

The potential of the creative economy and the future catalytic effect of Amazon HQ2 in Arlington County

El potencial de la economía creativa y el efecto catalizador futuro de Amazon HQ2 en el condado de Arlington

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Abstract: The supply and demand of vibrant places are often considered a luxurious goal for cities rather than an essential engine for business and talent attraction. With the ongoing development of Amazon HQ in Arlington and the potential jobs that will originate, the city must be prepared to fulfill the expectations of residents, workers, and investors. Through a qualitative analysis and interviews with relevant practitioners, this paper studies the potential gap between the current creative ecosystem by discussing the supply of cultural goods and services, Arlington's proposal, and the benefits and risks of achieving the targets, based on lessons from Seattle. To maximize what is expected, it will be imperative to foster a coordinated and creative environment while celebrating the unique essence of Arlington's communities and the potential risks these changes may bring.

Keywords: creative economy, placemaking, Amazon, cultural districts, urban regeneration.

Resumen: La oferta y la demanda de lugares dinámicos se consideran a menudo un objetivo de ostentación para las ciudades, y no un motor esencial para los negocios y la atracción de talento. Ante la próxima llegada de la sede de Amazon en Arlington y los posibles puestos de trabajo que se generarán, la ciudad debe prepararse para cumplir las expectativas de los residentes, los trabajadores y los inversores. Este artículo estudia, mediante un análisis cualitativo y entrevistas a profesionales relevantes, la brecha potencial entre el ecosistema creativo actual (analizando la oferta de bienes y servicios culturales), la

propuesta de Arlington y los riesgos y beneficios de lograr los objetivos, teniendo en cuenta lo aprendido en Seattle. Para maximizar las expectativas, será necesario fomentar de coordinadamente el ambiente creativo a la vez que tener en cuenta la especificidad de las diferentes comunidades de Arlington y aquellos riesgos potenciales que estos cambios podrían acarrear.

Palabras clave: economía creativa, *placemaking*, Amazon, distritos culturales, regeneración urbana.

In November of 2018, Amazon, the world's largest logistics company, announced the opening of its new headquarters (AHQ2) in Arlington County, Virginia, part of the metropolitan area of Washington DC (DC). It expects to bring 25,000 potential jobs to the area and have an estimated direct impact of \$2.5 billion, only in Arlington. This is a rare experiment linked to a transmutation of the metropolitan area, given the uniqueness of a massive relocation of highly skilled and paid jobs, with the hopes of associated economic and urban transformations. It also brings expectations from the investor, Amazon, in terms of image and spatial attractiveness –place– that real estate developer JBG Smith (JBG), the Commonwealth of Virginia, the metro area, and related organizations must meet. Construction on Amazon's HQ2 is currently underway, with Phase 1 (Met Park) and their associated 8,000 jobs generated, expected to be completed in 2023 (Arlington County, 2023).

Most of the discussion forums and outreach sessions before the decision of Amazon have focused its attention on the promises of tax breaks (Schweitzer, 2018), impacts on real estate, improvements to the transportation system, the advent of an educational campus from Virginia Tech University (VTU) –next to Reagan Airport–, and on the changes in zoning and densification. However, very little has been said about Arlington County's ability to meet the demand for a creative ecosystem in terms of culture and talent, and its spillover effects in workers and new businesses, in terms of land use, access to housing and urban segregation.

Arlington artistic and cultural producers' competitive position in domestic markets is strong, but also its grassroots creative community (artists, designers, high-end chefs, etc.). The foundation of this creative community is solid, and should be enhanced, offering an ecosystem in which it develops further but paying attention to those forces that could backfire: high land prices end up displacing these communities, which would result in the loss of character and social fabric that makes Arlington a county where creativity can coexist with a vibrant and healthy economy, contributing to the wellbeing of its citizens.

