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Overcoming a challenge creates new jobs and new beaches

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There are times, when it is best to look at what may appear to be an obstacle, and see instead opportunity. That is the approach we took in assisting waterfront tenants at Quonset to comply with state Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) guidelines regarding public access to Narragansett Bay.

In Rhode Island, the CRMC requires that businesses located on waterfront property on Narragansett Bay provide public access points to the water for public use. That meant tenants of Quonset Business Park located along the waterfront - including those in the defense and automobile industries - are required to provide access to the water.

We recognized this as a hurdle to these businesses - a challenge we were determined to help them clear. It presented an opportunity for us to find a way to make it easier for them to do business, which has long been our guiding mission. And so in 2005, the QDC came up with a public access plan in cooperation with the CRMC that would help meet those state requirements, but also relieve Quonset Business Park tenants from the hardship of having to each create their own individual public access points on land leased from the QDC. The master plan is then updated every five years in accordance with CRMC requirements.

Under the plan, Quonset tenants would not have to create their own individual shoreline access plans. Instead, the QDC itself came up with an expansive proposal that includes numerous avenues for public access within the Park. Among them is more than 180 acres of conservation space, a 2.3 mile bike path, the creation of a large-scale retail plaza, five historical and cultural venues (including the Seabee Memorial Park, Quonset Air Museum, and the Allen Madison House), access to the airport and QDC offices, and most relevant to this discussion - the creation of four new beaches at the business park. The CRMC agreed with our vision.

We believe that the result of that plan today serves as a good example of how creativity and flexibility can warm the climate for economic development, and can also serve the greater public good. The "beaches" portion of the plan itself was as Rhode Island as they come - a true Ocean State solution. What better way to please all of the parties involved than to create a series of beaches, all with breathtaking views of Narragansett Bay. And that is just what we have done. The QDC manages three beaches within the business park, providing maintenance, seasonal bathroom facilities, picnic tables, and garbage cans.

By conceiving of this plan and maintaining these beaches, we have relieved each waterfront tenant the responsibility of providing their own public access points. It is a solution that makes sense for all sides. For Rhode Islanders, we have created yet more areas where they can embrace the breathtaking beauty of our state. The beaches within the business park now include:

Blue Beach, which includes a small beach with sand dunes to the south and a densely wooded fringe to the north and east. It is connected to a residential area and the Kiefer Wetland to the west.

It is located next to a former salvage yard and solid waste dump that has been restored by cleanup efforts.

It features scenic views down the West Passage. It has a beautiful 1,000-foot stone-dust walking path which leads from the new parking area to the beach.

Compass Rose Beach is a small sandy strip located off Roger Williams Way. While presently owned by the state Department of Transportation, as part of airport property, it is leased by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation and managed by the QDC. It too, looks down the West Passage.

Spink's Neck Beach is a narrow, sandy strip located off Patrol Road not far from the North Kingstown Marina. The Little Allen Harbor area is an active working waterfront with several marine related businesses. The beach area features views of Narragansett Bay from Patience Island to Jamestown.

In time, we expect to add Calf Pasture Point Beach, which has been managed by the Town of North Kingstown since 2001. It is a natural habitat that is home to many species of wildlife, sea-life, and waterfowl. Adjacent to the Mount View neighborhood, it sits along the Quonset Bike Path and features views from East Providence to Warwick Neck to Jamestown and the sea.

Quonset Business Park continues to be an engine of economic development and job growth for our state. Nowhere are jobs being created at a faster pace, and nowhere are businesses expanding with greater consistency.

This story of the three beaches reinforces a key element of our recent progress here. Simply, we are committed to working with tenant companies to overcome obstacles, and achieve success. Through open communication, careful planning, and committed investment to our infrastructure, Quonset Business Park has been able to make a significant contribution to helping our state's economy to grow.

But at the same time, it is a place that recognizes and shares the true beauty of the ocean front. And it is a place that encourages you to do the same, and stop by for a visit.

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