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Quonset Business Park ramping up for a busy summer



Steven King, Quonset Development Corp.

With many advancements developing at the Quonset Business Park's front door as well as the waterfront, we have had a productive spring and are ramping up for a busy summer.

One visible sign of success can be seen at the mixed-use Gateway project that serves as Quonset's entry point on Post Rd. On May 15, the grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the Gateway's third anchor store: specialty grocery retailer Dave's Marketplace.

Local business leaders and politicians, including Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts, state rep. Laurence Ehrhardt, and state rep. Kenneth Carter took part in the grand opening to welcome the newest anchor store to the 72.5-acre mixed-use \$144 million Gateway project. The Gateway, developed by New Boston Fund, is being constructed in phases with the first phase to include retail shops, restaurants and a hotel.

Dave's Marketplace is Rhode Island's largest independently owned grocery store, and its arrival at Quonset came a few months after the opening of the Lowe's home improvement store in January and Kohl's department store in October of 2008.

Bob Fabiano, director of store development for Dave's Marketplace recognized cited the favorable setting as a primary reason for its decision to locate the 25,000 s/f store in the Gateway at Quonset. "The Quonset location is ideal for our new Dave's Marketplace. We look forward to serving the needs of the almost 9,000 workers that come to the business park every day. In addition, the Gateway at Quonset includes great open space for shoppers to stroll, there is direct easy access, and the combination of Kohl's and Lowe's will attract shoppers into the Gateway."

Drafted along a Martha's Vineyard theme, the interior and exterior of Dave's enhances the Gateway, adding to the New England style architecture that was used in the design of the Shops at Quonset Point.

In addition to the progress at Quonset's entryway, the gears are turning on the waterfront, with major new developments in the works at the Port of Davisville.

The Quonset Development Corp. (QDC) is moving to have the port included in the federal Marine Highway Corridor Program. The program establishes marine corridors to transport freight and passengers via ship, barge or ferry as an alternative to utilizing congested highway infrastructure.

Already the fifth busiest port among North American auto importers, the location and capabilities of the Port of Davisville offer great potential for increasing shipping activity.

The U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) Marine Highway designation includes ports and short sea shipping lanes and provides for federal support for infrastructure improvements and incentives to encourage utilization of the Marine Highway.

If the port were to receive the designation, it would mean an increase in economical options for moving goods throughout the region.

And finally, The QDC and Deepwater Wind have signed a letter of intent for the lease of 117 acres to use as a staging area, assembly site and regional headquarters for an offshore wind farm facility. Deepwater says the \$1.5 billion project is expected to create 800 jobs.

The QDC board is expected to consider approval of a 10-year lease for three parcels in the business park that deepwater would use to assemble the more than 100 turbines it plans to install in state and federal waters off the coast.

Between planning for an offshore wind farm, the intent to take advantage of the already busy Port of Davisville and the success of the Gateway with an exciting new addition, QDC continues to position the business park to provide good platforms for expanding businesses and emerging industries to create jobs and help produce economic stability.

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