1. CREATIVE ECONOMY: PLANNING VITAL AND VIABLE CITIES

Ensuring cities' vitality does not depend only on the supply of public space but also on commercial strength, attractiveness, and creative ecosystem. Building a vibrant urban ecosystem allow cities to achieve endogenous economic development (Porter, 1990; Sassen, 1991; Fujita, Krugman & Venables, 2002). Furthermore, to

attract talent (Florida, 2002a), it is important to guarantee basic tangible and intangible needs such as livable spaces, cultural identity, innovation, sustainability, and artistic vitality (Howkins, 2001; Pratt, 2005; Throsby, 2008), elements of a creative environment.

In the last decade the academic discussion around creative economy has gradually added two elements to traditional cultural and arts management: the use of technology, which ultimately combines the intensive use of copyrighted patents, industrial applications based on software and design, and artificial intelligence; and transversal cultural activities originated from human experiences, such as tourism, gastronomy and sports. These endeavors favor collaboration, interaction, community participation, sense of belonging and identity related to oral and intangible cultural heritage, beside the fact that it generates economic value. The second element, more present in the United States (US), is the incidence of cultural elements in the physical environment and multidisciplinary placemaking (Strydom et al., 2018), led by private and public local agents. Moreover, the incidence of preservation of cultural heritage in urban settings and its relationship with the real estate market, has improved the sustainability of protected assets and monuments.

By expanding flexibility to local urban planning legislation and transferring use rights of assets to the private sector, historic preservation interventions are no longer limited to restoring a building but are aimed to guarantee its preservation by generating a use with economic and symbolic value. An example is the bailment agreement of the historic building of the Carnegie Library in DC by Apple Inc., who restored the property, guaranteeing its preservation during a 10-year lease that includes the use and maintenance of the site taking advantage of the land value and capital gains generated on a central space vacant for years. The investments exceeded \$30 million in structural, access, landscaping and facade restorations (O'Connell, 2019).

Density and flexibility in local zoning regulations play an important role in granting building licenses for those mixed-use developments (Rabianski et al., 2009), a growing practice in the US. The conversion of traditional segregated industrial uses also helps to identify suitable areas to promote cultural and art districts that benefit from tax exemptions, as has already been done in several states within the US (NASAA, 2020). Evidence shows that cultural districts and agglomeration facilitate and attract businesses, revitalize neighborhoods, maximize branding and marketing efforts, and help plan for zoning ordinances and tax incentives. Chapain & Sagot-Duvaurox (2018), Becattini (2002), Lazzaretto (2003) and Nowak (2007) have compiled extensive evidence over the years on innovation districts worldwide and the US. The examples of Landry (2007, 2012, 2013) in policy design through his Creative Cities Index (Perth and Bilbao), helped sharing best practices with similar methodologies across different regions.

But beyond the possibilities offered by the creative economy in urban infrastructure, there is ample literature related to the concentration of talent and job opportunities (Florida, 2002b). The DC metropolitan area has a significant

number of highly qualified workers, linked to professional - several cybersecurity related, legal and financial services, and in the following years, an increase in the technology sector is expected. The cultural and creative supply has also demonstrated its contribution as an anchor for tourism, not only because of its cultural and unique attributes, but also because of the intensity of its interactions (Wickens, 2017). Finally, more open and cosmopolitan cities tend to show themselves more in global forums and take advantage of their international recognition and brand value (Mori, 2022), not only in purely artistic events, but also in entertainment, sports and business congresses, with their consequent spillover effects through income taxes and investments in infrastructure (Americans for the Arts, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGY

Based on a comparative with Seattle, a city where Amazon has already left its mark, a feasibility analysis of public policy tools that Arlington could use was made to leverage the substantial benefits to residents and existing businesses associated with the county's existing creative economy workforce, while mitigating exclusion and segregation risks. In addition, a three-step gap analysis has been made between the actual supply of creative goods and services and what was proposed to Amazon by JBG and Arlington's consortium:

- 1) Analysis of the creative ecosystem in Arlington including the supply of cultural goods and services, private and public sectors, non-profit organizations, and business associations, based on 14 semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and decision makers¹.
- 2) Characterization of this creative industry and the influence of Amazon in Seattle, in terms of job creation, income generation and land implications, with attention to the videogames and interactive media industry.
- 3) Gap analysis between the existing endowment of cultural and creative capital and what the proposal offered.

