



PROBLEMS OR PERIL?

After months of fevered anticipation, AMAZON announced in November that they'd be adding an additional headquarters in Northern Virginia. An influx of 25,000 jobs, at average salaries of \$150,000, plus a reimagined Crystal City will transform the region in the coming years. It's an economic boon to be sure, but should Northern Virginians rejoice?

BY JESSE RIFKIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON SPICER • ILLUSTRATION BY HAWL KRALL



IN A REGION AS DENSE AND developed as inside-the-Beltway Northern Virginia, it's fair to say that Crystal City had been a relative ghost town in recent years. Still struggling to find its identity after losing scores of employees to the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure project (BRAC) around 2005, the once bustling office buildings found themselves sparsely populated for more than a decade.

But that all changed when Amazon finally announced in November that it would be moving half of its second headquarters to Crystal City (now known, to the surprise of most everyone, as National Landing). Literally overnight, the once sleepy stretch of high-rise offices, residential and retail buildings were in demand.

"We were surprised by the immediacy of the response within the local mar-

ket," says Derrick Swaak, treasurer of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors and a managing broker with TTR Sotheby's International Realty in McLean. "Our office had a listing for a moderately-priced studio condo adjacent to Crystal City. For weeks, there were few showings and no offers. But once the media began to confirm Crystal City, the listing agent was deluged with showings and ended up with six offers. Half of them were investors looking to seize on the opportunity. I have also received requests from other investors looking for buyer's agents with specific knowledge of Crystal City and the nearby residential markets."

That 407-square-foot condo was originally listed for \$249,900. Its final sale price? \$255,000. Rising real estate prices and a modern-day gold rush mentality are just a few of the ripple effects the NoVA neighborhood is seeing as a result of Amazon coronating Crystal City America's hottest "new" neighborhood (that, and the other half of HQ2, Long Island City in New York).

But just as real estate prospectors—and those lucky enough to already own property in and



“I share the concerns of my constituents regarding whether we have the necessary infrastructure, including roads, transit, schools and affordable housing, to properly welcome Amazon to our region.”

-REP. JENNIFER WEXTON, VA-10TH DISTRICT

around the neighborhood—are popping the proverbial Champagne, there are plenty of naysayers who see the region’s newest corporate neighbor as a negative.

Rising real estate prices means gentrification and less affordable housing; 25,000 new jobs means even more gridlock and a strain on the region’s Metro system; higher taxes to pay to lure one of the world’s most profitable companies to move here; and even accusations of crony capitalism have all been offered up as reasons that Amazon isn’t what the region needs.

“This historic move by Amazon to bring half of its HQ2 to Virginia will yield good-paying, sustainable jobs that will allow Northern Virginia’s economy to compete globally for decades to come. I’m glad Amazon recognizes that Northern Virginia is a top location to raise a family and grow a business,” said newly elected Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton in a statement when the announcement was made. “However, I share the concerns of my constituents regarding whether we have the necessary infrastructure, including roads, transit, schools and affordable

housing, to properly welcome Amazon to our region. I look forward to working with Amazon now and in the future, and call upon them to be a responsible corporate citizen, to ensure that the quality of life of their future employees and current Northern Virginia residents is not adversely impacted by this move.”

“It has some of the best transit access, with three Metro stations, commuter rail access and Reagan National Airport all within walking distance.”

-BRIAN HUSEMAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC POLICY, AMAZON

Despite these concerns, Northern Virginia’s elected leaders fought hard to lure the online giant here.

