

**Arlington County
Amazon Listening Session,
December 17, 2018**

SUMMARY NOTES

Background

On December 17, 2018, the Arlington County Board hosted a “listening session” on Amazon’s decision to locate a major new headquarters to Arlington over the next decade. The County Board felt it was important to provide a setting where they had the opportunity to listen to community opinions, concerns, and insights on the topic. This was part of an assortment of engagement vehicles, which the County has hosted or attended regarding Amazon’s announcement.

For more in-depth background information on Amazon coming to Arlington, please see the information available at www.arlingtonva.us/amazon, which includes [video presentations](#) from ongoing virtual learning series, a fact sheet (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)), which was also distributed to all listening session participants, and a [presentation](#) with some of the issues discussed tonight among many other details.

These notes reflect the first of those listening sessions (another will be held on January 12), which was attended by approximately 160-200 participants at Gunston Middle School.

Emerging themes throughout the evening included the following topics:

- Amazon Proposal and Incentives
- Growth, Development, and Density
- Transportation
- Housing
- Schools
- Other Infrastructure
- Business Practice, Jobs, and Workforce
- Outreach and Inclusion

Amazon Proposal and Incentives

- *National Landing*
 - Interest in having Amazon as a good neighbor.
 - Concerns about changing the name to National Landing.
 - **[NOTE:** *The communities are not being renamed. [National Landing](#) was a concept that Arlington Economic Development came up with for their pitch in order to describe the joint Arlington/Alexandria jurisdictions. It is*

purely for economic development and being able to market three different areas. There is no intention of changing the name. Crystal City will remain Crystal City and the same is true for Pentagon City].

- *Incentives*
 - Support for the County Board to be strong in their negotiation and to stand firm to ensure that the package aligns with our values.
 - Concerns about the incentives being offered by Arlington County.
[NOTE: The County has agreed to [cash incentives only if Amazon performs to set standards over a certain period of time](#). The [\\$23 million incentive](#) comes from the resulting increase in hotel occupancy. If Amazon doesn't come, the County doesn't get that new money. We are giving them a piece of that because we wouldn't get it if they weren't here].
- *Transparency*
 - Interest in seeing a Memorandum of Understanding between the State, County, and Amazon available online publicly along with any subsequent agreements between the County and Amazon.

Growth, Development and Density

- *Growth*
 - Concerns about the already steep population increases projected for the areas and making sure that enforcement and development are being done wisely.
 - Concerns about the increased population growth with only 26 square miles .
- *Zoning and Gentrification*
 - Concerns that gentrification is already a problem and only going to be getting worse.
 - Concerns about the increase in McMansions, Manhattanization, and any additional impacts Amazon might bring.
 - Concerns that Pentagon City (Amazon Campus location) is intended for residential space, not office space, which will have a potentially large impact on traffic and density.
- *Other*
 - Concerns about traffic and parking (SEE TRANSPORTATION).
 - Concerns about housing affordability (SEE HOUSING).

Transportation

- *Bicycle /Pedestrian Access and Safety*
 - Interest in prioritizing bike/pedestrian issues for access and safety to help mitigate traffic, emphasize health, and be environmentally friendly (need for sidewalks, connections, and infrastructure).

