximum FAR, and would not meet the requirements of sections 11-1710(B)(3) and 11-1710(D). 11-1710(B)(3) states the following:

No resubdivision shall be approved which results in the creation or the continuation of a lot, building or structure which does not comply with the provisions of this ordinance, unless the commission expressly authorizes a variation pursuant to section 11-1713 of this ordinance.

Section 11-1710(D) includes a similar regulation which reads as follows:

The subdivision shall conform to the requirements of the zone in which the subdivision is situated.

The applicant has requested a variation from these provisions, stating the following special circumstance exists on the subject property:

- (1) Resubdivision of lots in subdivisions of record as of January 1, 1952, were, because of existing structures or gross area of land involved, the subdivided lots would not conform to all of the requirements of the zone in which the subdivision is located.

The applicant's justifications for the variation request are included with their application. They state that the strict application of the ordinance would cause a substantial injustice as it precludes any re-subdivision of the subject property.

Staff agrees that the special circumstance, stated above, exists as the St. Elmo subdivision and the subject lots was originally recorded prior to January 1, 1952. Because of where the dwelling is located, any re-subdivision that both maintains the existing dwelling and creates lots suitable for a semi-detached two-unit dwelling would "...not conform to all of the requirements of the zone in which the subdivision is located."

The existing dwelling's location affects the applicant's ability to create two complying lots. Lots suitable for development with a two-unit semi-detached dwelling must have the shared lot line located along the middle of the building so each dwelling unit can be on its own lot. As such, to keep the existing dwelling and convert it to a semi-detached dwelling configuration, the new lot line would have to run along the existing dwelling's west-facing building wall. Because of where the existing dwelling is sited, this configuration would result in a lot size for proposed Lot 501 that is insufficient to make the existing dwelling comply with FAR.

This situation makes it necessary for the applicant to seek a variation per Section 11-1713 to allow the FAR of 0.49 to exceed to R-2-5 zone limit of 0.45. Strict application of the ordinance would require Proposed Lot 501 to be large enough to accommodate dwelling's existing floor area. To accomplish this, Proposed Lot 501 would need to be wider or have an irregular shape. Alternatively, another version of strict application would require the applicant to demolish the existing dwelling. Staff finds that strict application, in either case, would create an unreasonable burden on the use of the property, meeting the substantial injustice requirement, because any re-subdivision that creates complying lots and preserves the existing dwelling would be precluded.

The FAR requirement exists to control the size of buildings and to ensure appropriate and consistent density within a given zone. Given that the size of the existing dwelling would not technically be changing, the purpose of the FAR requirement would be upheld.

Overall, staff agrees with the applicant's conclusions related to the variation standards. All required elements have been established so staff finds that the Planning Commission may authorize the requested variation.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff is including Condition #2 which requires that, if the existing dwelling is demolished, any new structure constructed on Proposed Lot 501 must comply with all applicable FAR requirements.

NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH AND COMMENTS

Staff notified the Del Ray Citizens Association (DRCA) on February 27, 2026. As of April 14, 2026, DRCA has not provided any comments.

III. CONCLUSION

In summary, staff finds that Proposed Lots 501 and 502 would adhere to all the subdivision requirements and the proposal meets all required variation elements. Further, the lots are of substantially similar character as other similarly situated lots on this block of Clifford Avenue. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the request subject to the conditions contained in Section IV of this report.

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends approval subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The final subdivision plan shall comply with the Zoning Ordinance Section 11-1700. (P&Z)
2. If the existing house on Proposed Lot 501 is demolished, any new structures shall comply with all applicable bulk and open space requirements. (P&Z)

STAFF: Catie McDonald, Urban Planner
 Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief
 Sam Shelby, Principal Planner

