



News release

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Shuttle orbiter not coming home to Houston

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – Following months of speculation, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden stood before a podium at Kennedy Space Center shortly after noon today and announced the facilities where four shuttle orbiters will be displayed permanently at the conclusion of the Space Shuttle Program. Space Center Houston was not among them.

Shuttle Enterprise will move from the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Virginia to the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in New York. The Udvar-Hazy Center will become the new home for shuttle Discovery, which retired after completing its 39th mission in March. Shuttle Endeavour, which is preparing for its final flight at the end of the month, will go to the California Science Center in Los Angeles. Atlantis, which will fly the last planned shuttle mission in June, will be displayed at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Florida.

This was devastating news for the crowd gathered at Space Center Houston to hear the announcement. Many organizations and individuals in the Houston region have been working diligently for the past two years to secure a retired shuttle orbiter. Space Center Houston President/CEO Richard E. Allen, Jr., stated, "Obviously for us, today is a bitter disappointment. However, let me just reiterate that the space program is going to continue. Johnson Space Center will continue to be the home of Mission Control. It will continue to do the astronaut training. Space Center Houston, with its great programs, will continue to support the space program and educate all of our students and our visitors about the greatness of the space program."

Attorney Denis Braham of Winstead Law Firm, another strong proponent in securing a shuttle for Houston, also spoke. He commented, "This is a sad day. It's sad, because Houston did not get the recognition it deserved. Houston is Space City. To find out today that Houston was barely mentioned in the remarks of the NASA officials is a true disappointment to our community."

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership and its president, Bob Mitchell, have been one of the driving forces behind this enormous effort. Mitchell stated, “This is a difficult day for all of us, especially the men and women who have dedicated their lives to the Johnson Space Center and the shuttle program. The astronauts have trained in Houston, and many still make their homes here. Mission Control monitors each and every shuttle flight. Houston is known as the home of human space flight. Common sense tells you that these facts alone would have been enough for Houston to have been selected to receive a retired shuttle orbiter. We will call for a congressional investigation or at the very least a congressional hearing. Politics should never play a part in a decision about a piece of American history. Today I am afraid that politics trumped common sense. Let’s hope at the end of the day that Houston was not selected due to someone’s political agenda.”

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Richard E. Allen, Jr., president/CEO, Space Center Houston



Bob Mitchell, president, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership



Attorney Denis Braham, Winstead Law Firm



Crowd awaits news conference at Space Center Houston.

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is administered by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. It is a State of Texas funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge and technology of the U.S. Space Program to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves. Visit www.spacetechnolutions.com/bahep.