

BISNOW

(ALMOST) NEVER BORING

Papa John's Delivering Its HQ To Atlanta

September 17, 2020 - Jarred Schenke, Bisnow Atlanta

One of the country's largest pizza chains is moving its global headquarters to Atlanta, more proof metro area's standing as a draw for corporate relocations and as a hub for corporate offices of fast-food chains.



Scooters parked in front of a Papa John's restaurant in Hoofddorp, Netherlands. The eatery has made an international push in recent years. Wikipedia/JordySchaap

Papa John's announced Thursday that it plans to move from its longtime headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, to Metro Atlanta, including its executive offices, marketing, customer experience, human resources, communication and marketing functions. In all, Papa John's officials said it would move or add 200 new jobs to the Atlanta metro area. The company will continue to house IT and logistics at its Louisville offices, company officials said.

“Papa John’s already has a major corporate presence in Georgia and metro Atlanta, and we know the many strengths of the region,” Papa John’s CEO Robert Lynch said in a release. “Our ability to tap into the diversity and talent of the Metro Atlanta area will help us accelerate that [corporate] growth.”

The pizza chain, which announced the move with Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp Thursday, declined to name a location for its future headquarters, stating in a release that it “is currently in discussions with a number of potential office locations throughout the Metro Atlanta area and expects to complete the selection process by the end of 2020.”

In economic development circles, the Papa John’s requirement is known as Project Frontier, numerous sources familiar with its search said. Papa John’s is focused in particular in the Cumberland/Galleria area in Cobb County, those sources said, while another source familiar with the search confirmed that the company is eyeing space at The Battery, the mixed-use project surrounding the Atlanta Braves’ Truist Park.

It was unclear as of press time how many square feet Papa John’s is seeking.

The Boyd Co. principal John Boyd, a corporate site selection consultant, said Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is a major attraction for a company like Papa John’s, especially as the company continues its international expansion efforts.

“Atlanta has a unique connection to the global marketplace,” Boyd said.

Papa John’s is the fourth-largest pizza chain in the country behind Little Ceasar’s, Pizza Hut and Domino’s, with more than 5,300 stores and more than \$3.5B in sales in 2019, according to Pizza Today.

While most restaurant businesses have been crippled by the coronavirus pandemic, it has been a boon for Papa John’s business. In May, the company reported that same-store sales rose 33.5% in the U.S. and 7% globally. It also has focused on international franchise expansion over recent years, having opened its 2,000th international restaurant in Moscow last year.

Papa John’s already has a direct connection to Metro Atlanta with its CEO, who is from Atlanta, and formerly was head of marketing for Arby’s, owned by Inspire Brands.

The area also is home to a number of fast-food and restaurant headquarters, including Chick-fil-A, Ted’s Montana Grill, Zaxby’s, Krystal, Moe’s Southwest Grill and Waffle House.

“Metro Atlanta’s deep talent pool and its world-class airport connecting us to the domestic and international markets that are key to our brand’s future will accelerate our long-term growth,” Lynch said in a release.