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How Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin Is Impacting West Texas Real Estate

Oct 06, 2021 by **Nell McPherson**

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On July 20, **Amazon** founder Jeff Bezos fulfilled a lifelong dream when he sent himself into space with his aerospace company, Blue Origin. Many wondered how he would ever be able to top that kind of marketing for space tourism -- and they didn't have to wait long for an answer.

William Shatner, the man perhaps best known as Captain James T. Kirk, commander of the Starship Enterprise on *Star Trek*, is scheduled to blast off into space -- for real this time -- courtesy of Blue Origin on Tuesday, Oct. 12. This news was already so awesome that the fact that the trip will make the 90-year-old actor the oldest person in space seemed only to appear in later headlines as an afterthought.

If you rewatch Bezos' launch or tune in to see Shatner's (and who wouldn't?), you'll see a small West Texas town called Van Horn in the background. Let's take a closer look at the community that serves as home base to the world's only privately owned and operated launch site and the impact Blue Origin's presence is having on its real estate.

The town behind the launch site

To be clear, Van Horn is not the headquarters of Blue Origin. That title goes to Kent, Washington, just south of Seattle, where the bulk of the company's business, engineering, and manufacturing activities take place. Van Horn is where Blue Origin tests engines and launches New Shepard, its rocket

named after astronaut Alan Shepard and responsible for launching Bezos and soon Shatner into space.

It's been 16 years since Bezos selected Van Horn as the location for his company's launch site. The town is situated in Culberson County, which only has around 2,000 residents total. And according to the *Houston Chronicle* [subscription required], the site didn't attract too much public attention until Bezos announced his July launch, thrusting the small town into the spotlight.

Blue Origins' impact on the community as well as its real estate has been something of a mixed bag. Its employees have bought and rented homes and regularly patronize local businesses such as restaurants and shops. They even work with the local hardware store to get needed tools and parts (yes, for a rocket!). And now the company's launches are bringing journalists and space enthusiasts who stay in Van Horn's hotels and also spend money locally.

One problem is that the company's presence means the town no longer qualifies for low- to middle-income grants it would have used in the past to make updates to its infrastructure. Another is that housing was already in short supply in Van Horn, and the influx of Blue Origin employees hasn't helped that situation. The good news from an investing perspective is that this creates a very interesting opportunity for developers.

The Millionacres bottom line

An increasing number of businesses have been seeking out locales with lower taxes and commercial real estate costs. Add to that the pandemic-induced desire for more living space, both indoors and out, and these types of moves may become more commonplace going forward.

So real estate investors may want to keep an eye on how the situation unfolds here, and not only to potentially invest in Van Horn, Texas. While the space tourism aspect adds a unique layer of intrigue to this story, Van Horn is also a living study in how the real estate market can be impacted anytime a large company moves into a small town.

Here's hoping Mr. Shatner enjoys his time in Van Horn and that he has an unforgettable trip into the final frontier and a safe return to Earth.

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