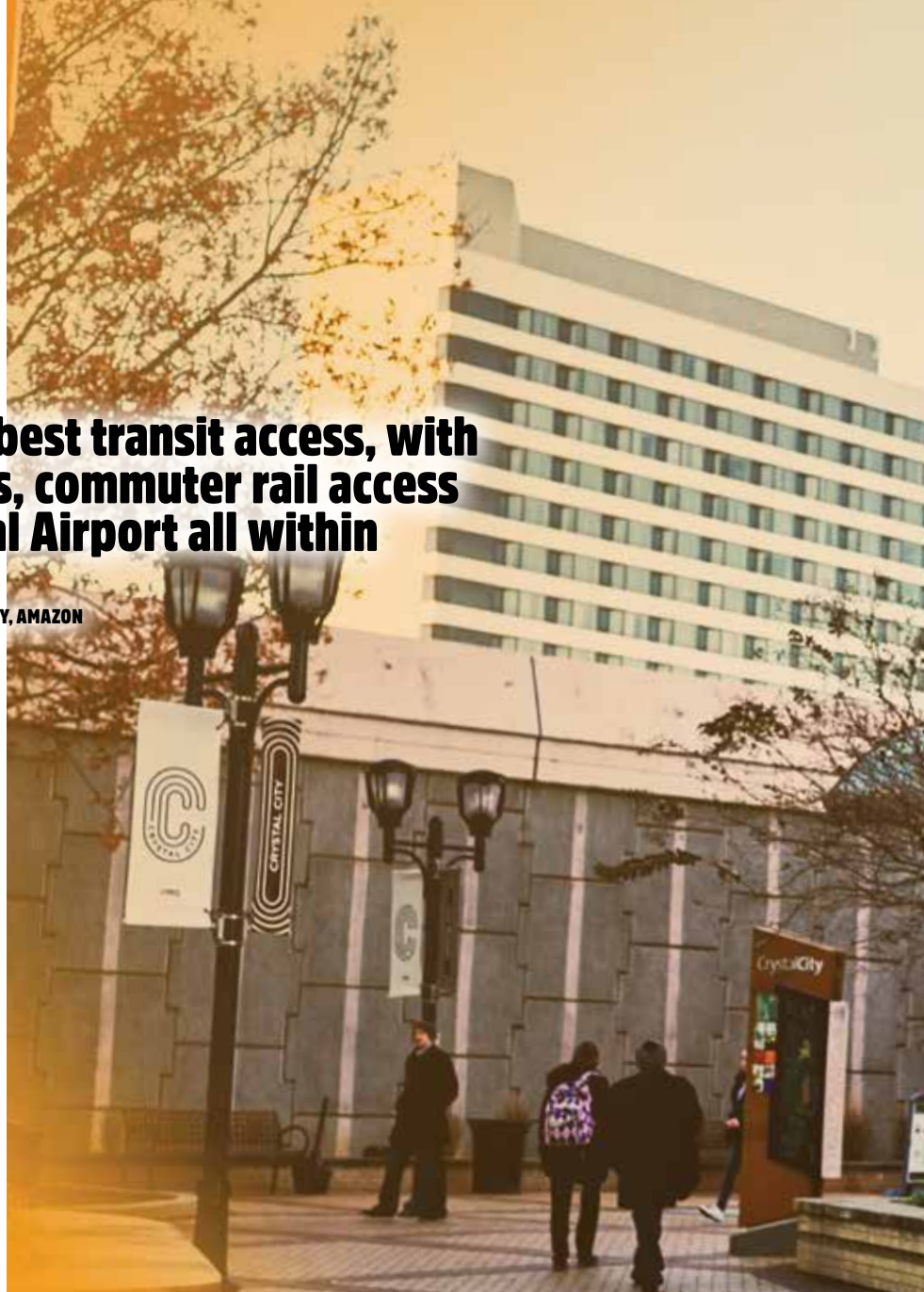
Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, speaking in Crystal City at a press conference the afternoon of the big announcement, declared it an economic triumph.

“Amazon will invest approximately \$2.5 billion to establish a major new headquarters here, and plans to create at least 25,000 new jobs,” he said. “In fact, the site where we’re standing right now will transform from an empty warehouse into a significant component of Amazon’s new headquarters.”

MEET VIRGINIA

S **O WHAT DID THE STATE** have to offer in order to win out on that promise of \$2.5 billion and 25,000 new jobs?

Some quick numbers: Virginia’s comprehensive incentives package directly totaled \$573 million. That’s in addition to \$223 million in transportation investments, and even more subsidies potentially reaching up to \$750 million if Amazon exceeds certain job creation thresholds. The state also agreed to invest \$1.1 billion over the next two decades in higher education technology programs at Virginia

