

Staff Report

Story County Board of Adjustment

Date of Meeting:
January 7, 2026

Case Number CUP25-000004

Okerberg Mental Health Clinic

APPLICANT: Melinda Wadsley

1247 Old Bloomington Road
Ames, IA 50010

STAFF PROJECT MANAGER: Marcus Amman, Senior Planner

SUMMARY: The request is for a conditional use permit for an existing mental health clinic located at 6139 US Highway 69, north of Ames. The existing use has been in operation since 2018. This CUP request does not expand the physical land use of the property but will bring the property into conformance. The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval of the conditional use permit at their January 7, 2026 meeting with a 6-0 vote.





Property Information

PROPERTY OWNERS

OKERBERG, CRAIG F & SHARON L CO-TRUSTEES
501 W RIVERSIDE RD
AMES, IA 50010

GENERAL PROPERTY LOCATION

SECTION:15 TOWNSHIP:84 RANGE:24 SE SE PARCEL M SLIDE 213 PG 3

SITE ADDRESS

501 W RIVERSIDE RD
AMES, IA 50010

PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER(S)

05-15-400-465 6.88-Gross Acres

CURRENT ZONING

A-1, Agricultural District

CURRENT LAND USE

The subject property currently contains the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic. The clinic utilizes the residence on the property to see clients and offers equestrian therapy services on site.

The property to the east contains the Korean United Methodist Church. The parcel to the south is land owned by the Loyal Order of Moose that is vacant and acts as overflow parking for the lodge. The parcel to the southwest is the Homestead Colony MHC. To the west and north is land in ag production owned by Flummerfelt Properties. Within a ½ mile of the property there are 174 single family dwellings and 76 manufacture homes.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP DESIGNATION

Residential and Natural Area

CITIES WITHIN TWO MILES

Ames
Gilbert

Floodplain

There is floodplain on the parcel. Any potential development in the floodplain would require floodplain permits, including bridge crossings.

The applicant submitted the following items: CUP Application, site plan, narrative, standards for approval, and responses to County Staff review comments.



Background

The proposed conditional use permit request is for an existing mental health clinic. The Okerberg Clinic has been operating out of the existing dwelling since 2018. There are 6 clients a day 3 days a week. This accounts for approximately 18 trips to the site a week. There is a horse barn on the property that is also used for equestrian therapy.

The conditional use permit was applied for to bring this existing use in to conformance with current County Code. The residence on the property is used as the clinic space for therapy.

Analysis

A. **Applicable Regulations:** Chapter 90.04: Standards for Approval

The Planning and Zoning Commission shall review the proposed development for conformance to the following development criteria:

1. **Compatibility.** The proposed buildings or use shall be constructed, arranged and operated so as to be compatible with the character of the zoning district and immediate vicinity, and not to interfere with the development and use of adjacent property in accordance with the applicable district regulations. The proposed development shall not be unsightly, obnoxious, nor offensive in appearance to abutting or nearby properties.

Applicant Comment: The proposed conditional use will be fully compatible with the residential and agricultural character of the surrounding area. We propose use of a single room of an existing single-family structure for home-based, one-on-one counseling services. The use will be indistinct from the residential and agricultural uses adjacent to the property. All services are to be provided on an appointment-only basis, typically six appointments per day, three days per week. Some clients benefit from contact with horses and farm activities that we are uniquely positioned to provide. The residential and rural character of the property is fundamental to our counseling approach. It would be counterproductive to change it. We propose no new structures, development, or soil disturbance.

Staff Comment: The proposed has been taking place on the property since 2018, and its use is compatible with the existing use on the site and the area.

2. **Transition.** The development shall provide for a suitable transition, and if necessary, buffer between the proposed buildings or use and surrounding properties.

Applicant Comment: No new structures or development is proposed, and the use will be focused on the single-family home near the center of the property with substantial setback from all property lines. Though no additional transition or buffer is necessary, the property also benefits from wooded edges along most property lines, separating it visually from neighboring properties.



