



November 22, 2016

To the O'Fallon Community,

It has truly been the honor of my life to be your Mayor.

For two decades now, we have all worked together to make our city a home – a place to raise our children, to build a business, to walk in the park, to worship and to give thanks for the blessings in our lives.

I am so grateful for the opportunity you gave me to serve you for the last twenty years.

Over the past several months, I have been reflecting on what the last two decades have meant and what they will mean for the future of O'Fallon. The image that comes to mind is the moment a plane lifts off the runway and soars into the blue skies taking off for its destination.

It is an image many of us know well. Whether you are a pilot at Scott Air Force Base, a business traveler on your way to an important meeting, a family taking off for a much-needed vacation, or just a dreamer looking up at the sky, you know the feeling when a plane leaves the ground and becomes airborne.

It is a feeling of freedom, of accomplishment, and of excitement for what is to come.

Just like a traveler or dreamer, I am filled with excitement for the future, and the next step. There is no better time to be part of the O'Fallon Community.

This is a community that stands together to create opportunity for every man, woman and child so that together we can all realize the American dream.

Over the last two decades, O'Fallon has grown from a farming community of 15,000 residents to a city of over 32,000 that is now one of the top five cities in the St. Louis region that families and businesses are choosing to call home.

I first ran for mayor, because I knew what you knew – this is a special community that defines progress. We embrace our past and carry it forward to create new neighborhoods, centers of commerce and a launching pad to tomorrow for ourselves and our future generations.

The fact is, we have transformed our city from a one stop light town with gravel roads to a gleaming city on the hill. Progress continues to this day, with the completion of the healthcare highway anchored by St. Elizabeth's Hospital.



We, as a community, have made a difference. I am most proud of the spirit of our city.

A few years ago, I was asked by a developer to tell him about the “O’Fallon Phenomena.” What makes O’Fallon great is not easily put into words.

When businesses and residents were leaving Illinois in mass, property values were plummeting, and investors were turning their backs on Illinois, O’Fallon continued to grow. Our city ranked in the top 8 percent of places to live and raise a family in the United States. Two hospitals were constructing new state of the art facilities for our citizens.

When the financial woes of our state and federal government were headline news, O’Fallon’s bond rating of AA plus was one of the highest levels Standard and Poor’s could bestow.

Our downtown was transforming from vacant buildings and unused streets to a shopping, dining, arts and entertainment district.

More new homes were being built in O’Fallon than in any other Illinois community in the St. Louis region and our existing home sales were on the rise.

We were investing in our community through infrastructure and by building a state of the art Fire Station on Venita Drive to complement the modern Public Safety Complex on Seven Hills Road.

Our Police Force and Public Safety Department earned the confidence of the community and 96 percent of our residents, well above the state average, said they felt extremely safe and secure in our community.

Our Family Sports Park was drawing tens of thousands of young athletes and visitors to our city creating an economic engine that helped spur our growth, and helped the future generations of O’Fallon residents realize that no destination or dream is unachievable.

Our city was not just taking off – it was soaring.

Back in the early 1990’s, when I was first running for Mayor, it was all so different.

Confidence in our city’s direction was at an all time low.

But my confidence in the people of O’Fallon and this community was never in question.

We took steps to remove politics from the hiring process and hired professionals to run and manage our city, but most importantly manage our tax dollars to maximize results without



raising the city's portion of our property taxes.

I am proud of our City Staff and the professionals that have worked hard to make O'Fallon what it is today, from our Parks and Recreation Department to our Economic and Community Development Office to our Finance Team and our Public Works and Public Safety professionals.

I have had the great fortune to work with outstanding leaders such as our City Clerk, Phil Goodwin, and our City Treasurer, David Hursey, who partnered with us to keep our city moving forward.

I especially want to thank all the great men and women that have served on the City Council. None of our great progress would have been made possible without their help, dedication, and vision.

Together, we rediscovered our values and our common sense to take O'Fallon to new heights.

Common sense told us that when you do the right thing, you will be rewarded.

The greatest reward I have received has been to see this city that I love soar.

When we believe in ourselves, the future will always be ours. We have begun a great movement, and there's no telling where it will end.

As I presided over the City Council Meeting for the 456th time on November 7th, I was overcome with gratitude.

The Council Chambers were overflowing with the youth of O'Fallon and their parents, downtown business owners, hotel developers, homebuilders and members of the faith community. There was a collective sense in the room that O'Fallon is a great community for all.

We were all coming together to make our city Better . . . Brighter and Blessed.

We were standing tall, breaking down walls and building bridges to our future.

It was at this moment that I knew it was time to pass the torch of leadership.

Our city is humming with commerce and creativity.

We are a magnificent city built on a foundation stronger than politics or neighborhood divides.

We are a destination for anyone and everyone looking for a better life.



That's how I see it.

So there is no better time for me to retire as your mayor at the end of my term in April, 2017.

Thank you to my wife Lucia, our children and grandchildren who believed in me and never complained when a call came in from someone who needed my help at all hours of the day or night.

Thank you to everyone who worked with me. Thank you to those who have not always agreed with me. You made me a better servant.

My heart is filled with gratitude. My heart is full of love for this community.

We did it.

We made a difference. We changed lives. We flew to places we never thought were possible.

May God bless us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary L. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "A".

Gary L. Graham
Mayor