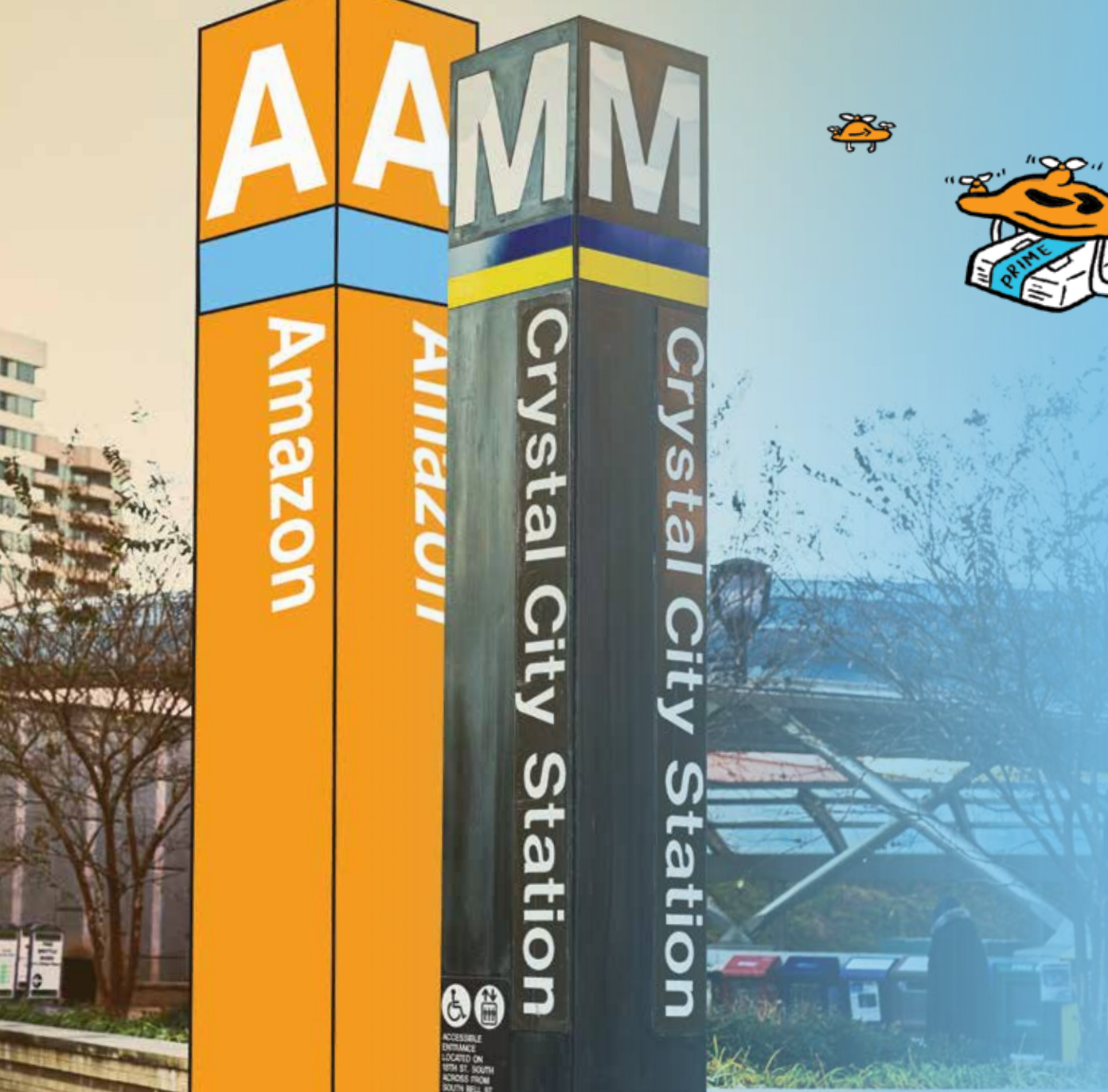


What does this mean for real estate?

Amazon’s arrival means the region’s already expensive residential market could go even higher. Two local realtors gave us their advice if you’re looking to make a move.

Looking to buy a home? You’ve got some time.

“Generally speaking, the effects will be gradual as the arrival of Amazon employees will take place over several years. It’s unlikely that we’ll see this frantic,



widespread hefty price increase,” says Jill Burke, a realtor with the Long & Foster Arlington office. Burke says the early estimates are that home prices may go up anywhere from 5-10 percent over time.

But competition is starting to heat up.

The Amazon announcement has made some potential buyers act faster, says Burke. “We are seeing that there are properties that have (been on the market) maybe 80, 90 days with no activity, and then after the Amazon announcement suddenly we have four offers on one property, all of them over list price.”

Amazon isn’t the only factor.

“Remember, you’re also fighting the rising interest rates, which are almost a foregone conclusion,” says Robert Chamberlain, an associate broker with Long & Foster. Chamberlain says if you’re in a position to buy now, don’t let Amazon influence that decision. “Markets are always in flux. I always tell buyers that the

second you’ve made the decision you want to buy, you should keep moving forward.”

