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Quonset Business Park: Small state, big impact - by governor Daniel McKee

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Daniel McKee

Before entering public service three decades ago, I was a small business owner. That experience has made advocating for our local businesses - both small and large – a top priority for me. As we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island businesses need our help now more than ever.

Over the next year, we'll need a targeted focus on successful strategies to encourage business growth in our state.

One of our state's best models for these strategies can be found at the Quonset Business Park which I recently visited. For more than a decade Steven King and his team at Quonset have created an environment where businesses can succeed and Rhode Islanders can flourish. Today, Quonset is the leading engine of economic development in Rhode Island, supporting over 200 companies and 12,200 jobs that pay wages 19% above the state average. Quonset is the manufacturing hub of Rhode Island, home to one of every six manufacturing jobs in the state, while generating \$1.3 billion in household income and nearly \$200 million in taxes. Over the years, Quonset has attracted a remarkable \$2 billion in private investment.

So what are the keys to Quonset's success?

Growth Mindset: Quonset's available land can accommodate up to 3.6 million s/f of new construction. And, their innovative "Site Readiness" program means that pre-permitted, pre-engineered parcels are available today, positioning businesses to get shovels in the ground within 90 days of site control.

World Class Infrastructure: Quonset's greatest strength has always been its variety of facilities and world-class infrastructure. The park's industrial spaces have the capacity to support large, high-tech operations like Electric Boat and Toray Plastics while the Commerce Park section accommodates some of the state's most successful companies like Ocean State Job Lot.

Quonset's state-of-the-art Flex Industrial Campus gives new and expanding industrial companies room to grow with move-in ready, affordable space adaptable to the needs of each unique business.

Meanwhile, the Gateway Offices provide companies with affordable rates and the option of flexible shorter-term leases.

Location: Quonset's location in North Kingstown, places businesses in the heart of the Northeast, giving them access to the East Coast's largest customer markets. Situated halfway between Boston and New York, companies can have a stake in both of the region's densest population centers.

Transportation: Quonset's location places companies at the center of major shipping and travel routes in the region. Quonset's Port of Davisville, the state's only public port, is one of the Top 10 auto importers in North America. The park also affords companies access to 14 miles of freight rail lines and both Rte. 4 and I-95 highways.

Cleaner and Greener: 100% of the energy needed to run Quonset is renewable, while the world-class facilities at the Port of Davisville have made Quonset a magnet for clean energy development. The Park supported much of the work for the Block Island wind farm, the nation's first. On land, the components for nearly every wind turbine in Rhode Island have crossed the Pier at Davisville.

The governor's office looks forward to working with Quonset to make Rhode Island a hub for the growing offshore wind industry.

The Future: Quonset will play a key role in Rhode Island's economic recovery. In the recent bond referendum, Rhode Island voters overwhelmingly passed a \$60 million measure that will prepare Quonset and Rhode Island for the 21st Century economy. \$40 million will be invested in statewide industrial site development that will replicate Quonset's successful "Site Readiness" across Rhode Island, preparing business-ready parcels for manufacturing and other job-creating activities. Quonset Business Park has only 94.6 acres of available land left, and I am excited to work with QDC to bring job-producing investment to every city and town in Rhode Island under this new program.

The other \$20 million will be invested to expand and modernize the Port of Davisville's infrastructure, positioning Davisville to service offshore wind project cargo and create new jobs.

The road forward to an equitable economic recovery in Rhode Island will be challenging, but the success at Quonset gives us a strong place to begin. My team in the Governor's office will be proud to work alongside the team at Quonset to expand economic opportunity as growth at the park continues. For more information about Quonset, visit www.quonset.com.

Daniel McKee is the governor of the state of Rhode Island.