3. URBAN PLANNING AND CREATIVE ECONOMY IN ARLINGTON

The average Arlingtonian almost doubles the income of a US peer and is higher than a DC citizen. White-collar workers flourish, mainly in professional, scientific and technical services (25.7%). The unemployment rate in Arlington is 2% and human capital stock high, given that 70.1% have at least a bachelor's degree. The county's 226,000 population are spread over 26 square miles and

¹ Interviews between April 2020 and 2022 include: Arlington County Board Chair; MICA President; AED Creative Economy Director and Senior Business Development Manager; Arlington Planning Supervisor for Urban Design & Research; National Landing CEO, Baltimore Jubilee CEO; Former Downtown DC BID CEO; Former JBG Smith Vice President; Former Member of the Arlington Public Schools Board; and Michelin Star Restaurant CEO.

have been growing steadily over this decade at 11% yearly, compared to 152,599 in 1980 and 301,000 expected for 2040 (Arlington County, 2021a). Arlington also registers acceptable figures in terms of diversity: 23,2% of neighbors were born outside the U.S. - twice the US average, with residents of 146 nationalities speaking 107 languages.

Arlington is also known for its connectivity and access to transportation in terms of roads, airports, bus services and subway stations, a service that covers a large part of the most disadvantaged populations. Several authors have empirically demonstrated the relationship between walkable cities, economic activity, creative entrepreneurship and higher productivity (Comunian, 2010; Zandiatashbar, 2019). There have been efforts in Arlington to increase walkability and mixed-use development to encourage densification and commercial development, such as the Columbia Pike corridor (HR&A, 2019), adopting flexible zoning models like Form Based Code.

This area is one of three economic corridors along with Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis, these two considered transit-oriented developments, where the county has identified its priority areas of commercial influence for offices, commercial space, residential units and lodging.

Intensive bike lane and trail use campaigns in Arlington (ArlNow.com, 2012) and analysis of neighborhoods in the DC metropolitan area (including Arlington) using walkability measures, give a glimpse of what could happen in *National Landing* in the coming years as the county becomes increasingly dense. Walkable sites tend to have higher economic returns, as higher numbers of occupants tend to drive up commercial and even residential real estate prices. Leinberger and Alfonzo (2012) find that places ranked higher for walkability also have residents with higher levels of education and income in the DC metro area. However, in the last decade, the densest and most walkable places have also become more intensely gentrified (Orfield, 2019). Walkability also shows positive effects in health issues in Arlington, a city ranked second among counties in Virginia (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2020). Crystal City, the central neighborhood of the *National Landing*, performs positively in terms of obesity rate (16.7%, compared to the 28.9% of the county) and 99% of residents in Arlington have access to parks and recreational facilities within a 15-minute walk (compared to Virginia's 82%).

3.1. Supply of cultural goods and services and demand for livable spaces

Arlington's competitive advantage of arts and culture producers in domestic and international markets is strong, not only because of local demand but also because of the supply and consumption of DC's cultural and creative goods and services - reinforced with the growth of the digital sector after the Covid-19 (Huseman, 2020). As of 2017, the creative and cultural industries in Arlington accounted for 5.1% of the total number of businesses and 3% of employees, compared to 4% of all American businesses and 2% of its workforce. Moreover, Arlington is in the first

percentile in the US in terms of jobs related to artistic expressions per 1,000 residents, and ranks 30th nationwide, among more than 3,000 districts, above counties like Miami-Dade and Seattle-King.

Arlington's main touristic attraction is its National Cemetery, with more than 3 million annual visitors², in addition to festivals, conventions, entertainment, and cultural activities. Arlington's competitive advantage is the lower daily average hotel price of \$159, compared to DC's \$216 in 2015 (Arlington County, 2018). The growth number of tourists is steady, and the demand for Arlington, in terms of services, high, but it is strongly associated with the DC brand, and concentrated in the neighborhoods of Crystal City and Pentagon City.

