



TENNESSEE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

## James Fenton, Executive Director of Gallatin Economic Development Agency, Awarded 2021 TEDC Professional of the Year

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE -- The Tennessee Economic Development Council (TEDC) has recognized James Fenton, Executive Director at Gallatin Economic Development Agency, as the 2021 TEDC Professional of the Year. Fenton has been honored with the Fred H. Harris Professional of the Year Award due to his overwhelming commitment to economic development in Tennessee and significant achievements and completed projects, especially in the Gallatin area.

James Fenton began his career at Gallatin Economic Development Agency in 2012 after serving for more than six years as Director of Economic Development for Cheatham Connect, driving new business development and investment in Cheatham County. As Executive Director, Fenton has encouraged business growth and expansion in a variety of industries, contributing to Gallatin's current reputation as one of the most business-friendly cities in Tennessee. Fenton has also spearheaded several economic development projects, including the Facebook data center site, which was announced in August 2020.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 1, 2021

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In 2017, Fenton was made aware that an anonymous entity, later known as Woolhawk, a legal entity used by tech giant Facebook to remain semi-anonymous, was considering Gallatin as the site of their potential \$800 million project. Over the next three years, Fenton and his team cooperated with Woolhawk, while maintaining the secrecy of the company's actual identity, and reached a deal for a data center on over 800 acres of land in Gallatin. The data center, which was the largest investment in Tennessee history at the time of announcement, is expected to open in 2023 and will serve as the biggest source of revenue in Sumner County.

The overwhelming success of the project along with Fenton's and his team's collaboration with Facebook led the company to create a video and dedicated page for the Gallatin Data Center, creating a massive boost to the city's exposure and reputation. In the months following the announcement and creation of the Facebook page, Fenton has been contacted by many other companies and brokers interested in pursuing projects in Gallatin, allowing the Gallatin EDA to follow its strategic plan for developing high-paying and respectable employment in the area.

"We [the Gallatin Economic Development Agency] decided in 2017 to create a strategy that focused the local economy on fewer but higher quality jobs," Fenton said. "The central idea was



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to move away from reliance on manufacturing and similar industries, and towards businesses with higher wages, such as the tech industry. Bringing a Facebook data center to Gallatin was a dream come true and it was an honor to work with the Facebook team to make that dream a reality.”

The Fred H. Harris Professional of the Year Award is presented annually to a member of the Tennessee Economic Development Council for outstanding achievement in economic development. It is given in recognition of the contributions the recipient has made to his or her own community as well as to the state of Tennessee.

This award is given in honor of Fred H. Harris, who became a nationally recognized economic development professional during his tenure at the Nashville Chamber. Recipients of the Fred H. Harris Award must be nominated by their peers and selected by a committee of TEDC past presidents from the field of nominees.

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TEDC is the statewide professional organization for people involved in economic development. Awards were presented in a ceremony during the TEDC Annual Fall Conference, which was held in Memphis this year.

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