



For Amazon's HQ2, Atlanta will be among top candidates, experts say

Plus, a poll: How do you honestly feel about Atlanta's chances of winning the corporate Olympics?

By Josh Green - Sep 18, 2017



"Here Bezos, Bezos, Bezos ..." SCAD Atlanta

It's being called the Olympics of corporate relocations, and those in the know think Atlanta has a good shot at winning.

E-commerce behemoth Amazon is courting offers from cities across North America before picking a site for its second headquarters. Dubbed HQ2, the project could eventually house up to 50,000 jobs—with average salaries today of \$100,000—making it an equal to Amazon's \$4-billion urban campus in Seattle, per an announcement earlier this month.

Observers far and wide are saying the ATL could suit Amazon's needs as well as any city, all things considered. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and others report the State of Georgia could dangle a \$1-billion carrot of incentives before Jeff Bezos' nose, despite warnings from Seattle observers that actually landing HQ2 would detonate a "prosperity bomb" of rising rents and other ill effects.

Then again, hooking the whopper that is Amazon could reshape intown Atlanta.

CNN Money likes Atlanta's chances, shortlisting the city among eight good fits for Amazon and noting: "Atlanta has the advantage of being a major air travel hub that's within a two-hour flight from 80 percent of the U.S. population."

An analysis by Brookings is also optimistic—although realistic. "Atlanta is intriguing: its sprawling physical development may be disqualifying," writes Brookings' Joseph Parilla, "but the city provides a combination of a deep white-collar labor pool, supply chain technology capabilities, Georgia Tech, and a relatively low cost of living."

Bloomberg slotted the Big Peach among this shortlist of six: Toronto, Boston, Washington, Atlanta, Dallas, and Denver.

And more recently, Bisnow picked the brain of John Boyd, principal of The Boyd Company—an international leader in corporate site selection, based in New Jersey—who said Atlanta will likely be "among Amazon's top five considerations."

Sure, Atlanta is burdened with the sticking point that is traffic congestion, but Boyd pointed out a positive not many others have mentioned yet. Writes Bisnow:

"A big lure for corporations to Atlanta and Georgia are both government's solid credit ratings and its balance of liabilities with pension programs. Boyd said companies are looking more critically at factors like a city's credit rating and property taxes when evaluating potential headquarter or major corporate presence locations. Georgia has a AAA credit rating among the three big ratings agencies and Atlanta's credit rating had been upgraded last year to one of the highest."

Cities have until Oct. 19 to submit proposals to Amazon, which will reportedly pick the winner next year.

Poll

Honestly, how do you like Atlanta's chances of landing Amazon's HQ2?

- It's a long shot, but we've got a lot to offer, so I'm hopeful.
- We've got this. Seriously.
- Too many other qualified cities. Doubtful.
- It's not gonna happen, y'all.
- Cost of living is getting ridiculous—last thing we need is 50,000 high-paying salaries.
- I don't know, but this would be the best thing ever for A