

Proposal for Formal Review of the West Central Independence Overlay District (WCIOD)

Submitted to: Independence City Council

Date: May 6, 2026

Purpose

This proposal requests a formal, data-informed review of the West Central Independence Overlay District (WCIOD) based on the gap between its stated objectives at adoption and observable outcomes since implementation.

Background and Adoption

The overlay was introduced to the public as the **Englewood Arts Overlay District (EAOD)** and later adopted as the **West Central Independence Overlay District (WCIOD)**.

- **Planning Commission introduction:** 2023 (UDO amendment and district-wide rezoning concept)
- **City Council adoption (creation and application): October 21, 2024**
 - Ordinance **24-097** (creation of overlay section)
 - Ordinance **24-098** (application to district)
 - Adopted following a **full public hearing** with a **5–2 vote**

The district applies broadly to the West Central / Englewood area (bounded generally by Truman Road to the north and 23rd Street to the south, with defined east–west limits per ordinance maps).

Stated Objectives at Presentation

At the time of public presentation, the overlay was described as a tool to enable small-scale, neighborhood-centered housing outcomes, including:

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to support aging in place
- Smaller homes on vacant lots
- Cottage or cluster-style housing concepts

- Incremental, homeowner-driven infill development
- Preservation of neighborhood character

These outcomes were presented as modest, attainable improvements rather than large-scale redevelopment.

Timeframe for Evaluation

As of today, **nearly two years have passed since formal adoption on October 21, 2024**, providing a reasonable window to evaluate whether the overlay has produced the outcomes it was intended to support.

Observed Outcomes (Post-Adoption)

Based on review of publicly available materials (Council and Planning Commission agendas, visible parcel activity, and observed conditions within the district):

- No observable pattern of ADU construction attributable to the overlay
- No documented cottage cluster or small-home pilot projects
- No visible increase in infill development on previously identified vacant lots
- No identifiable demonstration projects using the overlay framework
- No consistent Planning Commission or Council case activity reflecting overlay-driven housing proposals

For example, multiple vacant residential lots identified during overlay discussions remain unchanged, with no visible implementation of ADUs, cottage clusters, or similar housing types.

These observations indicate that the outcomes emphasized at the time of adoption have **not materialized in a meaningful or observable way**.

Related Public Investment Context

During and following the overlay timeline, the City secured and advanced significant corridor investments in the same area, including:

- **Winner Road Complete Streets project** (STBG federal project) approved April 2024

- **RAISE federal grant (~\$7.38M; total project ~\$9.2M)** supporting sidewalks, ADA accessibility, pedestrian infrastructure, and streetscape improvements

These investments are proceeding through their own agreements, timelines, and capital programs.

This context supports a reasonable policy question:

With major infrastructure investments already funded and underway, what role—if any—has the overlay played in producing the neighborhood-level housing outcomes it was presented to enable?

Alternative Approach (CGRI Framework)

A comparable approach—the Community Growth and Revitalization Initiative (CGRI)—has been developed which:

- Enables ADUs and smaller housing types
- Supports infill on vacant lots
- Preserves voluntary participation by property owners
- Avoids broad overlay zoning
- Can be applied citywide rather than limited to a single district

This demonstrates that the overlay’s stated goals may be achievable through alternative, less restrictive mechanisms.

Request for Council Action

It is respectfully requested that the City Council:

1. **Initiate a formal review** of the WCIOD
2. **Direct staff to provide verified data** for the overlay area (October 21, 2024 – present), including:
 - Number of residential building permits issued
 - Number of ADUs permitted and/or constructed
 - Number of new single-family homes on previously vacant lots

- Any Planning Commission or administrative approvals utilizing overlay provisions
 - 3. **Compare stated objectives to actual outcomes** using the above data
 - 4. **Assess whether the overlay remains necessary or effective** given current conditions and available alternatives
 - 5. **Consider modification or sunset** of the overlay if it is determined not to be producing intended results
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Basis for Review

This request is grounded in:

- Accountability for adopted policy tools
 - Alignment between public representation and measurable outcomes
 - Efficient use of zoning mechanisms
 - Responsiveness to observed community conditions
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Conclusion

The WCIOD was adopted with clearly stated goals focused on small-scale housing solutions and neighborhood revitalization. After a reasonable period of time, those outcomes have not been observed at a meaningful scale.

A formal, data-backed review is appropriate to determine whether the overlay is functioning as intended or whether alternative approaches would better serve the community moving forward.

Submitted by:

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