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Rhode Island Ready is preparing state for new industrial development - by Steven J. King

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Steven J. King

For nearly 20 years, Quonset Business Park has been growing, bringing new jobs to Rhode Island and expanding the state's tax base. Today, we are home to more than 250 companies and well over 14,000 jobs.

While there is still space available for small and growing businesses in our Gateway and Flex Campuses, Quonset has only 58 acres remaining for new development. Of this, the largest remaining parcel can only accommodate an industrial development of 200,000 s/f. The size of all remaining parcels restricts new facilities to 150,000 s/f or less. Now, Rhode Island needs to prepare for a post-Quonset reality and support industrial growth outside of the business park.

To set that process in motion, Rhode Island Ready (RI Ready) is a statewide site readiness initiative, based on Quonset's successful site readiness program, that is generating an inventory of pre-permitted sites, zoned for industrial use, that are ready for development.

Quonset chief operating officer Chelsea Siefert attended last month's New England Real Estate Journal Summit to share how RI Ready can help municipalities, developers and property owners turn their vacant land into a site that will create new jobs and tax revenue.

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.

Once a site is enrolled, the RI Ready team helps to fund and manage site plan review, permitting, any necessary demolition, and infrastructure upgrades that will better support industrial use. Streamlining these processes before a particular use or tenant is identified allows Rhode Island to offer prospective companies an attractive parcel of land that is shovel-ready in just 90 days, similar to Quonset itself.

For example, the Town of Burrillville recently received \$200,000 to assist with permitting a large industrial area for new development. The town also received an additional \$1.5 million for upgrades to the water and sewer infrastructure in this industrial district. When work is complete, the site will be able to support an estimated 95 jobs and \$5.4 million in annual household income for Rhode Island

families.

The program also takes the logistical challenges out of development. Enrolled sites have access to contractors that have already been vetted and procured. The RI Ready team handles billing and verifying vendor invoices, removing the hassle of reimbursement paperwork.

With Quonset Business Park nearing capacity, preparing Rhode Island sites for additional industrial development has never been more important – or so convenient. Funding is available now, so visit RIReady.org to enroll your site today.

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