



Long Island firm gets nod

Selected as preferred developer for downtown

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WATERBURY — The Waterbury Development Corp. board has picked Renaissance Downtowns of Long Island as the preferred developer of the city's struggling downtown.

On Friday, the board of directors unanimously endorsed a deal, but Renaissance must get approval from the Board of Aldermen on Tuesday before it can start working on a plan.

If successful, Renaissance would have 10 months to develop a downtown revitalization plan that would include conceptual designs, cost estimates and financing and acquisition plans. That would include negotiations with private property owners in a three-acre area of the central business district that the firm hopes to include in the project, either through purchase or partnerships.

"It essentially tells people that Renaissance has the city's stamp of approval to see what they can do," said Waterbury Development Corp. executive director Leo Frank. "But we're not on any hook."

Renaissance wants to turn the flagging central business district into a mixed-use retail and residential district where baby boomers, millennials and the creative class can live, work and play.

It will create this plan, which it is pitching to a dozen other cities across Connecticut, at no cost to the city. In return, the city pledges it will not sign a preferred developer deal with anybody else

Renaissance will make its "new urbanism" pitch to the Board of Aldermen Tuesday. The Independent Party initially dubbed the talks with Renaissance as an election ploy by Mayor Michael J. Jarjura.

Renaissance president Donald Monti first approached Jarjura through Rep. Jonathan A. Harris of West Hartford, a former mayor whom Jarjura knew from his years in the state legislature.

Jarjura was intrigued, talked it over with Frank and decided the city should quietly seek development proposals. He urged Monti to reply. Two firms, including Monti's, bid. The other was disqualified.

If its proposal is approved Tuesday, Renaissance plans to invite private property owners to a March 16 meeting where it will pitch its plans, Frank said.

After Renaissance completes its plan, the parties could agree to convert the plan into a contract that would spell out its goals and each party's commitments, such as tax credits given or jobs created.

The group is focusing its attention on three acres of mostly languishing, largely vacant lots valued at more than \$6 million. The target zone includes shops such as B&Bs and Yu Beauty Supplies.