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**March 4, 2025**

## **CROET Launches First Phase of Planned Closure Activities**

*Road Improvements, Lighting, Landscaping Help Transition Former K-25 Site to Mixed-use Industrial Park*

**OAK RIDGE, Tenn.**—The Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET), a regional economic development nonprofit focused on repurposing older U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) facilities and property for private development, has launched the first phase of its closure activities. The first phase—which includes road improvements, lighting, and landscaping—are all part of a larger closure plan aimed at transitioning the site of the former DOE Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant K-25 to a thriving, mixed-use private industrial park.



**CROET President and CEO  
Lawrence Young**

Due to years of heavy truck traffic required as part of the legacy demolition process, more than half of the site’s arterial roads needed improvement. With the design assistance of Barge Design and implementation by Rogers Group, more than 1.5 miles of paved area were restored to specifications beyond that of typical municipal standards.

“The paving project, which was completed on-time and under budget in late 2024, was undertaken to assure that current residents of the park—and those who may locate there in the future—have more-than-adequate access to their properties and to facilitate the transition of the roadways from DOE ownership to the City of Oak Ridge,” said CROET President and CEO Lawrence Young. “This was the first of many improvement projects that will allow us to close our doors knowing that we have left a lasting legacy for the community to build upon.”

In addition to road paving, a second effort was initiated to better illuminate the park’s central corridor. It involved the installation of new streetlamps along Heritage Center Boulevard, the main arterial roadway of the park that runs north and south. Ensuring compliance with City of Oak Ridge standards, the project’s design process was recently completed and is currently out for review and pricing. The project is tentatively set to begin in April 2025, with completion slated for fall 2025.

The most visually impactful of the closure projects currently underway is an effort to landscape some of the more accessible portions of the site. To tackle this massive undertaking, CROET enlisted the nationally renowned landscape architecture firm Stephen W. Hackney to update the main entry at Heritage Center Boulevard with trees, grasses, and wildflowers that are native to the East Tennessee-region.

“CROET has always been sensitive to the need to make any business property visually attractive to its current and future tenants,” said CROET Chair Nicole Merrifield. “The landscape project at Heritage Center will build upon the incremental beautification projects done by CROET over the years to coalesce the entire industrial center by unifying it into a cohesive, naturalized park-like setting.”

Further tree scaping will follow Enrichment Street to the entrance to the K-25 History Center, as well as along the eastern perimeter of the historical former K-25 building site. Sustainability features such as irrigation and repurposed hardscapes are also incorporated. In total, the landscaping project will install 200 trees, 3,300 grasses, and more than 13,000 flowers. Installation has been contracted through locally owned INTEGRITY Lawn and Landscaping and is expected to be completed by June 2025.



**CROET Chair  
Nicole Merrifield**

CROET began in 1995 as a conducive way to bring DOE grant funds to East Tennessee. Grants to mitigate the impacts of the downsizing of federal facilities in Oak Ridge following the Cold War totaled nearly \$60 million. In August 2023, the CROET Board of Directors elected to enter a process to orderly wind down operations, and in late 2024, the organization entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE) Foundation to ensure the continued stewardship of the former K-25 site long after CROET has officially ceased operations.

“As we continue to execute our planned closure activities, we have some really exciting projects planned in partnership with AMSE Foundation that will recognize and commemorate the historical significance of the site,” said Young. “It’s our vision, and that of the CROET Board, that the park becomes a community-owned resource of great and lasting impact—a fitting, final gift from CROET to the people of Oak Ridge and Roane County.”

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