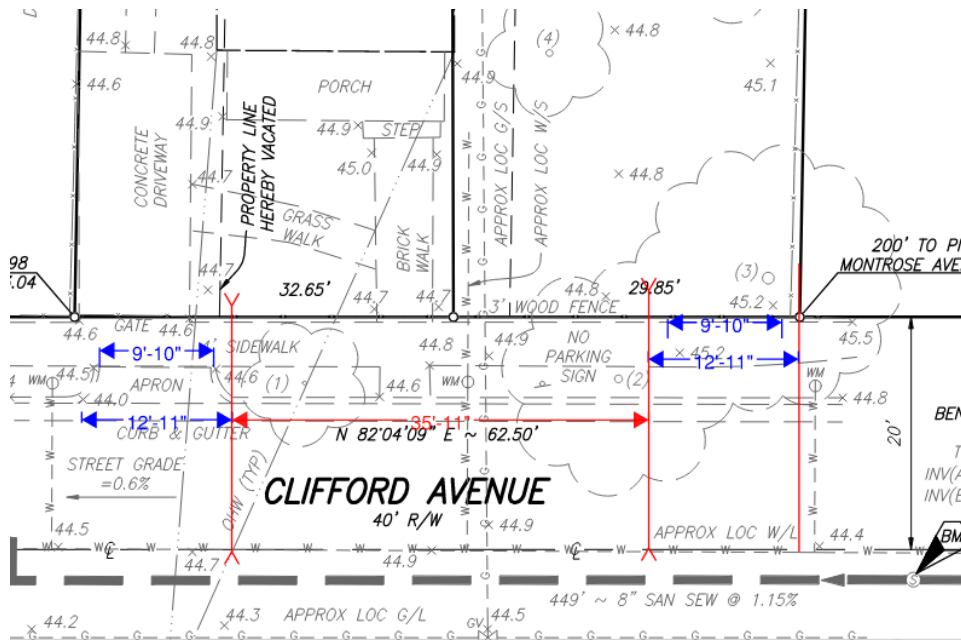
Staff Note: This plat will expire 18 months from the date of approval unless recorded sooner.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C – code requirement R – recommendation S – suggestion F – finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- F-1 As the grading plans develop, explore ways to minimize impacts to existing on-street parking by repeating the “character” (i.e., width) of existing driveway on the newly proposed lot. This would effectively preserve at least one on-street space in front of the site. (Transportation Planning)



Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Exterior walls located less than 5 feet from the lot line shall be of 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction in accordance with Virginia Residential Code Section R302.1(1). The proposed new lot line shall not be located within 5 feet of the existing building's exterior wall unless the wall is upgraded to meet the required fire-resistance rating.
- C-2 Openings are not permitted in exterior walls where the fire separation distance is less than 3 feet from the lot line. In addition, for unsprinklered buildings, the total area of openings in a wall with a fire separation distance of 3 feet or more but less than 5 feet shall not exceed 25 percent of the wall area. Therefore, if a new lot line is established within 5 feet of an exterior wall, all openings in the existing exterior wall facing the lot line shall be verified for compliance with Virginia Residential Code Table R302.1(1).
- C-3 Projections shall not be located closer than 5 feet to the lot line. In unsprinklered buildings, projections with a fire separation distance of less than 5 feet shall be protected on the underside. Therefore, no new subdivided lot line shall be

established within 5 feet of any existing projection unless the projection complies with these protection requirements.

Exception:

- Detached tool sheds and storage sheds, playhouses and similar structures exempted from *permits* are not required to provide wall protection based on location on the *lot*. Projections beyond the *exterior wall* shall not extend over the *lot line*.
- Detached garages accessory to a *dwelling* located within 2 feet (610 mm) of a *lot line* are permitted to have roof eave projections not exceeding 4 inches (102 mm).
- Foundation vents installed in compliance with this code are permitted.
- Decks and open porches.
- Walls of *dwellings* and accessory structures located on lots in subdivisions or zoning districts where building setbacks established by local ordinance prohibit the walls of the structures on adjacent lots from being closer than 10 feet (3048 mm) to each other at any point along the exterior walls.

Fire:

No comments.

Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities:

No comments.

Archaeology:

No comments.

Landscape:

No comments.