

R.I.S.E.

Restore • Invest • Stabilize • Empower

A District 1 Neighborhood Restoration and Reinvestment Initiative

Citizen Proposal for Consideration by the Independence City Council

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October 14, 2026

I. Purpose and Executive Summary

Independence must give the same serious attention to restoring its established neighborhoods that it gives to attracting new development.

R.I.S.E. proposes a coordinated approach to neighborhood restoration that makes better use of existing City programs, addresses deteriorating properties, supports housing rehabilitation and responsible reinvestment, and establishes measurable public accountability.

The initiative is organized around four objectives:

- **Restore:** Address dangerous buildings, neglected properties, and vacant lots while preserving viable structures.
- **Invest:** Encourage housing rehabilitation, appropriate infill, commercial revitalization, and responsible infrastructure investment.
- **Stabilize:** Improve housing preservation, property-maintenance follow-through, and neighborhood conditions.
- **Empower:** Give residents and property owners meaningful opportunities to participate and see documented results.

R.I.S.E. also recommends evaluating repeal of the West Central Independence Overlay District (WCIOD), advancing appropriate elements of the proposed Citywide Growth and Revitalization Initiative (CGRI), and incorporating practical conservation measures into neighborhood improvements.

District 1 is proposed as the initial pilot area, with the potential for citywide application if results justify expansion.

The immediate request is for a Council study session and a written staff feasibility report within 90 days of Council direction.

No new taxes, borrowing, permanent administrative bodies, or immediate program appropriations are requested.

II. The Four Pillars

1. RESTORE — Address Deterioration and Return Properties to Productive Use

R.I.S.E. would coordinate existing dangerous-building, demolition, vacant-structure, and property-maintenance activities.

The City should establish a verified District 1 inventory of dangerous buildings, vacant structures, recurring problem properties, and parcels suitable for rehabilitation or reuse.

Existing demolition work must be incorporated rather than duplicated. This includes identifying projects initiated or advanced during former Councilmember John Perkins's tenure, their current status, committed funding, and outstanding obligations.

Where rehabilitation is feasible and consistent with public safety, it should receive meaningful consideration before demolition. Necessary emergency or legally justified demolitions must not be delayed.

For publicly funded demolition, the City should identify responsibility for maintaining the cleared property and evaluate appropriate future uses, including residential infill, adjoining-property reuse, or maintained green space.

The City should review whether existing enforcement procedures consistently document verified violations, correction deadlines, reinspections, and final outcomes.

Desired results: Fewer dangerous properties, more viable buildings rehabilitated, completed enforcement follow-through, and fewer neglected vacant lots.

2. INVEST — Encourage Housing and Commercial Reinvestment

R.I.S.E. would prioritize reinvestment in existing neighborhoods through:

- Rehabilitation of vacant and aging homes.
- Appropriate residential infill and reuse of vacant parcels.
- Support for existing homeowners and responsible property owners.
- Revitalization of underused commercial buildings and corridors.

- Identification of ownership, title, tax, and lien barriers that prevent property reuse.
- Review of permitting or administrative obstacles that unnecessarily discourage investment.

Reinvestment decisions should account for existing streets, sidewalks, drainage, water, sewer, utility capacity, and future maintenance obligations.

Where public financial participation is proposed, Council should receive a meaningful assessment of total costs, financial risks, private commitments, incentives, long-term obligations, and expected public benefits.

Property Reinvestment Visibility

The City should evaluate a voluntary property-marketing pilot using real-estate-style 360° virtual tours to showcase eligible vacant, underutilized, or redevelopment-ready properties.

City-held properties could be included where appropriate under existing property-disposition procedures. Privately owned properties could participate with owner authorization and a modest financial contribution toward documentation costs.

Public funds should not be used to produce or subsidize virtual tours of privately owned properties without a clearly established public purpose, consistent eligibility criteria, and appropriate legal review. A property owner's financial contribution alone does not establish sufficient justification for public expenditure.

The pilot should use existing platforms and private-sector partnerships where feasible, clearly distinguish City-owned from privately owned properties, and avoid placing the City in the role of real estate broker.

Participation would be voluntary, with success measured by increased property interest and completed sales, rehabilitation, or productive reuse.

Desired results: More properties returned to use, stronger commercial occupancy, responsible private investment, and measurable value from public expenditures.

3. STABILIZE — Preserve Housing and Strengthen Neighborhood Conditions

R.I.S.E. would emphasize preventing manageable property problems from becoming dangerous or prohibitively expensive.

The City should evaluate existing assistance and partnership opportunities for essential home repairs, accessibility improvements, weatherization, and aging-in-place.

Rental registration, landlord licensing, inspection, and property-maintenance records should be reviewed for administrative consistency and reliable follow-through.