With the progressive increase in demand and housing costs, tensions have begun to rise in vulnerable communities, including ethnic minorities and other diversities, and may also result in a threat to the creative sector. In 2018, almost 11,000 people benefited from affordable housing programs and rent subsidy. Amazon is expected to transfer from 2021 about \$381.9 million in loans and below-market grants to preserve and create about 1,300 affordable homes (Amazon, 2021). In recent years the county has held discussions to allocate subsidized affordable housing units for artists with Artspace, a nonprofit developer that creates, fosters, and preserves affordable spaces for artists to live and work in their units. Artspace prepared in 2017 a pre-feasibility study to create affordable housing opportunities for local artists and a survey to design, finance and build affordable, mixed-use spaces for artists and creatives (Artspace, 2017, 2018), which by 2022 has not materialized.

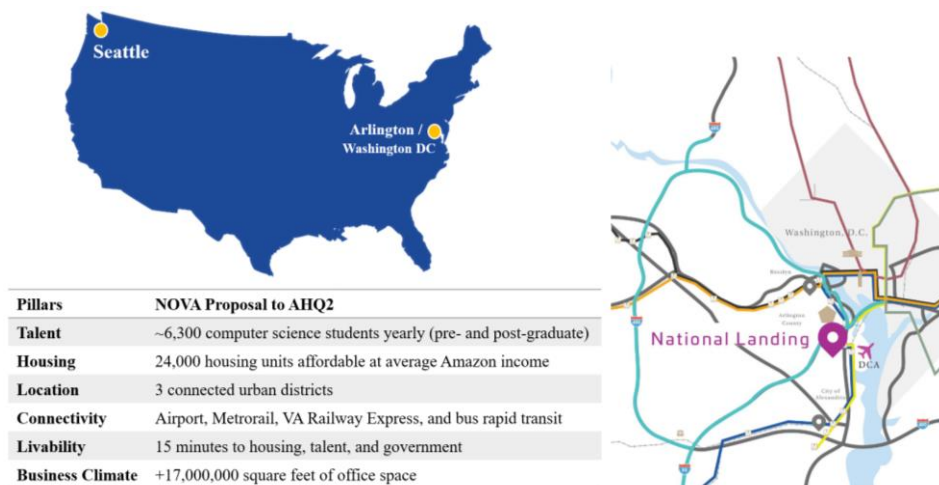


Figure 1: Location and NOVA AHQ2 proposal pillars. 2018. Source: Northern Virginia Proposal. Available at: <http://hqnova.com/info.html> (Accessed: February 20, 2022).

² Arlington National Cemetery. Available at: <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Visitor-Etiquette> (Accessed: May 8, 2022).

