

Amazon Community Meeting #2
7/7/2021, 6-8 PM
Meeting Notes

60+ people in attendance by Zoom.

1. **Welcome and introductions** were made by Lauren Byrne Connelly of Lawrenceville Corporation and Dave Breingan of Lawrenceville United. Elected officials in attendance were recognized -- Rep. Sara Innamorato, Rep. Emily Kinkead, Councilwoman Deb Gross, and County Councilwoman Liv Bennett.
 - a. **Rep. Innamorato:** appreciate the work of LU and LC. Meetings like this are democracy in action. Represent 10th Ward of Lawrenceville but also impacted neighborhoods like Morningside and Bloomfield. As a resident of Upper Lawrenceville, having lots of convos with my neighbors. Have heard neighbors who remember the jobs available at Sears Outlet and want more jobs like that, so that's one item in the positive column. But as a legislator, also very aware of concerns about Amazon bringing in workers from out of state, labor practices, working conditions of people they employ, which are concerns for me. In addition to jobs, we have to consider what are the social costs? How else is this going to impact our quality of life with traffic, pollution, and other impacts? Looking forward to consensus we can reach as a community and to advocate for that position.
 - b. **Rep. Kinkead:** Echo what Rep. Innamorato said. We are here to make sure we're advocating for you -- that's our job. We're listening. I come from a legal background, and in a lot of ways our laws are really based on private property rights. Amazon has taken these rights to a place where they're trying to beat the community over the head with "it's already zoned, we don't need your permission or input" and that's not a way to start a community partnership and invest in the community. Amazon has a really bad track record of how they treat employees and communities they're a part of and following through on their commitments. Need to make sure there are ways to hold them accountable. Rep. Innamorato and I can be a 1-2 punch to represent Lawrenceville. Also represent a lot of adjacent neighborhoods that will be impacted from increased traffic and increased environmental costs -- I want to make sure we make the best investment in our communities and Amazon needs to understand we're not going to just roll over.
2. **Background & history** was provided by LU and LC.
 - a. LC provided overview of the Lawrenceville community process and how projects like this are taken before the community by LU and LC. Notes that LU and LC are not affiliated with the project, didn't recruit this developer or use, and have no authority to intervene in private transactions of property.
 - b. LU provided history of previous plans for this site and the community process that took place. "Dock 51" had originally been proposed by Northwood Development in November of 2018, who abandoned that project and sold to Spear Street Capital. Went through extensive community process with Spear Street in

2019-2020 around their plans for a tech/office flex space, including a long list of community benefits that were agreed upon and part of the approval that they received from the Zoning Board. LU and LC only learned of the lease to Amazon in December 2020 when the news broke local media, which departed significantly from what Spear Street had previously proposed and what their zoning approvals were for.

- c. Amazon's proposal, which was covered in the first community meeting in June, was reviewed: 100-300 FT jobs + 200-450 PT jobs are proposed, with 75-150 delivery vans that would run routes between 10 AM and 8 PM, 12-20 long-haul trucks that would deliver wares overnight between 10 PM and 6 AM, and 468 van & associate parking spaces under contemplation in their site plan they shared with the neighborhood. Noted that Amazon has committed to build out portion of the riverfront trail, but has made no other commitments to community benefits. The site plan that Amazon shared in June was presented to refresh people's memories.
- d. LU reviewed the extensive community benefits that had been negotiated as part of Spear Street Capital's previous plans, noting that Amazon has not committed to anything other than the riverfront trail.
- e. LC reviewed community plans like the Green Boulevard, Upper Lawrenceville Plan, and riverfront zoning, and how these plans apply to this particular site, noting how Amazon's plans run against goals of promoting access to the riverfront (especially along McCandless Ave)
- f. LC reviewed feedback received from the community to date from the survey. Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of survey respondents answered "no" when asked if they support Amazon's plans for the distribution facility at this site.

