QDC officials unveil RI Ready program

Program is in place as QDC’s pre-permitting effort with CRMC

Governor McKee and Quonset Development Corporation officials in January unveiled a new initiative, Rhode Island Ready, for encouraging development of industrial properties throughout the state. The program was modeled after an effort by the R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council and R.I. Department of Environmental Management, together with QDC, to pre-permit sites in Quonset Business Park in North Kingston to encourage development and streamline the state permitting process.

The QDC attributes historic growth of the Quonset Business Park to its Site Readiness Program. In 2013, the QDC worked with the DEM and QDC and other state agencies to create the program, a streamlined and expedited permitting process for the park’s 39 undeveloped parcels. The QDC and CRMC also established a public access plan for the entire park, instead of relying on individual companies to incorporate it into their development plans and applications as part of CRMC review requirements, greatly enhancing the ability of QDC to attract tenants.

CRMC updates its Rights-of-Way online viewer

The R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) with assistance of the URI Coastal Institute has updated its ArcGIS online database containing information on each of the CRMC-designated public rights-of-way (ROW) to the shore.

Initially created in 2014 by then-CRMC intern Emily Robinson, the newly updated version of the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) database includes a map that identifies the location of each ROW with an icon. A click on any of these icons will open a window that includes that particular ROW’s names, its designation number, the means of access it provides, the coastal feature present, and other documentation regarding its designation.

According to Nathan Vinhaeiro, assistant director of the University of Rhode Island’s Coastal Institute, and Jeff Friedman, retired CRMC coastal geologist, wanted to use the data on the mapping tool to conduct a statewide assessment of ROW sites that might be impacted or impaired by climate change. After reviewing the first iteration, they decided that updating the database would be a beneficial step toward that goal.

The mapping tool has been widely used, and during its nearly eight years in existence, the CRMC has designated additional rights-of-way, photopraphs have been taken of each, and more information and documentation has been collected on many of the sites. This update was to incorporate those additions, fine-tune the location of the designation points, rectify a few broken links, and modernize the map’s appearance.

URI’s Environmental Data Center (EDC) assisted in developing the new platform, and the Coastal Institute volunteered to undertake the effort.

“The tool was simply there for an update to the interface and that allowed us to fix some issues in the database that had been identified over the years and to add new designations. Getting that functionality into an electronic GIS database, existing and photograpghing sites was a huge and meaningful undertaking,” said Robinson, CRMC’s Kevin Cole, URI’s Peter August and others. - Nathan Vinhaeiro, URI C.

The CRMC, through its formerly named Section 335 of the Rhode Island coastal program, requires public access to the water as part of the application or proposed development, and this program satisfies that condition.