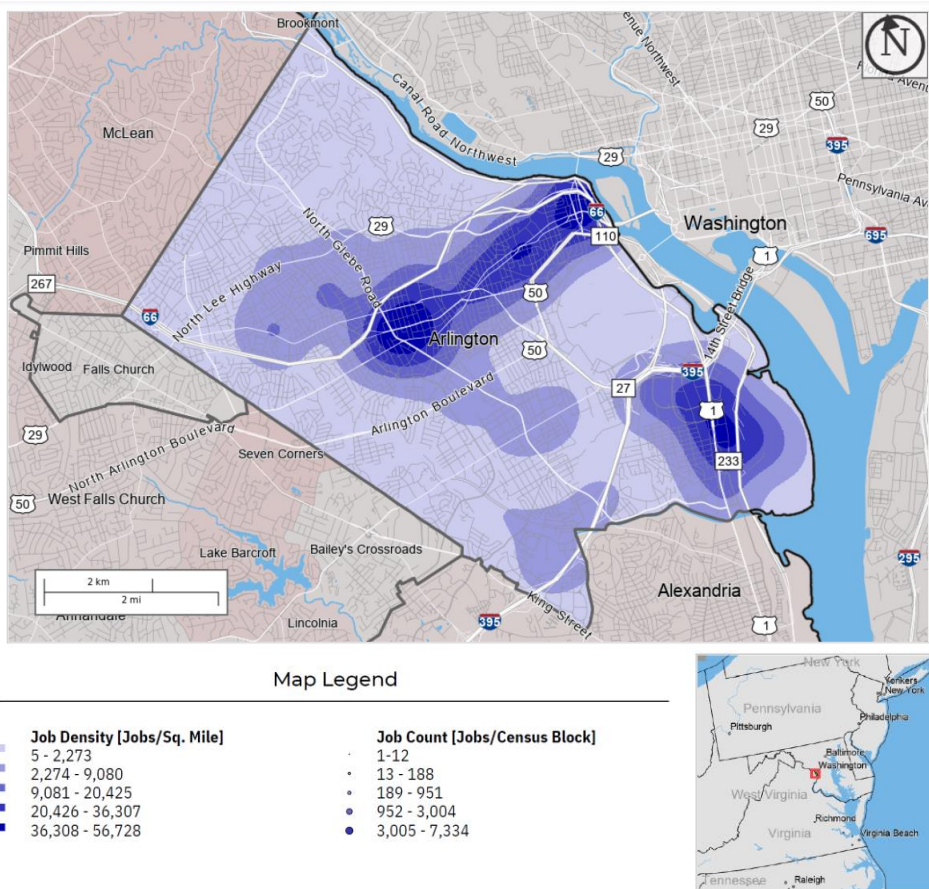


Figure 2: Job Density. 2019. Source: US Census Bureau’s OnTheMap. Available at: <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov> (Accessed: February 20, 2022).

Most residents are satisfied with the quality of life in the county, according to the last Community Satisfaction Survey (2018), 86%, compared to 75% nationwide. The perception of the quality of the county's cultural programs and library services is favorable, although only 10% considered it important to increase taxes to maintain cultural and arts services, while 51% preferred to reduce them. The perception of business leaders (Southeastern Institute of Research, 2016) highlight that the most important attribute of a commercial location was security and traffic systems, with 92% and 89% of the respondents, while 70% consider very important to have a “creative culture” and 61% “a great start up environment and a support network”. When asked about the “most important economic development activity for business leaders” respondents noted that “retaining and supporting existing businesses” was the priority from a list of 11 topics, 87% of respondents considered “very important.”

Tourism & art came in the lowest places, with 47% of respondents stating that it was “very important.”

Finally, when asked about the “most important feeling that a business location should provoke is having a high quality of life,” 79% said that Arlington “has a good energy or vibe”, 56% that it is a “cool/hip place to work,” and 53% that it is a “unique place to work,” even though both were at the bottom of a list of 15 attributes. In a survey in Rosslyn (Rosslyn BID & Streetsemse, 2018), Arlington's financial district next to the National Landing, 85% of respondents think “more entertainment would make spend more time,” and 68% highlighted bars and nightlife as reasons to do it.

3.2. What was proposed to AHQ2 and the place-based development

In September 2017, Amazon announced a competitive process for cities to host its second corporate headquarters, AHQ2, and 238 cities participated in the bid. The proposal from Arlington and Alexandria, led by Virginia Economic Development Partnership and JBG, was a multi-sector effort that brought together several counties, municipalities, businesses, educational entities, and regional and local development agencies. The main pillars of the AHQ2 proposal focused on human capital, commercial and residential infrastructure, connectivity, livability, human scale and business environment.

JBG, the exclusive developer of AHQ2, has a long tradition in the real estate market in Crystal City and Pentagon City, where they generate 42% of their business (JBG Smith, 2018). Part of JBG's strategy to transform the environment is based on the creation of experiences, design and placemaking, since it stimulates economic vitality, increased retail sales, and therefore asset value. Its work methodology consists of gathering information through focus groups and qualitative research, what they call “20x20”: 20 feet of sidewalk and 20 feet of street frontage where people interact with a distinctive stamp on the place, with special attention to signage, facades, urban furniture, paving stones, and public realm. JBG has already begun to carry out tactical urban interventions with artists, such as the “Phase Zero” campaign through street art, murals, colors, experiences and interactions with pedestrians and residents of the neighborhood's commercial areas, attracting national media (Kelly, 2018).