The objective is not to presume violations from incomplete data, impose automatic new fees, or penalize responsible owners. It is to determine whether existing procedures work effectively and fairly.

Neighborhood improvements should also consider potential displacement of longtime residents, older homeowners, renters, and small businesses.

Desired results: More housing preserved, fewer recurring verified violations, clearer owner responsibilities, and improved neighborhood stability.

4. EMPOWER — Make Residents Part of the Solution

Residents and property owners should have accessible ways to identify concerns, recommend improvements, and understand what the City has done in response.

R.I.S.E. should use existing public-participation channels and encourage voluntary partnerships with neighborhood organizations, businesses, nonprofits, and other community groups.

Public reporting should focus on completed work, expenditures, unresolved obstacles, and measurable outcomes—not merely the number of meetings or complaints received.

Desired results: Greater public participation, visible follow-through, and improved accountability for neighborhood conditions.

III. Housing Reform: CGRI and the WCIOD

A. Citywide Growth and Revitalization Initiative (CGRI)

The proposed CGRI provides a voluntary, citywide approach to expanding housing opportunities in residential zoning districts while protecting property-owner rights.

As described in the October 19, 2024 CGRI draft, its principal features include:

- Accessory dwelling units and smaller homes in qualifying residential districts without requiring conventional rezoning.
- Cottage Neighborhood Clusters under different approval procedures depending on the underlying residential zoning.
- Voluntary property-owner participation.

- Appropriate home-based business opportunities.
- Compliance with applicable building, fire, and safety standards.
- Preservation of existing property rights and lawful appeal procedures.

R.I.S.E. recommends that Council evaluate CGRI's proposed housing mechanisms as a possible alternative to restrictive, geographically limited zoning approaches.

CGRI would require its own legal and planning review before adoption. R.I.S.E. would provide an opportunity to evaluate practical neighborhood needs and potential implementation in District 1.

B. Proposed Repeal of the West Central Independence Overlay District

I previously submitted a formal request for review of the WCIOD on May 6, 2026. I subsequently received a response indicating that the matter would be placed on a City Council study-session agenda. As of October 14, 2026, that discussion has not been scheduled.

That proposal questioned whether the overlay, adopted October 21, 2024, had produced the accessory dwelling units, smaller homes, cottage developments, and incremental infill opportunities emphasized during its consideration.

R.I.S.E. advances that concern by recommending **formal consideration of repeal**, supported by verified outcomes and an assessment of available alternatives.

Staff should examine:

1. Actual permits, approvals, and completed housing projects attributable to the overlay.
2. Additional regulatory burdens or costs imposed on property owners.
3. Whether the overlay's intended housing opportunities could be provided through CGRI or amendments to the underlying Unified Development Ordinance.
4. Which existing protections and lawful approvals must be preserved.
5. The required public hearings, legal findings, and legislative process for repeal.

The objective is to remove unnecessary additional regulation without unintentionally eliminating beneficial housing opportunities or legitimate protections.

R.I.S.E. implementation should not depend on completion of the WCIOD repeal process or adoption of CGRI. Each proposal should receive the separate consideration required by law.

IV. Conservation and Potential Bird City Participation

Neighborhood restoration should consider the long-term condition of the land and natural resources supporting existing homes and businesses.

Practical conservation opportunities include preserving healthy trees where feasible, addressing stormwater and erosion problems, encouraging appropriate native landscaping, and maintaining cleared or vacant properties responsibly.

These considerations should be evaluated alongside property rights, public safety, project costs, and ongoing maintenance.

Potential Bird City Participation

Independence has not committed to Bird City participation through this proposal.

However, the City should give potential participation meaningful consideration by evaluating:

- Program eligibility and recognition requirements.
- Benefits to neighborhoods, trees, birds, and suitable habitat.
- Administrative and financial obligations.
- Opportunities to build on existing conservation activities.
- Voluntary community partnerships.
- Compatibility with existing ordinances and property rights.

Any decision to apply for recognition or undertake program commitments should require separate Council consideration.

Conservation should support neighborhood improvement, not become an excuse for unmanaged lots, unnecessary regulation, or unfunded maintenance responsibilities.

V. Preliminary District 1 Research

Independent analysis of City-provided datasets has identified:

Preliminary finding	Count
GIS-verified District 1 rental-property addresses	2,196
Addresses matched to supplied rental records	2,176
Addresses with confidently linked rental inspection records	668
Addresses requiring additional matching review	20
Property-maintenance cases matched to verified rental addresses	16

These figures are preliminary research findings, not official City compliance determinations.

Addresses do not necessarily represent individual housing units. Missing linked inspection records do not prove inspections were never performed, and an open maintenance case does not establish that a violation remains unresolved.

