



NORTH ◦ EAST KINGSTOWN GREENWICH INDEPENDENT



PHOTO: MICHAEL DEIR

Gov. Donald Carcieri puts on a hard hat before participating in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Quonset Gateway Project Monday. Officials revised the original plan after it was rejected by the Statewide Planning Council earlier this year.

Gateway Project underway as officials break ground

By Chris Church/Independent Staff Writer

NORTH KINGSTOWN - Once seemingly derailed, the Quonset Gateway project finally broke ground on Monday as state leaders praised the project as an economic spur for the state.

In a ceremonial event attended by Gov. Donald L. Carcieri and other state and local dignitaries on the site of the 72.5-acre entryway to the park, developers and members of the Quonset Development Corp. Board of Directors were applauded for their combined efforts in bringing the project to fruition.

"Quonset is already an important part of our state's economic engine," Carcieri said. "By breaking ground on the Quonset Gateway Project, we will further enable Quonset to realize its full potential.

"In the last five years, projects including the Gateway represent a private sector investment of \$300 million in Quonset, with another \$322 million in the pipeline," Carcieri added. "All of these statistics point to the fact that we are moving the Quonset business park in the right direction."

The \$144 million Gateway will be fully funded by New Boston Development and is anticipated to generate \$14.7 million in taxes for both the town and the state and create 2,165 jobs.

The 961,660-square-foot development includes 391,900 square feet of office space, 333,960 square feet of retail space, an 81,700-square-foot, 160 room Hilton Hampton Inn hotel and 154,100 square feet of non-retail space.

Along with the two anchor stores, Kohl's and Lowe's Home Improvement, the Gateway will also feature a \$10 million indoor and outdoor sports "megaplex" situated on 8.5 acres that is expected to create 50 jobs.

Monday's groundbreaking was only made possible after QDC and New Boston officials went back to the drawing board to make changes to the plan. The Statewide Planning Council ruled against the original arrangement, saying that it failed to comply with the state's comprehensive plan and criticized the proposal because it did not make the best use of the land.

But, after listening to input from town and state officials, revisions were made and the council unanimously approved the plan in August.

After donning a white construction cap and shoveling a symbolic mound of dirt along with Carcieri and other dignitaries, Saul Kaplan, executive director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corp. said the teamwork that led to the final Gateway plan was an "example of Rhode Island on its best day."

"This marks a significant step forward to position Quonset as an engine for job creation and economic growth. The Gateway will include 392,000 square feet of office space, which will create opportunities for our state to attract and retain high-wage jobs," he said. "The impact of this private investment will be felt in Rhode Island, North Kingstown and Quonset for many years to come. The hard work and commitment of partners ... took this project from concept to reality, and we have created a vision for the Gateway that all Rhode Islanders can be proud of."

Along with creating a retail center to the business park, the Gateway will integrate a bike path and small "pocket parks" throughout the site and will incorporate the existing Seabee Museum and Chapel to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Carcieri said he believes the project represents a major change in the state's economic climate and is the beginning of many exciting things occurring in the Quonset Business Park.

"I think this is a project where everybody came together and people will look back and say that this was a great move that really changed the whole area," he said.