

Renaissance deal is signed and sealed

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NAUGATUCK — With a few strokes of a pen Tuesday, local officials took the first step toward redefining what the borough stands for, Mayor Ronald S. San Angelo said.

He signed a development agreement at Town Hall with Alexius C. Conroy, the Fairfield development investor who wants to remake the borough's once-famous, factory-laden downtown with a mixed-use revitalization project called Renaissance Place. The project was overwhelmingly approved by voters Monday.

"Sometimes Naugatuck has a very negative opinion of itself," San Angelo said. "We constantly beat ourselves up as a factory town that has lost its old factories. We've said for years there is nothing government or citizens can do to change that. But Monday's vote changed all that."

Burgesses and members of the Naugatuck Economic Development Corp. also signed the agreement. All local officials, even three burgesses who didn't originally support the project, said they will work diligently in a bipartisan manner to see the project to fruition. They said they respect the wishes of voters, who approved the project by a 3-to-2 margin.

Saying that the contract is a historic symbol of the borough's transformation from "brown to green" — or industrial brownfield properties being redeveloped in a project that will bring alternative energy plans — officials signed an extra copy to be given to the Naugatuck Historical Society.

"This was a historic moment and everyone realizes that ...," San Angelo said.

He said local officials gave a presentation last week to state officials about the project. The borough will look for state and federal grant money to offset the \$29.2 million it needs to make infrastructure improvements for the project to make site remediation and build parking garages.

"The state knows about this project, and they have for a while," said San Angelo.