



For Immediate Release

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Event Marks Start of K-25 History Center

OAK RIDGE, Tennessee, October 18, 2017 – A celebratory event is set for Thursday (October 19) to formally launch a multi-phase project to commemorate the history of the former Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant – once known as K-25. **The event will be followed by a public tour from 2 to 4 p.m.**

Co-sponsored by the City of Oak Ridge, the event is part of the City's 75th Anniversary celebration. It will feature a walk-through of the future home of the K-25 History Center to be located in the city's Fire Station No. 4 at the East Tennessee Technology Park. The Department of Energy and URS|CH2M Oak Ridge LLC (UCOR), DOE's lead cleanup contractor, will unveil plans and the layout for the Center before construction starts.

Large graphics placed throughout the building provide the visitor a preview of the finished center. At points throughout the building, individuals with knowledge of the history of K-25 and Oak Ridge will be available to discuss significant events and facts about the K-25 facility. Artifacts from the era will also be on display.

When crews finished constructing Building K-25 in 1945, it was the largest structure in the world. Its size was rivaled only by the importance of its mission – to help end a global war. Despite its 44-acre footprint and urgent work, the public would not learn of its existence in the Secret City until the end of World War II.

"Although the building is no longer standing, DOE's Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management and its partners understand the historical significance of the site," Jay Mullis, Acting Manager of DOE's Oak Ridge Office, said. "We have made a substantial investment to ensure future generations can hear and understand the amazing story behind the men and women who constructed and operated the former K-25 site."

Mullis said exhibits will include oral histories and original artifacts that commemorate the history of K-25 and provide context for the way it fits into the national story.

Oak Ridge Mayor Warren Gooch stated, “This project will help preserve the history of one of the most significant facilities in modern times. But more importantly, as we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of our community, it is a tribute to the men and women whose work shaped the outcome of World War II and the Cold War. With its proximity to the K-25 footprint, the City’s Fire Station is an ideal venue for the History Center, and partnering with DOE will make its construction and operation more cost effective.”

UCOR President and Project Manager Ken Rueter said UCOR’s cleanup work is being carried out on the “stage of American history.”

“It is difficult to walk the grounds of our workplace without seeing reminders that take us back to a perilous time, and the secret, successful work that was accomplished on this site to secure world peace in one of America’s most challenging eras,” Rueter said. “These facilities will preserve and celebrate that history.”

Next year, DOE also plans to begin work on an Equipment Building and Viewing Tower adjacent to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The design replicates the exterior appearance of the K-25 building and houses a representative cross-section of gaseous diffusion technology. An enclosed observation deck will provide a 360-degree view of the site.

All work is being done under a Memorandum of Agreement for historical interpretation of the East Tennessee Technology Park executed in 2012 between DOE and various consulting parties. The Agreement was made as part of the National Historic Preservation Act whose requirements must be met under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) which governs cleanup of the site.

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park was formally established in November 2015. Historic preservation commitments at ETP are independent but complementary of ongoing efforts to develop the National Park. The original K-25 footprint – the concrete slab on which the massive building once stood – has been incorporated into the National Park.

Also in 2015, DOE launched the K-25 Virtual Museum online (www.k-25virtualmuseum.org). The website tells the story of the K-25 facility and its contributions to defense, energy and technology advancements. The site features a timeline chronicling the road to the atomic bomb via East Tennessee, a K-25 site tour where visitors can “walk” through decades of skyline changes, a glimpse of daily life in the construction camp known as Happy Valley, and sneak preview of preservation efforts planned to commemorate the 75-year-old site.

Uranium enrichment operations at the East Tennessee Technology Park ceased in 1985, and the site was permanently shut down in 1987. DOE then began cleanup operations which included demolition of many of the site’s structures, including five massive gaseous diffusion buildings. DOE is currently working to transform the site into a private sector industrial park.