- Emphasis on pedestrian movement by feet across Crystal Dr.; recognizing that there used to be a crossover that was wonderful and safe, instead of the current battle with motorized scooters on sidewalks.
- *Traffic*
 - Interest in fully understanding the number of vehicle trips potentially generated by Amazon employees (both inside the County and between here and someplace else)
 - Concerns regarding Route 1 traffic.
 - Concerns regarding neighborhood streets going to Arlington Ridge Rd. already being at capacity potentially make it worse with more development.
 - Concerns about the capacity of existing roadways, surface transportation to accommodate the likely influx of additional vehicles, and the capacity of infrastructure in 22202 to handle traffic.
 - Interest in aligning transportation policy focused on transportation demand management, which was central to the Crystal City sector plan.
 - Concerns about the increasing traffic that comes from travelers in and out of National Airport.
 - Concerns about the actual number of people riding Metro, driving, using Ubers, and increasing density and traffic.
 - Nervous about the impact on working class and immigrant communities; especially those who drive to Arlington and D.C. for work. It already takes 2-2.5 hours to get to D.C. in traffic from Prince William County. A connection to gentrification is that it's adding commute hours for working class people trying to get to work.
 - Concerns that Amazon is going to be shipping a lot; creating a lot more vehicles in and around Arlington.
 - **[NOTE: Clarification: Amazon is not building a warehouse in Arlington, they will be creating an environment of office workers].**
- *Regional Bus and Rail*
 - Interest in the capacity of the Metro area, where a lot of new people will rely on Metro and spread out through the region.
 - **[NOTE: The area has gone through significant job loss this century with more still to come. This shows up in Metro ridership, which is currently off by 25% in Pentagon City, Crystal City, and Arlington wide. There are 50K weekday riders].**
 - Recognition that people are not choosing Metro, because they feel it's unreliable. They need to rely on the bus to reach their final destination. Trains break down and maintenance ignores it for years. Metro needs to improve or else people will continue to avoid it and drive. Out of towners take Ubers.
 - Question about the status of the streetcar with Amazon coming.
 - Interest in having Amazon invest more money on public transportation.
 - Question about how Columbia Pike will take advantage as a place to work, live, and shop. How do we directly tie Columbia Pike into the benefits of this proposal?

- *[NOTE: the 2018 [Adopted Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) includes Joyce Street improvements, enhanced bus facilities, and a bus route to the front door of the campus].*

- *Parking*

- Commitment needed to enforce parking restrictions.
- Enforcement needed for cut-through traffic.
- Concerns about County parking programs with special interest on impact to neighborhoods with zoned parking areas.
- Concerns about visitors and neighbors parking on the street when there is a lack of driveways.
- Concerns that a 2050 vision/study identified much new parking as underground, but being expensive or otherwise not desirable.
- Concerns that people are using parking stickers for zones but don't live where their cars are parked.
- Concerns about scarcity of parking spaces and people are asking for more enforcement.
- Needs for transportation to focus on the working class and communities of color.
- Concerns about what seems to be increased parking violations for migrant communities and communities of color.
- Concerns about targeting out of County plates, which needs to be part of all these conversations.
 - *[NOTE: Amazon will be providing transit benefits to employees. They will only be providing one parking space for every six employees. In Seattle, Amazon provides a full transit benefit and they are willing to do the same here].*

Housing

- *Taxes*

- Concerns that taxes increase when property values go up (special concerns for senior citizens, young people, or others who may be impacted).
- Support for the [Transient Occupancy Tax](#) (TOT) increases, and interest in exploring the option of extending that idea to benefit specific County ideals for progress (e.g., affordable housing).
- Concerns about property taxes going up.
- Interest in the County considering freezing assessments at the current level until the property is sold so those with fixed incomes can be able to continue to live in Arlington.

- *Housing Affordability* [**NOTE:** Jan. 16: [Virtual Learning Series on Housing](#)]
 - Need to define “affordability” and make it part of a community conversation.
 - Recognition that housing problems are a long-standing issue (not just with Amazon’s arrival). Interest in having Amazon create an opportunity to look at what we did wrong and the goals we developed in the past. It is different from 20 years ago; there is a much larger population.
 - Concerns that Amazon’s arrival could lead to increased housing costs for owners and renters (like what happened in Seattle).
 - Interest in a possible opportunity to extend the tax credit (60%) so it reaches more who are affected than just low-income individuals.
 - Interest in innovative designs that could be ready to go, construction under six months, and some of them do lend themselves to affordable housing.
 - Recognition that Amazon is not going to create our housing problem— it already exists; however, there is interest in ensuring the problem doesn’t get worse with Amazon. There is also interest in identifying remedies to negotiate an investment into AHIF during the land use process.
 - Support for redeveloping empty commercial space into affordable housing.
 - Interest in taking Amazon’s temporary space and making it into affordable housing.
 - Concerns about the increases in tearing down lower priced smaller homes for mega-mansions.
 - Concerns that much of the new affordable housing funds in Arlington are used to build new units, which take time. There is also an interest in shorter term options.
 - Seems that workers, even those with decent salaries, are getting pushed further and further into the outer suburbs; making it difficult to live where you work.
 - Interest in having Alexandria also address affordable housing issues.
 - Interest in working with Amazon to create a trust fund to cover the gap between moderate to low-income and low rent housing.