The research demonstrates an opportunity to improve how existing City information is connected, verified, and used to measure outcomes.

Supporting data and methods are available for staff review.

VI. Funding, Administration, and Accountability

R.I.S.E. should begin with an assessment of existing City programs, appropriations, staffing, and legal authority.

Staff should identify current expenditures related to code enforcement, dangerous buildings, demolition, vacant structures, housing assistance, neighborhood infrastructure, and related conservation activities.

The review should distinguish available appropriations from restricted funds, potential grants, and uncommitted resources.

Council would retain policy, legislative, budgetary, and oversight responsibilities. The City Manager would remain responsible for administration and staff coordination under the Charter.

Any new ordinance, expenditure, contract, property transaction, or financial commitment would require appropriate separate authorization.

The initiative should not depend on pending federal legislation or funding that has not been awarded.

Measuring Results

The proposed pilot should track a limited set of meaningful outcomes:

Measure	Intended result
Dangerous and vacant properties	Verified resolution, rehabilitation, or lawful demolition
Demolition follow-through	Completed projects and maintained or reused lots
Housing	Homes preserved, rehabilitated, or returned to occupancy
Enforcement	Documented correction, reinspection, and case disposition
Commercial reinvestment	Vacant or underused properties returned to productive use
Property visibility pilot	Property inquiries, completed transactions, rehabilitation, or reuse
Public finances	Actual expenditures and measurable public benefit
Conservation	Appropriate improvements completed and maintained
Public accountability	Timely reporting and explanation of unresolved work

Specific targets should be established after the City's baseline information has been verified.

VII. Proposed Implementation

Phase 1 — Feasibility Review: 90 Days

Following Council direction, staff would evaluate existing programs, legal authority, funding, District 1 conditions, previously authorized demolition work, CGRI, the WCIOD, property-marketing opportunities, and practical conservation measures.

Deliverable: A written report identifying feasible actions, costs, legal obstacles, and recommended priorities.

Phase 2 — Pilot Design: 60–90 Days

If Council wishes to proceed, staff would develop a District 1 pilot plan with defined projects, responsibilities, funding, performance targets, and reporting requirements.

Deliverable: Implementation plan for Council consideration.

Phase 3 — District 1 Pilot: 12 Months

Following necessary approvals, the City would implement selected activities and provide quarterly progress reports.

Deliverable: Documented neighborhood improvements, expenditures, and results.

Phase 4 — Evaluation

Council would receive a final assessment of results, costs, lessons learned, and whether continuation or expansion is justified.

VIII. Request for City Council Action

I respectfully request that the Independence City Council schedule a study session to consider R.I.S.E. and direct the City Manager, if Council determines it appropriate, to prepare a written feasibility assessment within 90 days.

The assessment should answer five principal questions:

1. What can the City accomplish now?

Identify existing programs, staff capacity, funding, and opportunities to coordinate work already underway, including previously initiated demolition projects.

2. What housing and zoning changes deserve consideration?

Evaluate CGRI's voluntary housing provisions, the proposed WCIOD repeal, and the legal steps necessary to advance either proposal.

3. What should District 1 prioritize?

Identify feasible rehabilitation, dangerous-property resolution, vacant-lot reuse, commercial reinvestment, infrastructure improvements, and opportunities for voluntary property-marketing partnerships.

4. What would implementation cost and achieve?

Provide realistic funding options, public obligations, measurable outcomes, and any necessary legislative or administrative changes.

5. How should conservation be incorporated?

Identify practical stewardship opportunities and assess potential Bird City participation without assuming a commitment or creating unnecessary obligations.

The requested action is limited to study-session consideration and a feasibility assessment. Any subsequent implementation would return to Council for the necessary decisions and approvals.

IX. Closing

Independence should measure progress not only by the development it attracts, but also by the neighborhoods it preserves and improves.

We already have homes worth saving, businesses worth supporting, public investments worth protecting, and residents who deserve consistent attention to the conditions around them.

R.I.S.E. offers a way to bring existing efforts together, identify what is working, correct what is not, and measure the results.

Restore what can be restored. Invest where investment makes a difference. Stabilize existing neighborhoods. Empower the people who call them home.

I respectfully request Council's consideration of R.I.S.E. as a District 1 pilot with the potential to inform future neighborhood restoration throughout Independence.

Respectfully submitted,

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Supporting Documents Available

- *Citywide Growth and Revitalization Initiative (CGRI 5)* — draft dated October 19, 2024.
- *Proposal for Formal Review of the West Central Independence Overlay District* — May 6, 2026.
- District 1 rental-property inventory and related inspection and property-maintenance analyses.
- Existing demolition and dangerous-building project information to be requested from City staff.