The proactivity of the private sector around Arlington is not new. After the consequences left by the economic crisis of 2008, in terms of vacant commercial spaces and job growth, Arlington Economic Development (AED) and Arlington Economic Development Commission, adopted its strategy *Arlington's Framework for Prosperity 2.0* (Arlington Economic Development Commission, 2018), to boost the local economy taking advantage of its commercial infrastructure, location, neighborhood uniqueness and human capital, with special attention to creative talent and innovation.

The private sector also had a voice in the proposal through Arlington's three business improvement districts in Ballston, Crystal City (renamed National Landing

BID), and Rosslyn, as well as the three commercial associations in Clarendon, Columbia Pike, and Langston Boulevard. These organizations are some of the main promoters of cultural and placemaking initiatives. Private sector has also benefited from startup incubators and co-workspaces, even though they have not been integrated into the proposal. In addition, public-private organizations such as Arlington Arts, the Arlington Commission for the Arts, AED' Cultural Affairs had representation, but with limited participation.

The National Landing, a rebranded area around Crystal City, is a neighborhood historically marked by other events such as the opening of the Pentagon in 1943, the opening of Reagan airport in 1978 (and its subway lines), and the recession in 2008 when Arlington lost 17,000 jobs (ArlNow.com, 2010), mainly from the Federal Government. Amazon's arrival in an area originally with a car-centered design has coincided with the rebranding process of the neighborhood, taking the opportunity to expand the reach of the National Landing BID (NLBID), towards Pentagon City, Pentagon and Potomac Yard. According to NLBID CEO³, their role in the proposal and the aftermath of this first stage was to create a suitable atmosphere for placemaking and beautification. Building on their *Future Cities* strategy (Crystal City BID, 2020), explicitly focused on building identity, sense of place, culture and commercial vitality, around 300 events are organized annually.

The central pillar of Virginia's promise was to invest in technology-related human capital through funding in order to expand faculty, researchers, and infrastructure. Furthermore, it would provide training support to increase graduates in computer science and related fields by 50%, reaching 31,000 new professionals over the next two decades (Arlington County, 2021b). The agreement includes investments for \$1.8 billion, along with the \$500 million committed by VTU in its new campus located in Potomac Yard. In addition, George Mason University has committed \$425 million for capital improvements.

The spillover effects of these public investments will not only bring a new skill set from sub-sectors that will open multiple patterns in the major DC metro region: cyber security and government-related services, in addition to emerging sectors such as automation, IT applied to health, machine learning, artificial intelligence and data management, integrating STEM curriculum in primary and secondary levels. The experience in Seattle shows that world-class talent has its own creative demands to flow. Several composite indexes rank the DC metro area, Arlington and Alexandria among the most creative, livable, technological and attractive cities within the US (Arlington County, 2021b).

Regarding physical connectivity, in addition to an intermodal connector from Crystal City to the Airport (CC2DC) and the project to transform Route 1 into a walkable, mixed-use boulevard, capital investments will go toward adjusting two new Metro stations.

³ Interview by the author, to Tracy Gabriel, National Landing BID CEO on April, 2020.

4. SEATTLE AND THE FORETASTE OF WHAT WILL COME

Although the arrival of a company like Amazon in the DC metropolitan area, due to context and volume, is difficult to compare, lessons can be learned from Seattle. If the DC area has the second highest concentration of “creative class” among 51 cities studied by Florida et al. (2015), Seattle ranks among fastest growing creative class cities, and both cities lead technology and registered patents.

