

**UPHAM, NM** – With New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, Spaceport America officials and supporters of commercial space development in attendance, the world's first purpose-built commercial spaceport broke ground today in southern New Mexico. Today's event delivered on the promise of an exciting new age for space exploration and development, as well as a bright future for the people of New Mexico and their children.

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson remarked on the importance of the groundbreaking for the spaceport. "After all of the hard work to get this project off the ground, it is gratifying to see Spaceport America finally become a reality," New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson said. "New Mexicans have stepped up to the plate by making this investment. This groundbreaking ceremony is an important step toward our goal of being at the forefront of a vibrant new, commercial space industry."

Executive Director Steve Landeene of the New Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA) commented, "The groundbreaking for Spaceport America is the beginning of a historic new chapter in New Mexico's long legacy of space and cutting-edge technology. From the pioneering rocketry work of Robert J. Goddard in New Mexico in 1930, the beginnings of America's space program in the 1940's and 50's to the ongoing NASA programs at White Sands Missile Range and now to Spaceport America, the Gateway to the Future."

Virgin Galactic President Will Whitehorn was excited to be at the groundbreaking for Spaceport America. "The groundbreaking is an enormous milestone for Virgin Galactic which is investing over \$300 million in developing a new space launch system which will operate at Spaceport America after it opens. Today's event clearly signals the birth of a new commercial age in space and is a proud moment for the vision and foresight of both the people and government of the state of New Mexico."

Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group launched Virgin Galactic in 2004 with the objective of developing commercial space vehicles that would transform the safety, cost and environmental impact associated with manned space travel. As the spaceport's anchor tenant, Virgin Galactic has been actively developing the technology to make low cost commercial space access a reality in conjunction with Burt Rutan and Northrop Grumman's Scaled Composites, the company developing WhiteKnightTwo and SpaceShipTwo for commercial spaceflight.

Today's groundbreaking initiates construction on a cutting-edge, 110,000-plus square foot facility using cost-effective, energy-efficient green building practices. In accordance with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson's executive order 2006-001 for state buildings, Spaceport America's terminal hangar facility will be built to the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED rating system. Extensive use of sustainable and clean energy technology throughout the design will ensure that the spaceport will set the standard for environmentally sound design for similar structures in the future. From earth-tubes that will pre-condition the air to reduce HVAC costs by 50-70% to solar thermal panels on the roof for hot water to the embedded in-floor loop system, Spaceport America is both unique and iconic in terms of visual and environmental design.

The design for Spaceport America's terminal hangar facility was created by a team of American and British architects that were selected after competing in an international design

competition. URS Corporation, one of the world's largest design and engineering firms, teamed with lead designer Foster + Partners of the United Kingdom to submit the winning design. Foster + Partners has extensive experience designing airport buildings and other highprofile projects worldwide.

Spaceport America holds great promise for the people of New Mexico and their children. After voters in Sierra County and Doña Ana County approved an increase in local gross receipts taxes to fund the project, Governor Bill Richardson and the New Mexico State Legislature provided funding to develop and build Spaceport America. The economic impact includes growing the primary and secondary job markets to support the new commercial space industry. Perhaps most importantly, Spaceport America allows the creation of high tech jobs and education programs for the students of New Mexico and the world.