- *Homelessness*
 - Concerns about a potential rise in the homeless population if people can’t afford rent.

- *Alternative Housing Options*
 - Concerns that potential solutions and remedies (e.g., rezoning, multi-unit housing options, etc.) will take years, but the impact is going to happen now.
 - Interest in accessory dwelling policies that make it easier to allow seniors to rent rooms in houses and offer extra income.
 - [**NOTE:** [Accessory Dwelling \(AD\) ordinance](#) allows for this. It was adopted in 2008 and received a lot of feedback. It was amended recently and expanded. We are also looking to expand even more in 2019].

Schools

- *Capacity*
 - Concerns about overcrowding and the importance to have a plan to address capacity issues; especially with Amazon's arrival.
 - **[NOTE: 15-20% of employees will live here and 1 in 4-5 households will have kids, which is [only a small increase to schools each year](#). This is aligned with the school's growth plan].**
 - Recognition that with increased capacity, comes costs. What is the plan to fund the increased capacity in our system? Will it come from increase in County taxes?

- *Diversity*
 - Recognition that there is a need to ensure that minority students have access to good education and career exploration.

- *Career Readiness*
 - Interest in plans to address and prepare our children for math and science so that they have access to the jobs.
 - Recognition that Virginia Tech (VT) is getting a lot of money to increase student population. Have VT ensure more minority kids get into their schools. Sit down with them and do some new things to get people to have this education.
 - **[NOTE: Diversity is part of the tech pipeline. [Part of the state's investment - Council of Higher ed in VA](#) will be the guardian of how this money is used. It is a tech talent investment fund, available to all Virginia universities. It will lay out criteria for universities to apply for this funding that lays out all kinds of diversity, faculty, and recruitment guidelines. It is happening over the next 6 months. Diversity and inclusion has been a strong theme from the beginning of the whole Amazon process, so there are guidelines to help increase diversity in enrollment].**
 - Interest in connecting young people with Amazon (and other businesses) and having students interact with them early during their grade school years.
 - Recognition that people might want to change their job to increase their income, but may not have the money to go back to school.
 - Interest in offering opportunities to help people start changing their skill sets and offering funding so that they can make the change for jobs available now (i.e., it can take only months to learn how to 'code' as opposed to taking years for an advanced degree).

- *Oversight*
 - Interest in ensuring that there is good oversight for implementing plans for diversity and career pathways.

- *APS funding*
 - Interest in ensuring capital funding for improving schools and supporting good salaries for the APS workforce, given the importance of education in creating a pipeline for Amazon workforce.

Other Infrastructure

- *Energy and Environment*
 - Interest in solar energy use by Amazon and a commitment to 100% solar energy for all their operations in the area.
 - Interest in exploring Amazon's role in influencing our legislatures for a fair market situation with solar.
- *Hospital*
 - Concerns about not having a hospital with a Level 1 or Level 2 trauma center in South Arlington and the distance/time required to get to Virginia Hospital Center in North Arlington.
- *Miscellaneous*
 - Supportive of pro-corporation and pro-growth, but concerned about sightlines being blotted out.

Business Practice, Jobs and Workforce

- *Business Practice*
 - Concerns regarding Amazon's business practice and the agencies they work with through their various lines of business (e.g., U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), other federal agencies, sales of specific products, etc.).
 - Interest in ensuring that opportunities for entrepreneurship that promotes a social benefit for all— including minorities— are available.
 - Interest in ensuring fair competition that offers a fair playing field— here in Arlington and throughout the Country.
- *Transparency*
 - Interest in learning if Arlington has signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement.
 - Concerns of a lack of transparency and engagement about the cooperation between Amazon and federal partners (e.g., ICE).
- *Jobs, Hiring, and Workforce Practice*
 - Interest in plans to provide job opportunities for workers who don't have college degrees.