Staff Comment: The dwelling is approximately 550 feet from the right-of-way and is buffered from the right-of-way by existing vegetation. No additional buffering or screen is required.

- Traffic.** The development shall provide for adequate ingress and egress, with particular attention to vehicular and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow and control, and emergency access.

Applicant Comment: The property takes access from U.S. Highway 69 via a shared 30' easement, and the proposed use is expected to generate no more than 20 trips per business day when a full slate of client appointments is scheduled. This is typical of trips generated by the neighboring single-family homes on the adjacent stretch of U.S. Highway 69. The 30' easement has proven more than adequate for serving the Korean Methodist Church and our residential property for decades. Expansion of the easement would open the door to expansion of the corresponding road surface by either party sharing it, which would create additional impervious surface in extremely close proximity to the creek that parallels the easement. There is no pedestrian traffic, nor any sidewalks or trails in the area.

Staff Comment: The traffic impact of the existing use is not projected to change. The property takes access off of US Highway 69. The access is paved and there is an existing access easement that is shared with the adjacent property.

- Parking and Loading.** The development shall provide all off-street parking and loading areas as required by this Ordinance, and adequate service entrances and areas. Appropriate screening shall be provided around parking and service areas to minimize visual impacts, glare from headlights, noise, fumes or other detrimental impacts.

Applicant Comment: The property includes ample preexisting parking typical of a single-family residence. Concrete surface is adequate for parking at least four vehicles at once, and adjacent crushed rock aprons provide additional overflow and turnaround space. No new parking or impervious surface is proposed, as it is both unnecessary and would undermine the residential and rural character of the area. The property is oriented in a way that focuses any traffic impacts, including headlight glare, vehicle noise and fumes, etc, inward rather than across property boundaries.

Staff Comment: The site has existing parking that allows all clients to park at the dwelling and meets the maximum parking requirements.

- Signs and Lighting.** Permitted signage shall be in accordance with the applicable district regulations and shall be compatible with the immediate vicinity. Exterior lighting, if provided, shall be with consideration given to glare, traffic safety and compatibility with property in the immediate vicinity.

Applicant Comment: So as to maintain the residential and rural feel of the property, no signs or additional exterior lighting are proposed.

Staff Comment: There are no signs or lighting proposed on the site. However, if any are proposed both sign permits and lighting plans are required to meet County standards, including



lights being fully shielded for any lighting over 1800 lumens and not creating any light trespass on to neighboring properties.

- 6. Environmental Protection.** The development shall be planned and operated in such a manner that will safeguard environmental and visual resources. The development shall not generate excessive noise, vibration, dust, smoke, fumes, odor, glare, groundwater pollution or other undesirable, hazardous or nuisance conditions, including weeds.

Applicant Comment: Risk of environmental impact of the proposed use is lower than even the current low-impact residential use. The on-site wastewater treatment system has been inspected and deemed appropriate for current and proposed uses. No new construction or ground disturbance is proposed that might generate noise, dust, erosion, or run-off.

Staff Comment: No vibration, dust, smoke, fumes, odor, glare, groundwater pollution or other undesirable, hazardous or nuisance conditions, including weeds, are anticipated. No additional development is proposed for the site in relation to the conditional use permit.

If the Board concludes that all the above development criteria will be met, it must recommend approval of the application unless it concludes that, if completed as proposed, there is a strong probability the development will:

- 1. Not adequately safeguard the health, safety and general welfare of persons residing or working in adjoining or surrounding property.**

Applicant Comment: There is nothing about the proposed use that jeopardizes the health, safety, and general welfare of persons residing or working in adjoining or surrounding property. All potential impacts are typical of, and even less likely, than those associated with surrounding residential and agricultural uses. Additionally, safe and healthy communities benefit from ready access to mental health care and counseling, which the proposed use provides.

Staff Comment: No impacts to health, safety or general welfare are anticipated.