Don’t limit your search to Arlington and Alexandria.

“Anyone that is Metro accessible, anyone along the lines (that service HQ2) will see an impact,” says Burke. “Quite frankly, a lot of folks aren’t going to be able to afford to buy in those areas of Alexandria and Arlington, so they’ll be commuting in from more remote areas.”

Rentals may see the biggest impact at first.

“We’re saying ‘Rents, rents, rents!’” says Chamberlain. Many of the people who move here to work for Amazon will be millennials, he explains, and they’re more likely to rent and scope out the area before they buy. “Renting is the first thing you do, so it could take two to three years to affect the housing supply. I would be looking for rents to increase along that Route 1 corridor from 5 to 8 percent.” -**KATIE BIANCO AND MICHAEL BALDERSTON**

RUSSELL GRAVATT OWNER OF DAIRY GODMOTHER, DEL RAY

How long has Dairy Godmother been in Del Ray?

About 18 years

What did you think when you heard the Amazon news?

I think it's a good thing. Crystal City has been empty for a while, or emptying out since they moved everybody that was government related. So it's a good thing. Amazon's a great company. I figured with Bezos being a D.C. resident and all that it was going to happen. I live in Montgomery County and I thought maybe it was going to happen there, but when you look logistically at what JBG has in ways of empty square footage over there you kind of see that will help things a lot; proximity to the airport, all that. It's kind of nutty that they're going to rename it to National Landing.

How do you think it will impact small businesses like yours?

Two fold. If they hire people locally, I don't see that it's going to make that big of a difference, but if they're bringing 25,000 people in—making that kind of money—we may see some influx of it. It will just be kind of an interesting thing to see how they do it. Part of me hopes the majority of the folks are local because it would be a good job for a lot of people. I don't know if that technology is here. It's going to be hard on traffic, I know that.

Tech and George Mason University.

To the uninitiated, those totals may sound like a lot. But that financial package actually totaled far less than some other locations offered.

Maryland and New Jersey offered much more at \$8.5 billion and \$7 billion, respectively, yet neither landed the deal. Even the other headquarters Amazon did pick—in New York City's Long Island City neighborhood—provided incentives equaling an estimated \$48,000 for every new job it's projected to create, more than twice Virginia's \$22,000.

If Virginia didn't win out on money alone, why did Amazon decide to go with NoVA?

"It has a lot to offer," Brian Huseman, Amazon's vice president of public policy, explained at that same press conference. "It has some of the best transit access, with three Metro stations, commuter rail access and Reagan National Airport all within walking distance. The

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Local Developer JBG Smith was already planning a renaissance for the newly named National Landing when Amazon came calling. The high-profile tenant means they'll pick up the pace on construction.



From top: Alamo Cinema and Drafthouse will anchor National Landing's Central Retail District at 1550 Crystal Drive; the movie theater, a specialty grocer and other retail will move into the ground floor of 1550's existing office building.

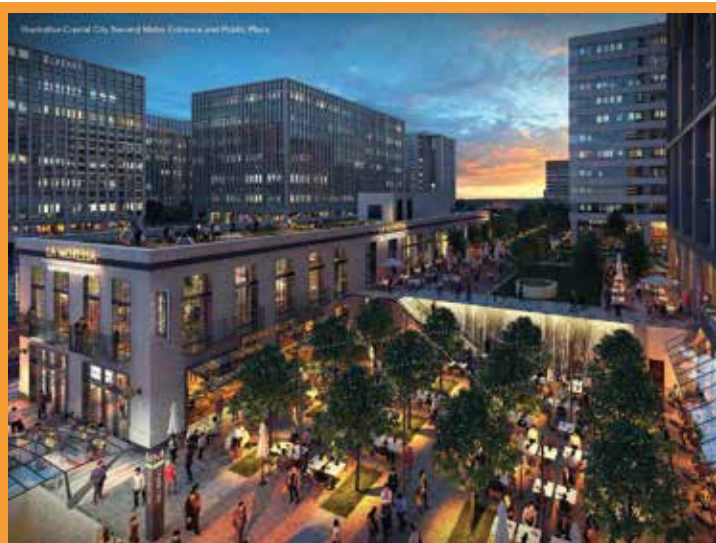
COURTESY OF JBGSMITH

community has a variety of hotels, restaurants, high-rise apartment buildings, retail and commercial offices. It has abundant parks and open spaces, with sports and cultural events for residents of all ages throughout the year. In this location, Amazon will be able to attract the top-tier talent that will help us innovate on behalf of our customers.”