- Interest in ensuring a diverse workforce across Amazon’s organization (jobs at all levels) and mirroring the diversity of Arlington County residents.
 - Interest in ensuring that all workers make a fair and living wage (minimum of \$15/hour), regardless of their job.
 - Interest in ensuring that County and school employees (including contractors that build and operate buildings) are earning a living wage (minimum of \$15/hour).
 - Interest in Amazon and/or JBG plans to set local hiring policies; especially for construction, painters, and other workers.
 - Concerns regarding Amazon work environments for their workforce.
 - Concerns about Amazon’s treatment of workers.
 - Interest in Amazon’s plan to protect workers; especially in marginalized communities.
 - Concerns about Amazon’s retention efforts.
 - Interest in Amazon/JBG practices for using project labor agreements, offering good wages and benefits, and local hiring and apprenticeship programs.
- *Workforce Training*
 - Interest in Amazon’s plans to create a pipeline of opportunities that represents diversity.
 - Concerns about ensuring that there are people with the necessary “skills” and “knowledge” to fill the available jobs.
 - Interest in Amazon providing apprenticeship options that includes diverse youth.
 - *[NOTE: the [State’s investment](#) is a billion dollars into the tech talent pipeline across all phases of education including [K-12](#), community college, BAs, MAs and internships. We are estimating that this will increase the number of graduate degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and internships by 25K-30K more. The state is working with VT’s innovation campus on Cyber Security and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs].*

Diversity and Outreach

- *Inclusion*
 - Concern about the lack of information available about Amazon in Spanish (and other languages).
 - Concerns that there continues to be a digital divide and interest in the County providing options beyond online engagement sessions.
 - Concerns about how people who may be impacted the most are potentially excluded and left out of the engagement process.
 - Interest in being respectful of diversity and immigrant resident voices in our engagement.
 - Interest in ensuring the redevelopment permits are fully transparent and easy to find and understand. In terms of land distribution, make sure we are maintaining character-- keep that a priority.
- *Amazon Participation*
 - Concerns that Amazon has not yet participated in outreach efforts.

- Interest in having Amazon hear resident’s interests and concerns directly.
- Appreciation for the listening session and interest in opportunities for meeting with Amazon Executives to help them build community relationships.
- *Other*
 - Concerns about the disparity in the black population in our jails compared to our overall population in Arlington.
 - Concerns regarding WMATA’s policies regarding decriminalization of Metro fare evasion.

Closing Thoughts/Major Themes

At the close of the evening, the County Board noted major themes that they had heard during the session, including:

- *Explore creative ways to address transportation, equity, pedestrian safety, parking, Metro, increase in single occupancy vehicles, and housing needs.*
- *Think more extensively about the [Affordable Housing Master Plan \(AHMP\)](#) with goals and targets. There should be more opportunities for creative thinking and faster building of houses. Rents and Committed Affordable Housing need to change and we need to be vigilant as we renew our focus on homelessness.*
- *Start a jobs pipeline with elementary school to include equity and inclusion, dedicated outreach to communities of color, increased outreach, and use of revenues to benefit the current population. We also need to look at policy change for living wage and protected labor agreements.*
- *Create other types of sessions for people to learn and expand beyond digital methods. We will be exploring these opportunities over the coming weeks.*

Additional Engagement and Information

- *Additional information is available at www.arlingtonva.us/amazon, which includes [video presentations](#) from recent sessions; the fact sheet (handed out in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)); and a [presentation](#) with some of the issues discussed tonight.*
- ***Listening Session with County Board:*** *Another listening session with the County Board on Amazon will take place on Saturday, [January 12](#), 9:30 am – 12:30 at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (4301 Wilson Blvd.) and we encourage you and others to participate.*
- ***Virtual Learning Series on Housing:*** *There is also a virtual learning series on [housing scheduled for January 16](#), 6:30 pm that will air on the County’s cable channel, website, and Facebook page. You can also see previous virtual learning series on Amazon on the [County’s website](#).*
- ***Open Door Mondays and County Board Feedback:*** *Individuals can visit with County Board members on Monday evenings at [locations](#) across the County; and can also submit comments via email at countyboard@arlingtonva.us.*
- ***County Board Meeting:*** *As the first of many required steps, the County Board will vote only on [performance incentives](#) no earlier than the County Board’s Regular Meeting of Feb. 23. Subsequent land use decisions will be voted on by the County Board at future*

meetings only after the conclusion of established community review processes and meeting schedules (e.g., [Site Plan Review Committee](#)).

[Read additional insights into the conversation.](#)