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## Potential Austin Amazon HQ could spark Hays County growth



*There were 238 cities across the nation looking to house Amazon, including Kyle. The shortlist not only gives the company a better look at the economic development and financial benefits of a smaller list, but also shows the serious prospects of the finalists, including Austin and its surrounding areas.*

BY EXSAR ARGUELLO | ?On January 31, 2018 ? | Originally Published by ?**Hays Free press**

Amazon may find its new home in Austin, but there is still a possibility that the new headquarters could be located in Hays County.

The tech company is looking at a new city for its second headquarters and Austin has made the short list with 19 other cities across the country.

Amazon?s HQ2, regardless of its location in or around Austin, would bring around 50,000 high paying jobs to Travis County and its surrounding areas. For Hays County, that could entail not only job growth, but a whole new workforce moving into Central Texas.

In June 2017, Amazon purchased Whole Foods for more than \$13 billion, an endeavor that leads the company into a larger entity that provides a growing service to its customers. Whole Foods? headquarters is located in Austin, leaving speculation that Amazon?s eyes could be on Central Texas.

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*Diana Blank-Torres, Kyle Economic Director*

Before the shortlist was released, there were 238 cities across the nation looking to house Amazon. The shortlist not only gives the company a better look at the economic development and financial benefits of a smaller list, but also shows the serious prospects of the finalists, including Austin and its surrounding areas.

Kyle, along with the Greater San Marcos Partnership (GSMP), put together information about their communities with regional partners and the Austin Chamber of Commerce in late 2017, per Amazon?s HQ2 request for proposals (RFP), said Diana Blank-Torres, director of economic development for the city of Kyle.

?The innovative corridor, of which Kyle is part, is poised for significant primary-sector job growth in the future,? Blank-Torres said. ?This potential is due to our location between two major cities, a talented and young labor pool of 1.6 million within a 45-mile radius, and the education and training institutions like Texas State University, Austin Community College, The University of Texas and Gary Job Corps.?

Amazon is no stranger to the Central Texas area. In 2016, Amazon opened its fifth fulfillment center in Texas in San Marcos, which currently employs a workforce of over 1,000.

?Our city also boasts strong population and economic growth coupled with an enviable and affordable quality of life,? Blank-Torres said. ?This is certainly a dynamic corridor for the future and Team Kyle is looking forward to the

next steps.?

Dex Ellison, District 1 Kyle City Council member, said the potential move for Amazon and surrounding areas could bring benefits and deterrents. Bringing 50,000 jobs to a community will leave cities responsible to handle infrastructure growth and housing needs.

“With this potential move, we will see an increase in property values and population in the city,” Ellison said. “This is all hypothetical, but we need to think about infrastructure improvements to our roads and potential mass transit needs. This is such a massive move with clear economic benefits and it’s going to take a lot of great city leadership to ensure our city can sustain this growth.”

According to data compiled by MWPVL Amazon has over 300 warehouses and shipping centers across the country. The company also has technology centers focused on research in robotics, video game development and artificial intelligence across the country.

Austin, considered the new Silicon Valley, has tech companies in the city limits that employ 11 percent of the workforce. Every year the city’s technology presence grows, giving Austin a serious opportunity to win the shortlist.

According to a report by Forbes, Texas’ estimated \$19.1 billion business incentives leaves Austin as a top contender with the likes of Dell, Apple, IBM, Google and Facebook with a growing workforce in the city.

“It’s a diverse and dynamic city for new companies. We also have great educational institutions here in this area,” Ellison said. “It seems like a perfect fit with all the new tech startups and schools, but if this happens, we need serious planning from all the cities in the surrounding area on how we can make this work effectively.”