Indeed, urban planners have long held Northern Virginia up as a shining example of what smart development looks like. The Ballston-Rosslyn corridor, spurred by the arrival of the Metro in 1979, essentially serves as an extension of Washington, D.C., with its (usually) easy-to-

navigate public transportation options. In Crystal City, i.e. National Landing, existing Metro stations (which also opened in the late 1970s), plus one in the works at Potomac Yards, and development plans from JBG Smith for reimagined retail and residential to support HQ2, stands to transform yet another slice of Northern Virginia into a walkable mecca for millennials.

“It’s us entering a new cycle of relevance and growth,” says John Asadoorian, principal broker for Asadoorian Retail Solutions, who has been an integral player in creating the region’s retail mix for decades and often works with JBG



Many of Amazon's Seattle employees walk or take public transportation to work, and that goal remains the same at HQ2. A second Metro entrance, along with plenty of public plazas (pictured) are planned for the walkable neighborhood.

National Landing, which consists of Crystal City, the eastern portion of Pentagon City and the northern portion of Potomac Yard, will get a facelift as construction gives way to new residential, retail, restaurants and Amazon office space.



Access to Reagan National Airport and other transportation were a selling point for Amazon. Here, a rendering of National Landing's multi-modal hub gives a glimpse of the pedestrian-friendly area.



Smith. “The defense industry was the primary driver of growth in the ‘70s and ‘80s. Now it’s more a matter of quality of life: ease of regional access, proximity to D.C. without the hassles of living in D.C., dated architecture and public spaces being redeveloped (and more).”

THE BEZOS FACTOR

BUT MOST OF THE 238 BIDS FOR HQ2 PROMISED to put the needed infrastructure in place—and when Amazon comes calling, the residential and retail would have followed.

What else might have gotten NoVA the green light?

Perhaps it all came down to Jeff Bezos.

On a personal level, Amazon’s founder

and CEO bought the *Washington Post* for a cool \$250 million in 2013, and then in 2016 purchased the largest home in D.C. for \$23 million in Kalorama. Notable neighbors include Barack and Michelle Obama plus Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.

On the corporate level, Amazon has faced and will face far more potential challenges emanating from the federal city in recent and coming years. D.C.-centric issues include contending for a \$10 billion contract with the Pentagon to move military data onto cloud services; pending federal approval on using drones to deliver packages; the Postal Service considering dramatically raising shipping rates in the face of declining usage; and even potential antitrust scrutiny from the Justice Department.

Accordingly, the company has surged its lobbying in recent years, spending \$13 million on lobbying in 2017, according to Amazon’s public financial disclosures. That’s more than quadruple the \$2.5 million they spent as recently as 2012, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Amazon did not reply to *Northern Virginia*



Magazine's requests for comment.

Critics argue that Northern Virginia probably needed to spend zero (or nearly zero), contending that Amazon would likely have picked the area anyway—rendering this whole yearlong competition an elaborate ploy to squeeze more money from the state and region.

“Did the world’s smartest company really need 13 months, and applications from 238 cities, to reach the striking conclusion that it should invest in New York and D.C.?” *The Atlantic* business writer Derek Thompson wrote in a recent article critical of the bidding process. “The former is America’s heart of capital, and the latter is America’s literal capital, where Jeff Bezos, chief executive of Amazon, already owns a house and a newspaper.”

AMAZON BY THE NUMBERS

25,000

The minimum number of jobs Amazon is expected to create at HQ2 in NoVA over the next 12 years

22,000

Number of indirect jobs (such as hospitality, support and non-Amazon technology and professional jobs) Amazon’s arrival is expected to create

3,800

Number of new residential units currently under construction near National Landing

46,200

Number of residential units expected to be built over the next 15 years in support of Amazon’s HQ2

SOURCE: ALEXANDRIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Hokies Fly to National Landing

On the same day Amazon announced it was coming to Northern Virginia, Virginia Tech announced its new Innovation Campus just down the road.



When the campus is completed, the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus is expected to be home to nearly 900 post-graduate students.



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WHEN VIRGINIA TECH WAS founded 147 years ago in Blacksburg, the “Tech” in its name was more closely associated with farmers and mechanical services. The definition of technology has changed in that time, and so has Virginia Tech. The university’s next evolution will occur when it opens the doors to its new, \$1 billion Innovation Campus in National Landing, a place for graduate students to learn about the cutting edge and vital technology of computer sciences.

