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NATION & WORLD, 1D

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

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THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2026 | CINCINNATI.COM | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Historic buildings to be renovated with state help

Vacant drugstore is one of city's last wood-frame buildings



The former Alms and Doepke Dry Goods Company building will be redeveloped into 149 residential units. The total project cost is over \$64 million. PROVIDED BY HAMILTON COUNTY

Mia Hilkwitz Cincinnati Enquirer | USA TODAY NETWORK

A former drugstore, a repurposed department store building and the home of a toy-themed mural are three of the 15 Cincinnati developments receiving historic preservation tax credits. • These projects will receive a total of \$13.4 million in historic preservation tax credits from the state this year, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced June 24. • Developers will use the tax credits to rehab aging buildings across the city. Most projects are focused on creating more housing, but a few will make room for restaurants, bars and commercial spaces. • Here are three projects boosted by the historic preservation tax credits.

Alms and Doepke Dry Goods Company

Address: 222 E. Central Parkway.

This building in Over-the-Rhine was constructed between 1878 and 1906 and fills an entire block. According to Enquirer archives, it was the "second largest dry goods store west of New York" and had its own bus loop to bring shoppers to the area. After the department store closed in 1955, it was converted into an office space. The building was home to Hamilton County Job and Family Services until earlier this year, when the department relocated to Bond Hill.

Stough Development Corporation purchased the build-

ing in December 2025 for \$12.1 million. Developers plan to use the \$5 million in tax credits – the most of any Cincinnati project received – to create 149 residential units and a commercial space on the first floor. They also want to add a lobby cafe and rooftop deck.

The total project cost is over \$64.2 million.

According to a Hamilton County Board of Commissioners press release, the units are supposed to provide "workforce and market-rate housing." Developers anticipate the building will open in early 2028.

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Ken Parker, center, speaks during a 2023 press conference. Parker served as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio for three years.

SAM GREENE/THE ENQUIRER

City hires public safety consultant

Ex-U.S. Attorney Parker will earn \$199K for 1 year

David Ferrara

Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Cincinnati has tapped former U.S. Attorney Ken Parker to help with public safety strategy and engagement, according to a copy of the contract obtained by The Enquirer.

City officials have brought in Parker for one year at nearly \$200,000. The city is seeking his expertise in public safety, including policy reform, conflict resolution and problem-solving in policing, according to the contract.

The city signed Parker on for consulting in September 2025, a month before the decision to place former Police Chief Teresa Theetge on paid administrative leave. The city manager's office asked Cincinnati City Council for the money to pay Parker earlier this year.

Parker spent a quarter century prosecuting federal crimes and then served as southern Ohio's top prosecutor for three years before being fired by the Trump administration in 2025 and joining the Taft law firm.

In an interview after being chosen as one of The Enquirer's People to Watch this year, Parker said he had been approached about continuing public service in "various capacities,"

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Pioneering caretaker of zoo babies retires

Carly Gist

Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Imagine caring for 600 newborns in a lifetime. Some were the size of your finger, others weighed twice as much as you did. Sometimes, you relied on cell phones and radios to communicate. Other times, you put your trust in your colleagues, just as the animals put their trust in you – drinking from bottles you offered, matching your heartbeat, taking steps for the first time.

"I started holding her on my chest, and then she started breathing with me."

Dawn Strasser

On helping Fiona, a hippo born six weeks premature, to breathe on her own

This was reality for Dawn Strasser, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's former head keeper of neonates, or baby animals. She retired in June, after a career spanning 45 years, 600 babies and 80 species. She led a chapter of a national nonprofit. She paved the way for female

zookeepers. She even taught Fiona the hippo how to breathe properly. But if you ask her how she stumbled into baby animal care, the answer is simple.

"I just fell into it naturally," Strasser said. "It's just – I don't know – just a love."

From junior zoologist to head keeper

Strasser's career began when she was 12 and took junior zoologist classes. Since

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Dawn Strasser, head keeper of neonates, or baby animals, at the Cincinnati Zoo, holds a baby cheetah. PROVIDED BY THE CINCINNATI ZOO

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Volume 186th | No. 77
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The Cincinnati Enquirer



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