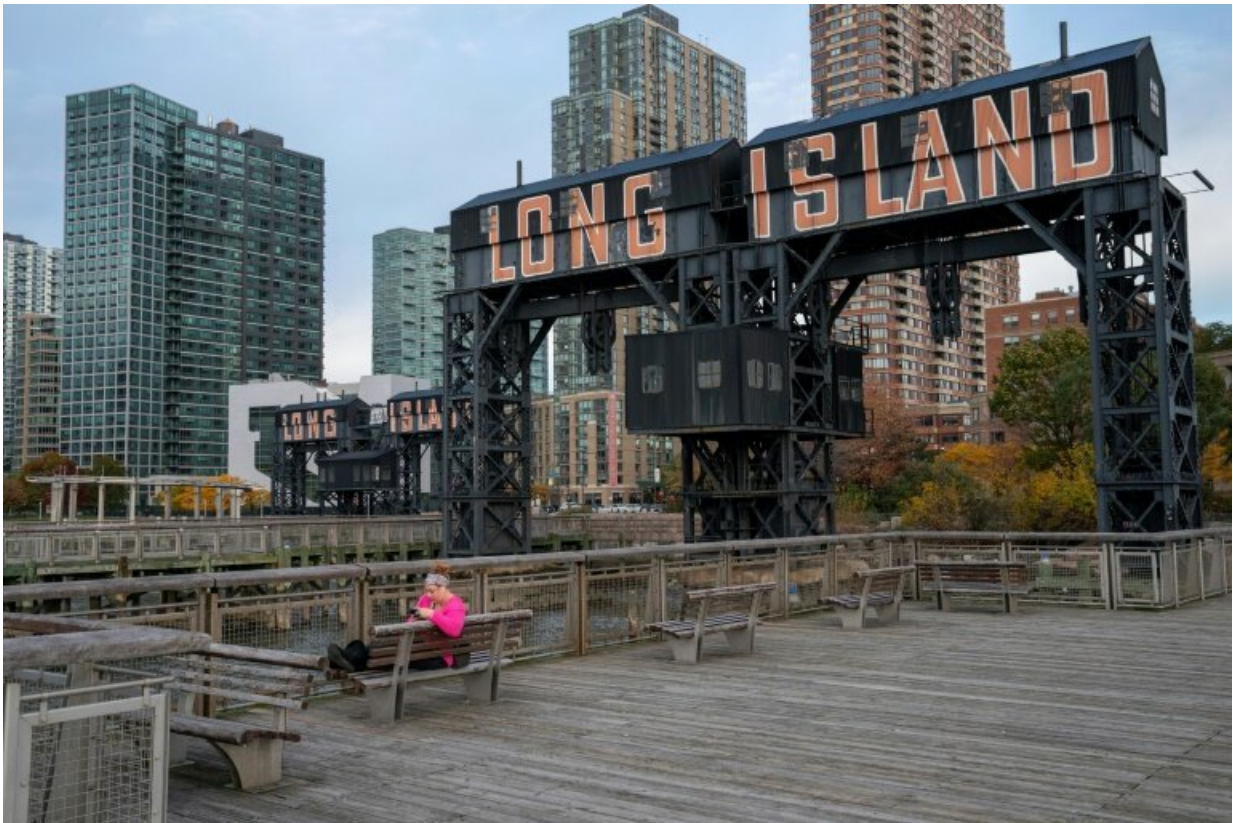


Amazon drops New York headquarters plan amid protests

February 14 2019, by Catherine Triomphe



The New York neighborhood of Long Island City had been one of two locations Amazon selected last year after a long search for a second headquarters or "HQ2"

Amazon abandoned plans for a new headquarters in New York City on

Thursday, blaming opposition from community leaders angry at the huge subsidies being offered to one of the world's most successful companies.

The New York neighborhood of Long Island City was one of two locations Amazon selected last year after a long search for a second headquarters or "HQ2."

The online retail giant had promised the sprawling complex in the borough of Queens would create 25,000 jobs in exchange for nearly \$3 billion in state and city incentives—which had riled some New Yorkers.

"While polls show that 70 percent of New Yorkers support our plans and investment, a number of state and local politicians have made it clear that they oppose our presence and will not work with us to build the type of relationships that are required to go forward with the project," Amazon said in a statement.

"We are disappointed to have reached this conclusion—we love New York, its incomparable dynamism, people, and culture—and particularly the community of Long Island City, where we have gotten to know so many optimistic, forward-leaning community leaders, small business owners, and residents."

Amazon, which is also in cloud computing, streaming media and artificial intelligence, chose the site after a lengthy search, saying it was outgrowing its home in Seattle, Washington.



Amazon dropped its plans for a new headquarters in New York City following a series of protests including this one on November 26

The company said it would "continue growing" its 5,000-strong workforce in New York.

No new bidding

It added that it would not reopen the bidding process but would "proceed as planned" with a site in northern Virginia and a logistics center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The New York plan had been endorsed by Mayor Bill De Blasio and

Governor Andrew Cuomo, but ran into fierce opposition from some local politicians and community activists, including newly elected Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose district borders the New York site.

"Anything is possible: today was the day a group of dedicated, everyday New Yorkers & their neighbors defeated Amazon's corporate greed, its worker exploitation, and the power of the richest man in the world," she tweeted.

De Blasio sounded bitter about the reversal of a deal clinched after months of negotiations.



Anti-Amazon graffiti is seen in a Long Island City neighborhood initially selected for a new headquarters for the technology giant

"We gave Amazon the opportunity to be a good neighbor and do business in the greatest city in the world. Instead of working with the community, Amazon threw away that opportunity," the mayor said in a statement.

"If Amazon can't recognize what that's worth, its competitors will."

Cuomo meanwhile lamented that "at a small group politicians put their own narrow political interests above their community" to pressure Amazon to withdraw.

He said the state Senate, which appointed an Amazon opponent to a key board, "has done tremendous damage" and "should be held accountable for this lost economic opportunity."

Conservative and liberal opponents have argued that the company led by Jeff Bezos, who tops the Forbes rich list with a personal wealth of \$134 billion, does not need what some describe as "corporate welfare."

Critics also voiced concerns that the promised jobs could inflate an already overpriced housing market and strain infrastructure.



The Long Island City neighborhood in the Queens borough of New York is across the East River from Manhattan

Initial reactions to Amazon's decision from the local community appeared mixed.

"I'm relieved because I'm a renter here," said one female resident of the Queens neighborhood who declined to give her name. "I'm not sure these jobs would have been what the people living in this community need."

Bitter pill

But others like David Katzen, who owns a construction company in the

neighborhood but does not live there, were disappointed.

"It was a horrible decision by the local legislators to oppose it," he told AFP. "It was short-sighted and ultimately what's going to happen here? Nothing. There's no good that came of this."

George Miranda, who leads the local branch of the blue-collar Teamsters union, said after the announcement: "New Yorkers made it clear that Amazon wasn't welcome in our city if it would not respect our workers and our communities. Apparently, the company decided that was too much to ask."

Scott Galloway, a New York University professor and author, said on Twitter after the announcement: "Immunities kick in and NYC finds its testicles. This is good for NYC, and America. Billionaires should not have their hand(s) out."

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