The announcement of Virginia Tech’s Innovation Campus coincided with the reveal that Northern Virginia would be one half of Amazon’s HQ2. Tech worked with the Virginia

Economic Development Partnership on including the Innovation Campus in the official proposal, but plans for the campus were being developed prior to Amazon’s anticipated arrival.

When Tim Sands became Virginia Tech’s new president four years ago, the school began pushing to increase its urban landscape. Though Tech has had a presence in Northern Virginia for nearly 50 years, Sands wanted “to have a stronger presence in the urban landscape, because that’s where the modern land-grant is doing its best work,” according to Mark Owczarski, assistant vice president for university relations. So ideas for a new campus were underway when, serendipitously, Amazon came along.

“Really what Amazon is, the simple word is a catalyst.”

says Owczarski. “Amazon fast-forwarded this thinking very, very rapidly. Virginia Tech would have done this anyway, it would have just taken us a lot longer to do, perhaps decades.”

Instead, 100 new graduate students will be arriving in Northern Virginia as part of the Innovation Campus in 2019. The official campus is not expected to be completed until 2022-2023, but Virginia Tech will rent or lease out temporary space for the program. When

“There is already industry, there is the federal government, there is Northern Virginia, sort of the gateway to the world and that really special geographic positioning.”

-BRANDY SALMON, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

completed, Tech expects the campus to house more than 750 master degrees and 125 Ph.D. students.

Julia Ross, the dean of the College of Engineering at Tech, is helping develop the academic program, which initially will focus on computer science and computer related degrees, “because that’s where the biggest gaps are in the workforce,” Ross says.

The campus will be more than just about academics though. With its close proximity to Amazon, the Innovation Campus will promote a partnership with the conglomerate and others. “Amazon will be a very important partner, but not the only one,” says Brandy Salmon, Tech’s associate vice president for Innovation and Partnerships and the founding chief operating officer for the Innovation Campus.

“There is already industry, there is the federal government, there is Northern Virginia, sort of the gateway to the world and that really special geographic positioning,” Salmon continues. “Those pieces were there and we see a really nice opportunity for a campus like this to kind of knit these things together and be an element of the fabric of the region.”

-MICHAEL BALDERSTON

AMAZON ON THE HORIZON

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HATEVER ULTIMATELY TIPPED THE SCALES in our favor, Amazon is moving in—with some settlers arriving as early as this year.

The company will start hiring and staffing the National Landing location this year, says Amazon’s Huseman. “This is in addition to the more than 8,500 employees we already have in Virginia, and the more than 2,000 employees in our D.C. metro offices.”

All told, official projections are 25,000 jobs each for both the Virginia and New York City locations. According to the most recent monthly employment numbers from the District of Columbia Office of Revenue Analysis, that would represent about 0.4 percent of D.C. metro area residents and 0.76 per-



**ASHLEY KAUPE
MANAGER
BOB &
EDITH'S
DINER CRYSTAL CITY**

How long has Bob & Edith been in the area?

This location, about four years. In general, about 50, since 1969.

What did you think when you heard the Amazon news?

My general reaction was I wasn't sure, I had questions. What does that mean for me? Is there going to be an increase in population, or just less jobs for businesses? We're all curious to know.

Are you worried about traffic?

No, not at all. There's too many ways to commute into the city around here. There's like three Metros just around us, I think it's fine. But as for population increasing, I think it would be better for us anyways. Because we're 24 hours, people who live around are usually regulars of ours. And if they are going to be working here, most people are going to be living in the new buildings that are getting built all around here.



Who is Jeff Bezos?

LAST YEAR'S TOP-RATED SUPER BOWL commercial featured celebrities like chef Gordon Ramsay, rapper Cardi B, actor Anthony Hopkins and comedian Rebel Wilson filling in for the Amazon Alexa device's robotic voice. A man asks Alexa how to make a grilled cheese sandwich, but receives the famously acidic Ramsay's scathing response: "You don't know how to make a grilled cheese sandwich? Its name is the recipe, you [censored]!"

Yet also featured in that advertisement was company CEO and founder Jeff Bezos, without any text with his name at the bottom of the screen. The implicit message: you can count on one hand the CEOs whose faces are recognizable to the mass public, and Bezos is one of them.

