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Quonset Business Park seen as a wise investment and job creator

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The federal government continues to recognize Quonset Business Park as a place that produces a remarkable return on investment when it comes to job creation, and the most recent grant from the Department of Commerce is just another example.

Quonset Business Park received a \$440,000 grant last month from the U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration to improve its utilities and road access. The roadway improvements are projected to provide the impetus for 275 jobs according to federal projections and up to \$50 million in private investment. They will directly serve Compass Circle, a 60-acre development within the business park.

In awarding the grant, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development John Fernandez noted that the Obama's administration -- as part of its job growth and business development strategy -- has identified the Quonset Business Park as a wise place to invest federal dollars.

This \$440,000 grant reinforces the long-term commitment the federal government is making at the former Navy base and serves as evidence that federal officials recognize that Quonset has established itself as one of Rhode Island's most effective vehicles for job development. We are grateful for the ongoing efforts of our U.S. Senators, Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, as well as our representatives James Langevin and David Cicilline. Governor Lincoln Chafee's continued support is essential to our progress as well.

It was a previous federal investment, along with funds from Quonset Development Corp.'s operating budget that made possible the completion of the Romano Vineyard Way Bridge. The construction of that bridge has eliminated the dangerous automobile crossing over the busy railroad tracks at Bailey Rd. and Davisville Rd. The bridge also makes the parcels south of Davisville Rd. more attractive and marketable to future tenants. Delays that visitors used to encounter as trains filled with automobiles passed by are gone, and now there is an easy, safe and efficient passage to those areas of the park.

The opening of the Romano Vineyard Way Bridge comes on the heels of a series of economic development initiatives at Quonset Point that are making it easier than ever to do business here. For example, extensive repairs have been made to 14 miles of railroad tracks. Also, the park boasts of first-rate public works, 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.

Visitors - including many elected officials and potential developers who come to Quonset Business Park can see first-hand this bright spot through a challenging economy. When they arrive, they see new cars by the 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 doors or existing businesses expanding on a regular basis.

We are a leading driver of job growth in Rhode Island, home to over 8,800 workers at 168 companies - and that number is growing. Within the next decade, the vast majority of the original 1,378 acres to be developed here will be occupied by companies doing everything from processing fish to producing credit cards to insuring cargo to finishing automobiles.

In fact, as 2012 unfolds, only 302 acres - or just over 30 sites -- remain to be developed. This unprecedented momentum for job development has not gone unnoticed. The secret is getting out. We are building new businesses, expanding existing ones, and above all, we are creating jobs. As the federal government indicated with its most recent grant - Quonset is, indeed, a wise investment. Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540