- 2. Impair an adequate supply (including quality) of light and air to surrounding properties.**

Applicant Comment: The spacious, rural character of the neighborhood, which will be enhanced and protected by the proposed use, ensures an adequate supply of light and air to surrounding property. No new structures or development are proposed which might negatively impact air quality and circulation even temporarily.

Staff Comment: The proposed use will not impair light or air.

- 3. Unduly increase congestion in the roads, or the hazard from fire, flood, or similar dangers.**

Applicant Comment: Road congestion, fire and flood hazard will not be impacted by the proposed development. The property has functioned with equal or greater intensity for decades without any such concerns. There is no new development proposed that would create greater exposure to flood from the nearby creek.

Staff Comment: There is not any anticipated increase in traffic. The mental health clinic has been



operating at this location since 2018.

4. Diminish or impair established property values on adjoining or surrounding property.

Applicant Comment: Maintenance of the property's residential and rural character will protect and enhance values of nearby properties.

Staff Comment: The Story County Assessor's Office raised no concerns with this item from the review of the requested conditional use permit application. No impacts on property values are anticipated.

5. Not be in accord with the intent, purpose and spirit of the Land Development Regulations or County Cornerstone to Capstone (C2C) Plan.

Applicant Comment: The proposed use maintains the rural character of the area, secures an in-demand rural residence in a prime location without conversion to another type of structure, and does so without negative impacts on nearby natural resources or the conversion of prime agricultural land. And, it delivers much needed mental health support to Story County's residents. Granting the requested CUP would be in full accord with the C2C Plan and the Ordinance.

Staff Comment: The C2C plan is oriented towards preserving the County's rural character and high value agricultural land, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, and identifying areas for future growth and development. The property is identified on the C2C Future Land Use Plan as Residential.

B. Burden of Persuasion.

1. **The burden of persuasion as to whether the development, if completed as proposed, will comply with the requirements of this Chapter is at all times on the applicant.**
2. **The burden of presenting evidence to the Board of Adjustment sufficient enough for it to conclude that the application does not comply with the requirements of this Chapter is upon the person or persons recommending such a conclusion, unless the information presented by the applicant warrants such a conclusion.**

Commentary

The following comments are part of the official record of the proposed **Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004**. If necessary, conditions of approval may be formulated based off these comments.

Comments from the Assessor's Office

No Comment.

Comments from the Auditor's Office

No Comment

Comments from the Story County Conservation Office

No Comment

Comments from the Engineer's Office



No Comment.

Comments from the Emergency Management’s Office

No comment

Comments from the Environmental Health Office

No comment.

Comments from the Sheriff’s Office

No Comment.

Public notices were mailed to adjacent property owners within ¼ mile of the proposed site on December 30, 2025.

At the time of writing this Staff Report no comments had been received from the public.

Story County Planning and Development Staff presented the Staff Report to the Planning and Zoning Commission at their January 7, 2026 meeting. There were no questions from the Commission or the Public.

The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval of the CUP as presented with a 6-0 vote.

Points to Consider

- This clinic has been in operation since 2018.
- There is no anticipated increase in traffic to the site.
- This Conditional Use Permit is to bring the use into conformance with the current ordinance.
- There is no anticipated impacts on assessment values.
- Mental Health is a highly needed specialty.
- There is no additional development proposed on the site related to the Conditional Use.
- The site will continue to be utilized for residential purposes in the future.

Conditions of Approval

Story County Planning and Development Staff Recommends approval of the Conditional Use Permit for the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004 with the following condition:

- All activities related to the Conditional Use Permit must be located within the bounds on the site plan.

Alternatives

The Story County Board of Adjustment may consider the following alternatives:

- 1) **The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission recommends approval of the Conditional Use Permit for the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004, as submitted.**
- 2) The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission recommends approval of the Conditional Use Permit for the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004, with conditions.



- 3) The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission recommends denial of the Conditional Use Permit for the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004.

- 4) The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission remands the Conditional Use Permit for the Okerberg Mental Health Clinic CUP25-000004, back to the applicant for further review and/or modifications and directs staff to place this item on a future Story County Planning and Zoning Commission agenda.