His corporation hardly needs an explanation, since the vast majority of Americans have bought at least one item from the shopping website since its 1994 founding. With \$177.8 billion in revenue last year, *Fortune* ranked them the No. 8 highest-earning American company and the No. 18 high-

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est-earning company globally.

As a result, Bezos isn't just the richest person on earth. With a net worth of \$125 billion as of press time, according to Bloomberg's Billionaires Index, he is worth a full \$31.5 billion more than runner-up Bill Gates. Phrased another way, only three other people on the planet are currently worth at least half as much as Bezos.

His connections to the local area have grown in recent years. He purchased the largest house in Washington, D.C., for \$23 million in the Kalorama neighborhood, with neighbors including Barack and Michelle Obama and Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner. And he famously bought the *Washington Post* for \$250 million.

It was Bezos as an individual and not Amazon as a company that purchased the *Post*, a distinction which has confused many. Nonetheless, President Trump has derisively nicknamed the paper "the Amazon Washington Post" and tweeted "In my opinion the Washington Post is nothing more than an expensive ... lobbyist for Amazon. Is it used as protection against antitrust claims which many feel should be brought?"

Did Bezos' ties to the area factor into Amazon's headquarters decision? The man and the company have both been reticent to answer outright in other forums or publications, and the company didn't respond to *Northern Virginia Magazine's* inquiries. But the likely answer: it surely didn't hurt. **-JESSE RIFKIN**

cent of jobs.

Although that may sound small, that's actually incredibly large for a single private sector company amid the sixth most populous metropolitan area in the country. Also consider that those jobs will arrive relatively rapidly, at least compared to accumulating over multiple decades as most of the area's other biggest private sector employers required. For comparison's sake, there are about 170,000 federal employees in Washington, D.C. (not including active duty military), according to the United States Office of Personnel Management.

Salaries for the new jobs are also expected to keep pace with the region's high cost of living, with average salary clocking in at \$150,000. To fill those six-figure jobs now and into the future, Virginia's bid included heavy investments in education, like the just announced Virginia Tech Innovation Campus that will open in Alexandria. "Amazon has committed to creating at least 25,000 jobs over the next 12 years, but may grow as large as 37,850. Amazon is more likely to hit the larger target with the state's investment in K-12 and higher education," explains Stephanie Landrum, president and CEO of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, an organization that played an integral role in the area's Amazon bid. "The new Virginia Tech Innovation Campus in Alexandria will play a critical role in helping to build a strong tech pipeline, which is why it was such an important investment in our partnership proposal?"



**JBG SMITH HAS
ALREADY DIS-
PLAYED RENDER-
INGS IN CRYSTAL
CITY OF WHAT'S
TO COME.**

TAKE THE "A" TRAIN

PERHAPS ONE OF THE BIGGEST bogeymen that comes with Amazon's arrival is the traffic. You can't add 25,000 new jobs and not see an uptick in cars on the road. Since complaining about the traffic is a beloved pastime in this region, the promised local investments in public transit were reportedly a focus for Amazon.

Among the pledged developments include improvements to Route 1, more entrances to the existing Crystal City Metro station and the planned Potomac Yard station scheduled to open in 2021, plus a pedestrian bridge from Crystal City to Reagan Airport. Currently the airport is one train stop away on either the Blue or Yellow lines, but with no good

way to walk or bike the route.

“At Amazon’s major employment centers now, the majority [55 percent] of their employees either walk to work, bike to work or use some form of transit,” says Paul Smedberg, chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.

“Twenty-five thousand people are not going to work for Amazon the first day they open the building. It’s going to be spread out over a period of time,” Smedberg continues. “That creates a really nice framework from which to build. It’s going to enhance the transit and transportation initiatives that Alexandria and Arlington certainly have in place, and also the region.”

On the other side of the equation is the pseudonymous administrator of the popular social media account Unsuck DC Metro, perhaps the leading source of viral complaints about the local transit system.

“I think we all know that Metro has been failing the region for over a decade. There have been several, very expensive attempts to right the ship, but Metro keeps getting worse,” the anonymous author writes by email. “Ridership continues to plummet, so I would expect any new Amazon worker will end up driving to work just like many in the area.”

Amazon has also been developing driverless cars, so could we soon be seeing them on Jefferson Davis Highway? “You never know,” Smedberg says. “They’ve had some cars tested around this area, but in a very limited and very careful way. So it wouldn’t surprise me.”