Amazon's first headquarters in downtown Seattle left a series of catalytic effects such as the arrival of qualified workers, restaurants, commercial services, and the redevelopment of two stagnant neighborhoods: South Lake Union and Denny Triangle. According to the company, between 2010 and 2016, this effort resulted in additional \$38 billion for the city alone, a significant multiplier (for \$1 invested in Seattle, an additional \$1.4 was generated in the city) with a flow of 40,000 employees in 33 buildings, with \$3.7 billion invested on infrastructure (Amazon, 2017).

The “Seattle brand,” globally known for rock stars (Hendrix and Cobain), Boeing and Starbucks, and for a creation of intellectual property registered and protected for its uniqueness, now share the fame of origin with two of the largest technology companies globally: Amazon and Microsoft, leaders in terms of revenue and growth. Their vitality has had unprecedented spillover effects in the Seattle metropolitan area—the Puget Sound Region—and King County. According to Florida and Mellander (2015) estimates, Seattle ranked sixth among US cities in terms of creative class participation in 2014, with 35.7% of jobs.

The impact of this creative class has an important effect on the consumption of cultural goods and services. This was reflected in the rapid growth of the creative sectors in the Washington state capital. According to the 2019 Creative Economy Report, prepared by the City of Seattle (2019), 18% of the city's regional product in 2018 came from this sector, compared to 4% on average across the country. This coincides with the 23% growth of employment in the creative sectors between 2012 and 2017, compared to the 15% increase in the general economy of the country. Among these fast-growing occupations are web developers at 41.7%, software and app developers at 37.3%, actors at 31.7%, librarians and bookstore staff at 31.1%, and writers and authors at a growth of 26.5%. However, a closer look highlights the importance of sub-industries such as interactive media, virtual reality, and the gaming industry throughout the creative economy, where King County is a pioneer. This digital leap, in the aftermath of the pandemic, is a lifesaver for the creative sector, one of the hardest hits in the global economy in 2020 and 2021.

It is precisely King County where the DigiPen Institute of Technology was established years ago, as one of the first universities focused on computer science, animation and game design industries. In 2016, the Washington Interactive Network commissioned a study that quantified the impact of this group of interactive industries throughout Seattle and King County. This interactive media, virtual reality and gaming cluster feeds into leading global companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Bungie and Valve and nurtures Seattle, which has made it

the fourth largest city in the US in terms of jobs related to interactive media, with 107,000 people employed. It is also the fourth largest city in the US in terms of median salary among interactive media-related jobs, at \$109,000 annually.

Businesses: 423 (total). 40 virtual reality / augmented reality	
Total of jobs through direct, indirect and induced impacts	94,200
Direct Jobs from Washington interactive media firms	20,800
Freelancers	2,400
Revenues - Industry (2015)	\$21.4 billion
Labor Income	\$ 7.6 billion
Revenues – State	\$28 billion

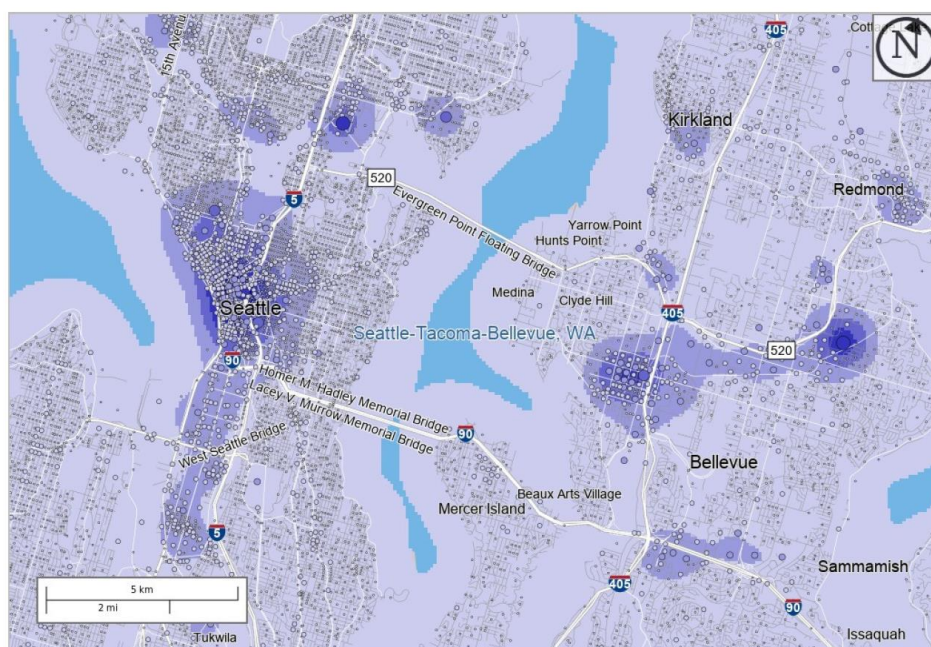
Table 1: Washington State Interactive Media Cluster (2016). Source: Estimations from the Washington Interactive Network.

