

February 19, 2026

**To:** Mayor and Members of City Council

202600904

**From:** Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager

**Subject:** **Emergency Ordinance** – Authorizing the City Manager to execute a Real Estate Agreement with Whex Garage LLC and Cincinnati CH (OH), LLC

---

Attached is an Emergency Ordinance captioned:

**AUTHORIZING** the City Manager to execute a Real Estate Agreement with Whex Garage LLC, (an affiliate of 3CDC) and Cincinnati CH (OH), LLC, pursuant to which the City will: (i) vacate as public right-of-way and convey an air parcel being a portion of West Fifth Street adjacent to the City-owned Cincinnati Convention Center, (ii) convey an existing air parcel adjacent to West Fifth Street, (iii) vacate as public right-of-way and convey all of Home Alley between West Fourth Street and West Fifth Street in the Central Business District, and (iv) grant, retain, and obtain certain easement rights to facilitate the construction of a new convention center headquarter hotel, Cincinnati Convention Center, the parking garage commonly known as Whex Garage, and an elevated and enclosed pedestrian walkway connecting the structures.

## **STATEMENT**

The Convention Headquarters Hotel project is a critical component of the City's broader Convention District strategy and is essential to maintaining Cincinnati's competitiveness in the national convention and tourism market. The project will activate underutilized publicly controlled land, strengthen connections between the Convention Center and other Downtown assets such as Fountain Square, and support increased convention bookings, visitor spending, and long-term economic activity.

## **BACKGROUND/CURRENT CONDITIONS**

In January 2022, the City and Hamilton County (the "County") retained the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation ("3CDC") as Manager of the Convention District to address needed renovations to the Convention Center and to coordinate redevelopment of nearby publicly owned, underutilized lots and buildings. Acting in this role, 3CDC partnered with the City and the County to lead a request for proposals (RFP) process to select a developer for the Hotel, through which Portman Holdings ("Portman") was selected.

Since that time, the City, the County, and 3CDC have worked collaboratively with Portman, the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority (the "Port"), Visit Cincy, and other local stakeholders to advance the project. Key milestones include finalizing the

development plan; securing State of Ohio grant funding; establishing a financing structure with Port-issued bonds backed by future property taxes, lodging taxes, and community development charges; conducting community engagement; and negotiating a comprehensive Development Agreement and related project documents.

In June 2025, City Council authorized the City Finance Director to issue Economic Development Revenue Bonds—a major step toward project financing. The bonds are to be issued in coordination with the project’s overall financial closing, expected in April 2026. In September 2025, the City Planning Commission approved several real estate actions necessary to facilitate the project, including the conversion of Plum Street to two-way traffic, vacation of Home Alley, and the granting of various easements. Most recently, City Council took additional action in October and December 2025 to support the project by approving the creation of the Convention District Community Authority, which will generate community development charges to support repayment of the project bonds.

Passage of this ordinance would authorize the City Manager to enter into the Convention Headquarters Hotel Real Estate Agreement, which outlines several real estate transactions between the City, as the owner of the Convention Center; Portman, as the owner of the future Convention Headquarters Hotel; and 3CDC, as the current owner of the Convention Center Garage (formerly Whex Garage). The Agreement outlines that the City would convey air lots and grant several easements to allow for the construction of an elevated pedestrian walkway over 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Home Alley connecting the Convention Center, the future Convention Headquarters Hotel, and the Convention Center Garage. The City would also vacate and convey Home Alley to 3CDC to support the operations of the Convention Center Garage. The City, 3CDC, and Portman will also grant additional reciprocal easements to coordinate Convention Center, Convention Center Garage, and Convention Headquarters Hotel operational efforts involving the former Home Alley and the new elevated pedestrian walkway.

### **DEVELOPER INFORMATION**

Cincinnati CH (OH), LLC is a subsidiary of Portman Holdings based in Atlanta, Georgia. Portman is a real estate development and management company founded in 1957. They have developed over 75 million square feet in hospitality, industrial, and mixed-use projects, including multiple convention headquarters hotels in major cities including Salt Lake City, San Diego, and Charlotte.