SUPER NOVA

AFTER 14 MONTHS OF ANALYSIS, rumors and breathless media coverage in every city that threw their hat in Amazon’s HQ2 ring, it’s no surprise that the final decision was national news. The company’s announcement of their two new headquarters locations even sparked a number of jokes. “Amazon was just going to go with New York,”

quipped James Corden in *The Late Late Show* monologue, “but then at the bottom of the page they saw: ‘People who buy New York also buy Northern Virginia.’”

HuffPost reporter Elise Foley earned more than 1,000 likes with this satire: “ANNOUNCEMENT: I am willing to move to a new city. Please join my nationwide competition and tell me what your city has to offer by way of helipads, free zoo memberships, etc. Will increase employment by 1 person.”

All kidding aside, Amazon’s selection of Northern Virginia will continue to be hotly debated for years to come, with everyone putting their own spin on the high-profile corporate move.

One economics professor argues that even the so-called negatives are actually positive.

“It increases our challenges the region faces in supplying affordable housing for

JOEL COHEN CRYSTAL BOUTIQUE OWNER, CRYSTAL CITY

How long have you owned Crystal Boutique?
48 years.

What did you think when you heard the Amazon news?

I was thrilled. It’s a great shot in the arm. Crystal City has been hanging out here for 48 years and it’s never had a great feeling. I’d say to people ‘I’m in Crystal City,’ and they’d say, ‘oh.’ All of a sudden yesterday, the phones started ringing, ‘wow, you’re in Crystal City, you’re going to be where Amazon is.’ I think it’s going to be a big shot in the arm. JBG Smith is planning a complete remake of the place to make it a place. So it’s pretty exciting.

Are you expecting any immediate changes?

Well, at the moment, we’ll be doing the same thing that we are because nothing has really changed other than the fact that now we have a new cache, Crystal City is a pretty cool place. My customer is a destination customer, so she will still come here and shop. But ... now (we can) say that we’re in Crystal City, I think that will have a whole different connotation.

What will Amazon’s arrival mean?

I take it all as a positive. This is progress. People complain about potential traffic or the displacement. You know, it’s a positive thing. You live in an urban area, you’re going to be crowded and there are going to be new people, it’s going to be young and it’s going to be vibrant and it will bring a whole different feeling and activity level here. I’m one of the older guys, but I like being around an age diverse environment, and that’s what we’ll have, I think, at the end of the day.

Where is Long Island City?

For more than a year, cities across the country thought they were competing in a winner-take-all scenario that would end with Amazon and its 50,000 jobs moving in. When it was all said and done, the online behemoth announced they’d settled on two locations: newly named National Landing and ... Long Island City? Like National Landing, the name wasn’t immediately familiar. But for New Yorkers, the up-and-coming neighborhood has been on their radar for some time. Long Island City is located just across Manhattan along the East River. It was once an industrial area, but about a decade ago developers decided its waterfront location and subway-accessibility made it ripe for gentrification. Today, it is home to a thriving art scene (the Museum of Modern Art even has an outpost), a trendy dining scene (including Michelin-starred Mexican restaurant Casa Enrique) and thousands of residential units (with plenty more in the pipeline). Essentially, it’s similar to NoVA’s new Amazon home in its appeal to the tech-savvy millennial set. **-KB**

Is Northern Virginia now Silicon East?

With one of the largest and most successful tech companies in the country putting down roots in NoVA, is it fair to say we're now a tech town? Stephanie Landrum, president and CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, says yes. In their pitch to Amazon, they positioned Northern Virginia as a “technology

stronghold” with more than 1,000 startups and five of the top 100 investors in startup technology and biotechnology companies making their home here. It doesn't hurt that *Forbes* named Washington, D.C., the country's “No. 1 new tech hot spot” in 2013. **-JR**



our resident workforce and solidifying our transportation system to handle increased demand,” acknowledges Terry Clower, director of the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University. “In reality, these are good problems to be facing, certainly better than declining demand for labor and loss of housing value.”

“The under-reported part of this story is how the success of attracting HQ2 will impact the region's overall ability to attract other firms,” Clower continues. “Nothing draws a crowd like a lot of people, and this is true in

economic development.”

While it remains to be seen what the ultimate impact will be on Northern Virginia and its residents, even most detractors may admit landing Amazon is the latest indicator of NoVA's magnetism, capping off what has almost undeniably been an impressive upswing decade for the area.

“It was a matter of time before the area achieves its potential,” Asadoorian says. “Amazon is the catalyst that will get people to understand and see this.”