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Renewable energy momentum growing at Quonset

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Only 290 acres of land at Quonset Business Park remains available for development today. That's a small fraction of the more than 1300 acres of developable space within the Park, and a key motivator for companies looking to grow their business at Quonset to contact the Quonset Development Corporation (QDC) soon. But even the parcels at Quonset that aren't suitable for industrial or commercial development are also being put to work.

As the Providence Journal recently said, "the state-owned business park on Narragansett Bay is quietly becoming a hub for renewable power in Rhode Island as the QDC looks to maximize the use of marginal properties that are not suitable for traditional development." Below are some of the innovative ways Quonset and our tenants are finding to promote renewable energy in the state and meet QDC's goal of supporting sustainable initiatives.

- In February, the QDC board approved a 500-kilowatt solar farm, to be spearheaded by Bella Energy of Colorado. It will be built on a 5-acre parcel that is not suitable for commercial or industrial development. The project offers a productive use of land, but will maintain a quiet, compatible presence that will not disturb the residential community situated just south of the Business Park.
- In December, the QDC approved a similar solar project that allows North Kingstown Solar 1 LLC to build close to 300 solar panels on a property closer to the Gateway District. Scheduled for construction later this spring, the panels would have the ability to produce about 620,000 kilowatt-hours annually.
- The West Davisville section of the park is home to the most powerful solar rooftop array in New England. In November, Governor Chafee "flipped the switch" on the 8,500 solar rooftop panel project that produces approximately 3 million kilowatt-hours per year, enough to power over 500 homes annually.
- Toray Plastics, one of Quonset's oldest tenants, has been using renewable energy from its own solar array of 1,650 panels, installed in 2011, to offset the firm's energy costs. Currently, Toray is working on a cogeneration facility which will produce both electricity and heat using natural gas. The new cogen system will significantly decrease the company's electricity demand and will also cut down carbon dioxide emissions by 12,500 tons annually.
- Last year, we announced that NEO Energy LLC of Portsmouth, N.H. was planning a project at Quonset centering on the construction of a multi-million dollar food-scrap digester. The system would create biogas energy to be sold to National Grid, while also producing organic lawn fertilizer as a byproduct.
- All American Foods, a tenant in the West Davisville section of the Business Park was approved last year for a 182-kilowatt solar array. Their project was permitted through the state's fixed-pricing renewable energy program, known as the distributed generation (DG) contracts program.

- The QDC itself is also participating in the push for renewables, as it has made a commitment to convert the lighting it manages within the Business Park to LED bulbs. This includes the pier lighting across the Port of Davisville, lighting within the QDC headquarters, and all maintenance and storage facilities.

These renewable energy initiatives are just part of the momentum happening at Quonset. The Business Park is now home to more than 175 companies, 9,500 full and part-time workers, and its Port of Davisville is consistently ranked as one of the Top Ten auto importers in North America. At the end of 2013, the QDC also announced the longest signed lease renewal in Electric Boat's history at Quonset (25 years). The company could double their workforce there within ten years. 2013 was also the 4th consecutive record breaking year for autos arriving by sea at the Port of Davisville. Clearly, Quonset has momentum in the early months of 2014.

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