

Amazon debuts its headquarters complex in Virginia as it brings workers back to office

June 16 2023, by Matthew Barakat



The two buildings comprising Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, are seen after a grand opening ceremony, in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023, Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

Amazon unveiled the first phase of its new headquarters complex in

Virginia Thursday, a pair of gleaming, amenity-packed office towers that its leaders hope will persuade employees accustomed to working from home during the pandemic to happily return to the office.

The grand opening of the Met Park office complex in Arlington's Crystal City neighborhood near the nation's capital marks the biggest milestone in the headquarters project since the [company](#) announced in 2018 that it would build a second headquarters complex in northern Virginia to complement its existing headquarters in Seattle.

Initially, plans for the "HQ2" project called for Amazon to bring 25,000 jobs each to both northern Virginia and New York City. But opposition to the incentive package in New York helped derail those plans, and the Arlington complex became the sole site for HQ2.

At Thursday's ribbon-cutting ceremonies, Amazon emphasized its efforts to ingratiate itself to the region. The company committed hundreds of millions of dollars to help preserve affordable housing in the region, and the project includes a 2.5-acre (1.01-hectare) park, fenced dog run and playground. Amazon even replicated its well-known banana stand from its Seattle headquarters, offering free fruit to workers and visitors.

Generally speaking, local leaders have welcomed Amazon and [the high-paying jobs it has brought](#). Arlington County Board Chair Christian Dorsey praised the company's willingness to partner with the county, particularly on [affordable housing](#).



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, center, with Holly Sullivan, Vice President of Economic Development at Amazon, center right, cut the ribbon during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023. From right, Christian Dorsey, Chair of the Arlington County Board of Directors, Lieutenant Gov. of Virginia Winsome Earle-Sears, John Schoettler, Vice President of Global Real Estate and Facilities at Amazon, Holly Sullivan, Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Brian Huseman, Vice President of Public Policy and Community Engagement at Amazon, and Youngkin's wife Suzanne Youngkin. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

"We looked to Amazon to learn about our community's values and embrace them as their own. I want to commend Amazon's leadership for doing exactly that," he said.

Still, the changes have not been without some aggravation. Some community activists have complained about rising rent and gentrification. During construction, piledriving occurred in the first half of 2020, during the worst of the pandemic. Neighbors stuck in their homes pleaded for relief from the noise, to no avail.

Amazon also designed its headquarters to appeal to its employees. The project launched before the pandemic disrupted office culture. Earlier this year, Amazon announced it is pausing the second phase of the HQ2 project, though state and county leaders remain confident that the delay is only temporary.

In February, Amazon said it will [require all its workers to return to the office](#) at least three days a week, prompting 30,000 workers to sign a petition asking the company to reconsider.



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin speaks during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, center, with his wife Suzanne Youngkin, tour Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, after a grand opening ceremony in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, center left, with Holly Sullivan, Vice President of Economic Development at Amazon, center right, cut the ribbon during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023. From right, Christian Dorsey, Chair of the Arlington County Board of Directors, Lieutenant Gov. of Virginia Winsome Earle-Sears, John Schoettler, Vice President of Global Real Estate and Facilities at Amazon, Holly Sullivan, Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Brian Huseman, Vice President of Public Policy and Community Engagement at Amazon, and Youngkin's wife Suzanne Youngkin. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin



John Schoettler, Vice President of Global Real Estate and Facilities at Amazon, speaks during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, in Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin



Holly Sullivan, Vice President of Economic Development at Amazon, speaks during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023, Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin



Brian Huseman, Vice President of Public Policy and Community Engagement at Amazon, speaks during a grand opening ceremony at Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, Arlington, Va., Thursday, June 15, 2023, Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

In a tour of the complex Thursday, John Schoettler, Amazon's vice president of global real estate, said the company tweaked the designs to incorporate changes designed to accommodate a post-pandemic workforce. The towers feature dedicated suites to accommodate group projects and open spaces dubbed "centers of energy" designed to facilitate collaboration.

"This was designed pre-pandemic, but we were constantly gathering information from our employees" to accommodate their needs,"

Schoettler said.

The finished product includes rooftop gardens, pool and foosball tables, outdoor electric grills—Amazon says the building uses no fossil fuels—high-quality dining options and a "dog wall" that shows photos of workers' pets.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, himself a former corporate chieftain, seemed genuinely impressed by the complex as he toured it.

"I don't want to cause any intracompany tensions," he said, "but I wonder if this should be renamed HQ1."

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Citation: Amazon debuts its headquarters complex in Virginia as it brings workers back to office (2023, June 16) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-06-amazon-debuts-headquarters-complex-virginia.html>

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