3. Community Discussion

- a. Ground rules were reviewed.
- b. LU and LC went through a summary of concerns that we've heard from the community so far, and our own research on these topics as it relates to Amazon. These topics included increased traffic (#1 concern), air and noise pollution, jobs and employment practices, displacement of and impact on local businesses, and general concerns about Amazon's corporate practices. At the end of each topic, community members were invited to share their own thoughts.
 - i. *Traffic comments*: requests that traffic study include impacts to Stanton Heights through Stanton Ave, and also be conducted in season and time of day done when people are actually active -- may want to conduct our own independent traffic impact study. Desire for community to be able to communicate with Amazon regarding routes and areas to avoid. Concerns about intersections at 51st/Stanton/Butler & McCandless/Butler and need for signal/infrastructure/safety improvements. Can we make them build/fund affordable housing? Concern about self-driving cars and safety risks of this and personal delivery devices (robots).
 - ii. *Air & noise pollution comments*: questions about Amazon's commitment to adding trees / landscaping to site (no commitments to date). Desire to

see LU and LC connecting with other communities impacted by Amazon. Can we route traffic directly to 28? Concerns that planting trees and other efforts wouldn't offset carbon emissions generated by Amazon. Concern that Lawrenceville community shouldn't have goal of trying to push this to other communities, especially lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color -- we need to be working in solidarity with other communities. Encouragement to also have dialogue around individual shopping choices and even business web hosting.

- iii. *Comments on jobs and employment practices:* Used to be a lot of trucking companies in Lawrenceville, but need to point out that overnight trucks are 53' long instead of what used to be 40', which makes a huge difference in terms of blocking traffic, causing accidents. Concerns about culture of work, high turnover rates, lack of unionization, how drivers are contracted out (which creates low accountability for enforcing things like speeding), moves toward automation. Concern that \$15/hr is not a family sustaining wage sufficient for increase in housing and other costs in Lawrenceville and Allegheny County. Comment that we need to push other Lawrenceville companies as well on providing livable wages. Concern about Amazon's refusal to hire locally, concerns about Amazon's practices in other cities. Comments that approach should be rooted in empowering workers.
- iv. *Councilwoman Gross:* Sorry to miss beginning of meeting, but have been in conversation with LU and LC since we found out about this, convening City around next steps. I continue to be concerned about this development and have heard directly from you and other constituents about Amazon moving in, the fact that it's Amazon, and the specific impacts of a freight terminal (which is what it is more than a warehouse). LU and LC are doing a great job around researching this and creating spaces to make demands for the community. Amazon is claiming they have a by-right project, meaning there's nothing community or Councilperson can do to get changes, but we're going to continue to find ways to get changes and insert community voice. My goal is to increase the power that community members have in relation to developments like this--whether it's Amazon or something else. As a City government, we've been unprepared for this level of development and will continue to try to increase people power.
- v. *Small business impact comments:* Will Amazon be receiving any public funds or tax abatements? What's the estimated tax revenue for this project? Comments that this is fundamentally about the community growing power to influence the future of the neighborhood.

4. Next Steps

- a. LU and LC shared that Amazon believes they have a by-right project (meaning that it will not trigger any zoning variances or special exceptions), but the community groups disagree and believe the project as proposed will require

zoning approvals and other approvals like a traffic study. It will ultimately be up to City departments like Zoning and Department of Mobility & Infrastructure to decide this once permits are applied for by Amazon.

- b. LU noted that residents had been asking what other communities had done that were seeing Amazon try to move in, and in response, shared examples of other community responses including, locally, Churchill Future (churchillfuture.com), nationally the Athena coalition (athenaforall.org) and Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ilsr.org/Amazon), as well as examples from Grand Island, NY and West Dallas, TX where community members had successfully organized to oppose Amazon or to create strong community benefit agreements like local hiring.
 - c. Residents repeatedly asked what they could do to get involved. LU offered opportunities to get involved by completing a [survey](#) and noted there would be future meetings where people can begin to assemble into working groups.
 - d. Contact LU at 412-802-7220 / info@LUnited.org or LC at 412-621-1616 x 101 or lauren@lawrencevillecorp.com
- 5. Meeting adjourned.** LU and LC emphasized this is only the start of the process and to stay tuned for future meetings.