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Construction starts on green hotel at Quonset Gateway

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We broke ground last month on what will most likely be Rhode Island's first LEED-certified hotel. At 55,000 s/f, the environmentally friendly Towne Place Suites by Marriott hotel will stand four stories tall, with 103 rooms. The hotel is the latest addition to the growing Quonset Gateway, a New Boston Fund development, and another example of how the park is supporting "green" growth at the same time it stimulates impressive economic activity in a difficult economic climate.

Governor Donald Carcieri kicked off a groundbreaking ceremony, saying the hotel is an important addition to the already bustling Quonset Business Park. "The pace of building and job creation at Quonset has been impressive, in spite of the economic downturn," Carcieri remarked.

Also joining us were John Samenfeld, president, Pro Con Inc.; Kirk Sykes, president of the Urban Strategy America Fund, a New Boston Fund; Robert Shapiro, manager, Quonset Hotel LLC; governor Donald Carcieri; and Keith Stokes, director of the Rhode Island EDC.

Financing for the project was assisted by the U.S. Small Business Administration's 504 loan program, and was the largest debenture of its kind the agency has made in Rhode Island according to SBA district director Mark Hayward.

The new hotel will feature a cutting-edge geothermal system, which uses wells to draw water from deep beneath the Earth's surface to help control the climate of the building naturally and efficiently. Part of the system installation involves drilling 16 geothermal wells, which will take place in about a month. Recycled and local materials will also be used in construction, which is an important element in green and sustainable construction. The hotel has been registered with the US Green Building Council as part of the LEED certification process.

Additional jobs are expected as the hotel takes shape, supplementing the nearly 9,000 employees already working at Quonset. Jobseekers can monitor openings at the business park on the new Quonset jobs webpage: QuonsetJobs.com.

The Town Place Suites, which will sit on 4.6 acres on Gate Rd. across from The Shops at Quonset Point, is scheduled to open for business in February 2011. It will be designed for the extended-stay traveler looking for moderately priced accommodations.

The hotel is the latest addition to the larger Gateway, which gives the business park a public entry point, important amenities for people who work at the park, and a central place that provides community. Travelers who stay at the hotel will have easy access to recreation, food and shopping at the Gateway, even if they are staying at the business park for business purposes.

The fact that the developers were able to finance a hotel in this difficult economy speaks volumes about the depth and breadth of the growth at Quonset - and the potential here. The park has continued to grow, offering new job opportunities along the way, despite a slow economy. It has been widely recognized on a local, regional and national level for its prime location and many successes such as infrastructure improvements and bustling port activity.

The latest hotel development joins eight other construction projects currently underway or recently completed at the Quonset Business Park, which is home to 164 companies. Quonset has added 2,700 new jobs since 2005, bringing total employment up to 8,842 jobs.

I should also note that it has always been important to the QDC to make environmentally sound decisions for the business park. Recently, one of our efforts to this end was rewarded by the Narragansett Water Pollution Control Association (NWPCA). That group selected the Quonset Wastewater Collection System and Treatment Facility to receive this year's A. Joseph Mattera Small Plant Safety Award.

Quonset welcomes Towne Place Suites, the newest, greenest member of our community.

Steven King, P.E., is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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