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Steven King - Quonset Business Park a bridge to economic success

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Completed on time and under budget, the Romano Vineyard Way Bridge is now open to traffic, eliminating the dangerous automobile crossing over the railroad tracks at Bailey Rd. and Davisville Rd. This bridge represents a committed effort to improve the park for our current and future tenants, and a significant asset in our continued efforts to develop the Quonset Business Park.

In addition to making for safer travel within the park, the bridge establishes a more fluid connection between the former sites of the Davisville Construction Battalion Center and the Quonset Naval Air Station. In fact, it makes the parcels south of Davisville Rd. much more attractive to the marketplace. Gone are the days of traffic delays while trains filled with automobiles pass by.

Construction of the bridge was a joint effort supported by federal funding and the Quonset Development Corp.'s operating budget. No money came from the state's operating budget and the project took just over a year to complete. As a result of being completed under budget, federal funding was also approved to add additional landscaping, highlighted by the planting of some 500 trees to make Quonset even more green.

The opening of the Romano Vineyard Way Bridge follows a series of economic development initiatives at Quonset that are making it an even more appealing place for companies to do business in Rhode Island. For example, extensive repairs have been made to 14 miles of railroad tracks. The park also boasts of first-rate public works, including sewers connected to an award-winning wastewater treatment facility, street and port maintenance expertise, and a communications network that provides high-speed fiber optics for voice, data, and video.

There is also the creation of the "Quonset Zone," a single zoning district designation assigned to the Quonset Business Park a year ago, as part of an agreement between the town of North Kingstown and the Quonset Development Corp. Developers - often resigned to red tape and regulatory hurdles - are finding the Quonset Business Park a very business-friendly place to be. The new process means development and re-development projects in the park can proceed at a faster pace than previously. In conjunction with the zoning district designation, the QDC has amended our Master Plan to adopt the uniform regulations. A more efficient permitting process will save developers time, and as a result, money.

This is noteworthy, because despite the economy, the Quonset Business Park is experiencing job creation and a strong return on investment. Quonset Point has carved out a niche as one of the Ocean State's most proficient job creators, at a time when it is needed most.

Visitors to Quonset see new cars by the tens of thousands being unloaded from large ships at the 8th largest auto importer in North America. They see rows of pleasure boats berthed at a renovated marina. They see a manufacturer using high-tech solar panels, capturing energy from the sun. They see new businesses opening their doors or existing businesses expanding on a regular basis.

And maybe most telling -- they see people working. Quonset is in fact, one of the leading drivers of job growth in Rhode Island. Since 2005, some 2,700 jobs have been created here. Today, there are 8,800 workers in the park - and that number is growing.

And there's more on the way. Within the next decade, the vast majority of the original 1,378 acres available to be developed at Quonset will be occupied by companies doing everything from processing fish to producing credit cards to insuring cargo to finishing automobiles. And as 2011 draws to a close, 354 acres - or 34 sites -- remain to be developed.

In essence, the improvements we make for our tenants will help build the most important bridge - one that will contribute to Rhode Island's future economic success.

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