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Rhode Island Ready initiative - by Steven King

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Steven King

Rhode Island Ready (RI Ready) is a statewide industrial site readiness initiative backed by \$40 million overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2021. We launched the program in January of 2022 to help streamline industrial development across the state—ultimately bringing jobs to Rhode Islanders and tax revenue to communities.

Since the launch of RI Ready 12 months ago, the unique initiative has gained momentum, with 16 industrial sites across the state currently enrolled in the program. In total, these sites span approximately 245 acres of developable industrial land that can accommodate over 2.9 million s/f of new development—with the potential of thousands of new jobs.

The program is modeled after Quonset’s successful site readiness program, which has led to the creation of more than 3,500 jobs and generated \$664 million in private investment over the past decade across 14 developed sites and 36 companies at the Business Park. Prioritizing site readiness made Rhode Island an attractive investment for each of those companies, and RI Ready is beginning to replicate that success statewide.

RI Ready’s unique approach includes a required letter of support from the chief executive of the city or town where the site is located, as we understand the importance of working with partners in government to continue growing Rhode Island’s economy. As Quonset has grown to host 13,000 Rhode Islanders working at 228 companies, we have benefited from the ongoing support of our partners at the local, state and federal level.

RI Ready has created an inventory of pre-permitted properties smoothing the path for industrial development. RI Ready actively works with each enrolled property to activate the sites for economic development—providing technical assistance with engineering, permitting and facilitating other approvals.

The list of enrolled sites approved for RI Ready span across the state, including sites in Burrillville, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, Smithfield, Warren, and West Warwick.

Looking ahead, RI Ready staff will work with each of the 16 property owners and municipalities to activate the sites for economic development, bringing new jobs and tax revenue to Rhode Island. This process expedites the permit and approval process for industrial sites by taking the uncertainty out of the development process, eliminating red tape and guaranteeing efficiency with unified development regulations.

Applicants for RI Ready are considered eligible for enrollment based on the following criteria:

- Sites that will allow for upgraded or improved infrastructure in support of an industrial district or

area; or

- Sites that will allow an existing industrial use or facility to expand significantly; or
- Sites that are approximately 10 acres in size (or are capable of supporting a 100,000 s/f building) and are:
 - Zoned for industrial or offshore wind support uses, and;
 - Located within one mile of a roadway designated by the state to support industrial traffic.

There are still 11 applications under review for enrollment, so we look forward to sharing updates on the program's continued success. We also welcome new applicants on a rolling basis.

To learn more about RI Ready or submit your application, please visit our website, www.RIReady.org.

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