



A Letter from Mayor Graves

February 14, 2014



Positioning Gallatin for Success

Now that the announcement of Beretta U.S.A. locating in Gallatin has been made, the question that continues to be asked is, "Why did Beretta choose Gallatin over 80 other sites in the U.S.?" As Beretta stated, Gallatin was chosen because of its "superlatives", i.e. our sense of community, our amenities, our quality of life, our cost of living, our strong workforce, and our well-respected schools and community college. One of the strongest factors in making their decision to come to Gallatin is that our industrial center is site ready. The significance of this statement requires a look back over seven years.

In 2007, when I was sworn in as Mayor, our existing center was more than 80% full. There were very few tracts that could accommodate a request for an industry requiring large acreage. Many times, the City was going to private developers and trying to negotiate a competitive land price to lure a company to our City. Too often, the disparity between what the developer needed to cover their costs and what the company was willing to pay was difficult to overcome.

In 2008, a decision was made to evaluate the purchase of more land for another industrial center where the City could set the land price. Several areas were evaluated, but when 200 acres became available next to the existing industrial center, debate began in earnest. After many weeks, the City Council made a decision and bought the 200-plus acres. Also in 2008, the City again decided that it needed to be more competitive in recruiting industry. A new payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) program was evaluated by the Council. This new PILOT program was a 3-tiered plan based on the number of new jobs and capital investment. It is similar to what the State of Tennessee was offering. The PILOT allowed Gallatin to go head-to-head with other cities around the country.

Just as Gallatin geared up with the addition to the industrial center and the PILOT program, the recession caused many industries to put the brakes on any thoughts of expansion. For a few years, our new industrial center sat empty. But once again, Gallatin had a vision for the future. Gallatin moved forward with certifying our industrial site as a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ), which established tax incentives for businesses who qualified.

Next, the City approached the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to help us build a road into the new acreage. Gallatin was starting to get inquiries, but without a road, the land was difficult to show. Gallatin's Economic Development Agency (EDA) was able to provide facts and figures about who was looking at our industrial center and the potential for economic development if TDOT would help us build the road. The state awarded Gallatin an Industrial Access Grant for \$1,800,000. Several City Departments – Engineering, EDA, and Public Utilities among them – worked on a design to maximize use of the new acreage.

Next, while plans were being developed for the new road, the City began evaluating the existing center and its road. Our current roadway was deteriorating and needed upgrading. The City stepped up and included the necessary funds in our budget to repair the existing roadway. While the new road was being built, the existing road was being repaired. Our new road, funded nearly 100% by TDOT, opened in August. Shortly thereafter, repair of the old road was finished with new curb and gutter, which improves drainage; and the old road was completely repaved.

Both of these roads were finished at about the time representatives of Beretta, as well as other potential industries, were taking a hard look at Gallatin. The new road, along with aerial photography, showcased Gallatin's beautiful, expansive industrial center.

Gallatin has been working hard for years to position itself to be competitive in the industrial recruiting process. It has taken the Council and many of our departments working diligently to attract a company like Beretta. It has taken the hard work of our EDA and its board of directors to attract a company like Beretta. And, it has taken the commitment and success of our existing industries and businesses to lay the groundwork to attract a company like of Beretta.

So, when the Beretta family announced they had chosen Gallatin – all that hard work paid off. As the famous movie line says, "If you build it, they will come." Gallatin did build it. We built a solid community. We built a beautiful industrial center. We built the infrastructure to showcase the industrial center. We built the team to promote the center. And we built strong relationships with the State to partner with us in recruiting industry. And, Beretta came – choosing Gallatin from 80 other sites in the United States.

I want to thank every family, every business, every industry, and every individual who has contributed to the success of Gallatin over the years. Beretta has recognized what we all know – Gallatin is the place to be in Tennessee.