3CDC is a non-profit organization that has invested over \$1.47 billion dollars in development in Downtown and Over-the-Rhine over the past 15 years. This investment has resulted in 300 apartment units, 534 condominiums, 156 hotel rooms, 320 shelter beds, 1,070,500 square feet of commercial space, and 4,925 parking spaces.

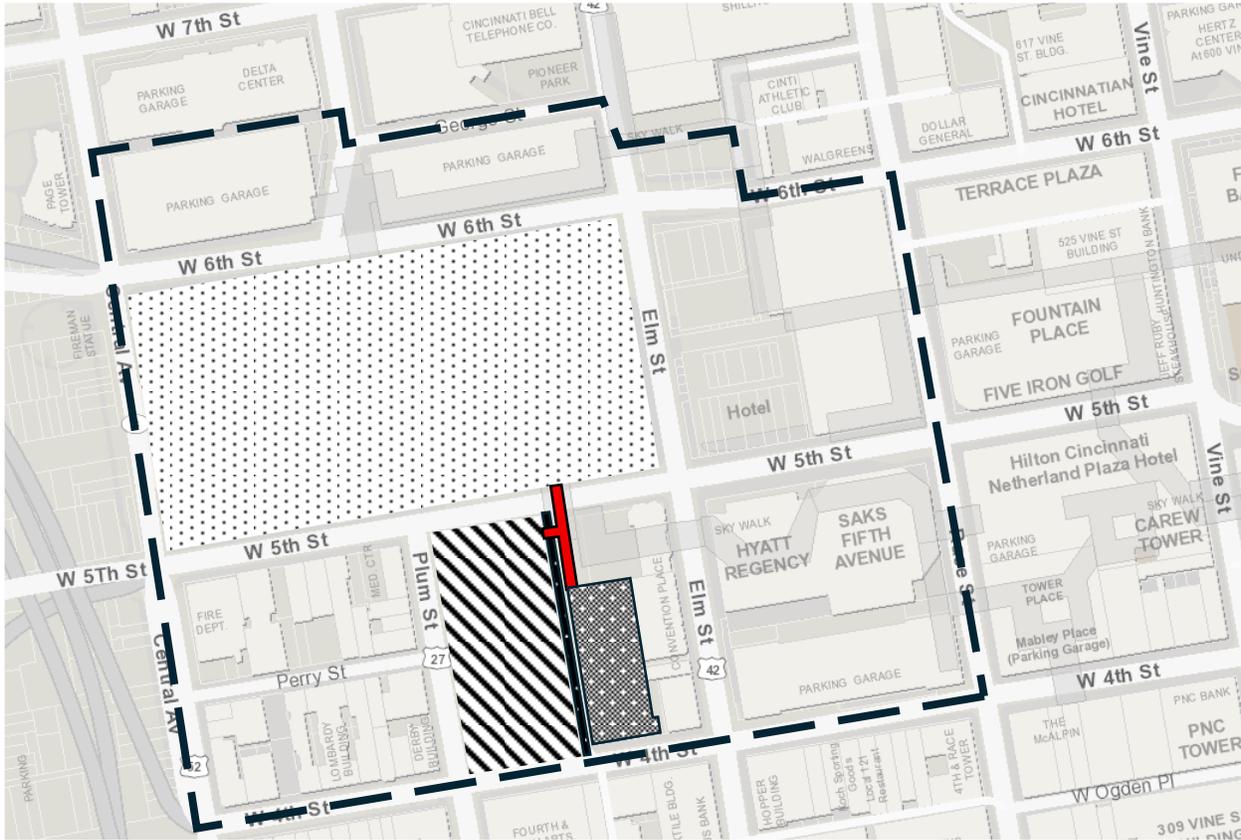
### **RECOMMENDATION**

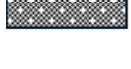
The Administration recommends approval of this Emergency Ordinance.

**Attachment:** Site Plan

*Copy: Markiea L. Carter, Director, Department of Community & Economic Development*

### Site Plan



-  Convention Center Project Area
-  Home Alley
-  Convention Center
-  Property (Hotel Site)
-  Elevated Pedestrian Walkway
-  Whex Garage