

BIW demolition signals new future

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – The site of what was known as the Brillion Iron Works for close to a century is at a crossroads in its history.

The majority of the former foundry buildings are being torn down paving way for future redevelopment.

Demolition on the buildings started last week. Ayres Associates is overseeing the demolition and has contracted Brandenburg. Demolition is scheduled to be finished by April at the latest but is likely to be complete before that deadline.

The Brillion Iron Works closed in the fall of 2016. Ariens Company has worked with the city for more than two years to redevelop the property and has established the LLC, Brillion Works.

“We’ve been working with Ayres for a good solid year,” Brillion Public Works Director Andy Geiger said. “The applications for grant dollars and that type of thing is the next step



The former Brillion Iron Works buildings, which are in the process of being demolished, are pictured last week from Highway 10. The demolition project started last week and will be complete by April at the latest. (David Nordby/BN)

because it’s definitely not going to happen out of the city’s pocketbook, or one pocketbook all by itself.”

Grants and the environmental TID that was established by the city have helped cover the cost of demolition.

Geiger meets with Ayres and Brandenburg weekly, and monthly with the Brillion Iron Works LLC

group.

The long-range vision for the site that will be spaced out over the next five to 20 years could include commercial and retail spaces, businesses, residential areas, new roads and parks.

The building from the foundry that will remain intact is the Farm Implement Building. Ariens has turned that into a building for its own business.

“It’s just an ongoing thing, and it’s going to be ongoing for many years to come from the potential development of roads once demolition is done to developing cities on the property ... There’s going to be a lot of years of work ahead of us here,” Geiger said.

Geiger will be involved with the process during those years as the site is redeveloped. He said he never imagined a project like this would be a part of his role as public works director.

“It really is cool to have a vision like that. You have a roadmap and you’re trying to stick to it. There’s going to be some deviations in it, obviously, but to have the full thought and carry it out is pretty big stuff,” Geiger said.

When *The Brillion News* posted photos of the demolition on its Face-



Ayres Associates is in charge of the Brillion Iron Works demolition project. They have contracted Brandenburg for the project. Just one building will remain standing, which Ariens Company is using for its business purposes. (David Nordby/BN)

book page last week, some expressed sadness seeing the buildings come down.

“To me, we can’t cry over spilled milk. They made a business decision and they left, and now we have to move on. It’s sad to see it go, but we can’t do anything about it. The only thing we can do is pull ourselves up, get back in the pants and move forward and work with the Ariens LLC (Brillion Works LLC) and that’s all we can do,” Brillion Mayor Gary Deiter said.

Deiter said he understands the sentimental value with the BIW foundry, as someone who spent their working career at the site.

“It was hard work and dirty work. I always look at it this way. I made a good living there and I had good insurance and I bought a home from there and I bought some cars from there. I had my vacation. I was well-treated, just like a lot of people were. It’s sad to see it go, but you have to understand it’s part of the future plans of where we go next,” Deiter said.

Environmental remediation and demolition were two major steps that Ariens and the city have worked on for the last two years. The site will be redeveloped in incremental steps.

“Things are going to be kind of quiet. You might see some movement for the next five years. This is going to be a long, long longevity project,” Deiter said.

Geiger said he was driving into Brillion last weekend and realized the demolition already gives the city a different look from Highway 10.

“It was like a dark hole before ... It exposes so much more; it’s going to give it a whole new look right away just from that standpoint. That’s pretty cool. That’s progress that will make people talk,” Geiger said.

For Deiter, the redevelopment signals a new era for the former foundry site.

“The future keeps coming and the past goes past you. You can’t live in the past. We’d all love to, but you can’t,” Deiter said.



(Photos by David Nordby/BN)

