

Former ConAgra site in Garner eyed for 'Project Axis,' developer linked to Amazon

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Amazon's Vice President of North American Operations leads a tour of an Amazon fulfillment center in Schertz, Texas.

A developer linked to Seattle e-retailer Amazon is finalizing plans with the town of Garner for “Project Axis,” a planned warehouse distribution facility at the old ConAgra site.

Officials have not identified the tenant, and are quick to point out that Dallas-based Hillwood has also developed projects for several other companies, from FedEx to PepsiCo.

information.”

“At this point anything is based on pure speculation,” says Joe Stallings, economic development director of the town of Garner. “All I can tell you is what’s public

Regardless of which company is bringing a warehouse distribution center to the town, it likely means jobs, he says, pointing to the firm's disclosed plans, which call for 1,800 parking spaces.

Town documents make no specific references to a job number.

Last month, an Atlanta-based developer bought more than 94 acres at Triad Business Park. A number of factors suggest the site will be an Amazon fulfillment center, including that site plans submitted to the town of Kernersville show signage bearing the Amazon name and logo.

In Garner, the site plan calls for the development of about 88 acres of the 97.9-acre tract, with a four-story concrete building that takes up about 680,000 square-feet. The total area – at 2.6 million square feet – will house office space and a warehouse with loading docks, according to what was filed with the town and approved by Garner’s planning commission at its own meeting June 18.

John Boyd, a location consultant with the Boyd Group who has no direct knowledge of the project, says the benefits of a facility like this typically outweigh the old “NIMBY (not in my backyard) mentality” regions used to have toward fulfillment centers over traffic concerns.

“The modern day fulfillment center employs not only forklift operators, but also IT workers trained in inventory software and other tech workers,” he says. “The enormous property and sales tax revenue generated by these massive fulfillment centers make them even more desirable to cash-strapped municipalities.”

Hillwood is already contracting with a local company: Withers & Ravenel. Jason Bertoncino, vice president of land development at the Cary engineering firm, says it's his company's first project with Hillwood.

“We’re doing the site work, grading, drainage, utilities, landscaping and shepherding it through the approval process,” he says.

Bertoncino declined to identify the tenant, citing a nondisclosure agreement. But he says the project is a few utility permits shy of moving forward, and refers additional questions to Hillwood.

Hillwood has not returned a request to comment. The developer has worked with Amazon to develop warehouse developments before, including a recent project in Texas.

An Amazon spokeswoman declined to comment in an email, writing that, “Amazon has a longstanding practice of not commenting on rumors or speculation.” Amazon is building a 1,500-job regional warehouse in Charlotte.



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