

## PROJECT SHEET: AMAZON'S LAST MILE DISTRIBUTION CENTER



### Site Overview:

Address: 27 51<sup>st</sup> Street, 110 10<sup>th</sup> Ward  
 Lot and Block: 119-R-60  
 Parcel Size: 14.1450 Acres  
 Zoning: Riverfront Industrial Mixed Use (RIV-IMU)

### Background:

**History:** The existing 321,000 SF warehouse has served as a Sears, Roebuck & Co warehouse and distribution center since its construction in 1949. Prior to that the site was home to Carnegie Steel's Lucy Furnace.

In 2019, there were plans for Spear Street Capital (the owner) to redevelop the warehouse into mixed office and retail, a rehab which would have required multiple zoning approvals and resulted in a community benefits agreement.

In December 2020, Amazon publicly announced that it would be renting the space instead and converting it into a last mile distribution center, leaving the previously agreed upon community benefits up in the air. This center is part of Amazon's new strategy to open up over a thousand small delivery hubs in cities and suburbs across the country to cut down on delivery times and compete with online retailers with a larger local presence such as Walmart and Target.

### Potential Zoning Actions:

Amazon has told the community that its site plan does not require any zoning approvals or traffic studies. Meanwhile, the city has told LC/LU that Amazon's current site plan would trigger a traffic study. Because of the additional, non-contiguous parking, this development could also trigger a special exception.

A change in use may also be required, from warehouse distribution to freight terminal.

**Current Status:** Amazon publicly presented their site plan at a June 2021 community meeting, promising to deliver on building out a riverfront trail but failing to adequately respond to other community concerns or commit to any other community benefits. They have not yet filed for any permits. They plan to begin operation in late 2021 or early 2022.

**Impacts and Concerns:**

**Community:** In a survey completed by 308 community members, 62.7 percent said that they did not support the opening of Amazon's facility at this location. The most repeated concern was regarding increased traffic, with many also citing the resulting impact on pedestrian and bicyclist safety, public infrastructure, air quality, and noise. There were also substantial concerns about the impact to small businesses, Amazon's employment practices, and the barrier the facility would create for those wishing to access the riverfront. Another commonly repeated concern was that Amazon, as a large, multi-national company with a well-known reputation, does not belong in the community. All of these concerns were reiterated in the June 2021 Community Meeting, which had 133 Zoom registrants and over 1,000 views on Facebook.

**Traffic:** Amazon anticipates between 75 to 150 cargo vans per day delivering within a 40-minute radius between 10 AM and 8 PM and 12 to 20 long haul trucks between 10 PM and 6 AM.

**Employment:** Amazon will hire 100 to 300 full-time employees, in addition to contracting 200 to 450 seasonal delivery drivers.

Amazon has a history of mistreating its workers. On top of below-average wages, the company is known for unpredictable work hours, breakneck pacing and pressure, workplace injuries, workplace surveillance, and a high turnover rate. In addition, an estimated 40 percent of their warehouse workers are temps, and Amazon is moving more towards on-demand jobs and automation. Amazon's delivery workers are also contracted, typically with regional couriers. Contracted and temp workers are often ineligible for benefits and face unstable, unpredictable working hours.

**Growth:** Since Amazon first presented its plans in December 2020, their proposed footprint has expanded substantially (see site plan), and their job, long-haul truck, and Amazon van numbers have doubled. When asked about the potential for further expansion at the site, Amazon says that they are unsure.

**Local Business:** Amazon's Distribution Centers typically result in an increase in warehousing and storage jobs in the short-term, but no new net jobs overall. There are few positive spillover effects for local businesses because there is little to no need to source local goods and services such as printing, accounting, and design. Increased traffic and congestion poses a further threat to local businesses, as does the potential for Amazon to expand its footprint and displace its neighbors.

## Relevant Plans:

### Spear Streets Capital Community Benefits (2019):

Prior to Amazon's announcement, Spear Streets Capital had plans to convert the site into a mixed retail and office space. Over a year of community planning and negotiations led to the following community benefits: tree plantings and other landscape improvements on and around the property; a bike and pedestrian trail along the riverfront; publicly accessible bike parking and a bike repair station; robust alternative transportation incentives for employees; prioritization of minority and women owned businesses for contracts; a new bus shelter at 51st and Butler; a new Healthy Ride station; and a commitment to cut energy use, water consumption, and transportation emissions in half by 2050.

### Green Boulevard (2013):

Create a multi-modal pathway along Allegheny Valley Railroad. Create a new riverfront open space system with access points to the river, habitat and ecological enhancements, new community open space amenities, riverbank stabilization, and stormwater technologies.

### Upper Lawrenceville Plan (2013):

"Riverfront and Industry" was rated as the highest community priority (pg. 16), specifically around avoiding adverse impacts, activating underutilized space, promoting connections to the riverfront, and hiring local residents. The plan also emphasizes riverfront access, recreation, and green infrastructure improvements. Specifically, the plan recommends green infrastructure and mobility improvements down McCandless Ave towards the riverfront, terminating in a new floating riverside park and bike trail connection.

### Allegheny Riverfront Vision (2010):

Increase public access to the riverfront and river and make better connections to other centers of resources to improve the Allegheny Riverfront Area as a desired civic resource. Recognize stormwater and vegetation as natural resources for a healthy ecology. Enhance the experience of the river's edge with new recreational, commercial, residential, and cultural uses recognizing the need for compatibility.