This fertile environment for Seattle's creative industries impacted the fabric of the city. Amazon and Microsoft have shown different patterns of expansion: while Microsoft was developing a campus outside of Seattle, in Redmont, Amazon decided to invest and develop real estate in the central districts, primarily in the downtown Seattle neighborhoods that flow near Elliot Bay, South Lake Union, Denny Triangle and, in recent years, in the Central District neighborhoods. This growth in the historic center has occurred mainly in the neighborhood of South Lake Union, which, according to data from Leinberger and Hadden (2018), has grown in population in the period between 2000 and 2015 by 92%, while King County in the same period has grown by 18%. However, the most notable situation the South Lake Union neighborhood has faced in the last 15 years was a 465% increase in land prices, compared to 57% in the county. Labor supply also increased in the area by 22%, while housing vacancies decreased by 8.3%.

Economic Impact of Amazon	Period	USA	Washington State	Virginia
Investments including infrastructure and compensation to employees	2010-2021 2020	\$530B \$167B	\$129B	\$34B
Contribution to the U.S. GDP*	2010-2021	\$499	\$112	\$27
Direct full- and part-time jobs	2010-2021	1.1	85K	30K
Indirect jobs (construction, logistics & other services)	2010-2021	1.6M+	258K*	96K*
Jobs created by a 3 rd party - SMEs & independent authors	2010-2021	1.1M		
Multiplier Effect in Anchor Companies			46K	42K
Charitable organizations benefited			28K	34K

Table 2: Amazon Economic Impact. Source: Own elaboration based on Amazon’s data web aboutamazon.com (Accessed: February 8, 2022).

Both Seattle and DC metropolitan areas have highly skilled workers, a concentration of schools and universities, good transport infrastructure and connectivity (Seattle’s seaport and air hub and Arlington as a capital airport enclave and an acceptable subway network). Furthermore, both cities took advantage of relatively affordable areas with great potential for revaluation after large employers left: Washington Mutual in Seattle (McCartney, 2019) in the 1980s and Arlington during the 2008 crisis with the subsequent escape from US government agencies favoring DC. The company that arguably best illustrates the change of the past decade in downtown Seattle and which is likely to set the tone for change in Arlington and the DC area, is Amazon.



Map Legend

Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]	Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]
5 - 9,626	1-78
9,627 - 38,490	79 - 1,247
38,491 - 86,596	1,248 - 6,313
86,597 - 153,945	6,314 - 19,950
153,946 - 240,537	19,951 - 48,706



Figure 3: Job Density Map Seattle Metropolitan Area, 2019. Source: US Census Bureau’s OnTheMap. Available at: <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov> (Accessed: December 20, 2022).

Amazon's anabolic growth in Seattle was perceived almost as a relief to the local economy, as it managed to double its revenue figures in three years, to over a billion dollars in 2010, with its effects in terms of urban regeneration and placemaking, along with their associated risks. Rather than follow the almost historic trend of large logistics or product development companies acquiring spacious suburban campuses, all but hidden from each other, Amazon has chosen to acquire real estate in the South Lake Union and Denny Triangle neighborhoods and rehab or construct buildings in the center of the city, the so-called *place-based development*.

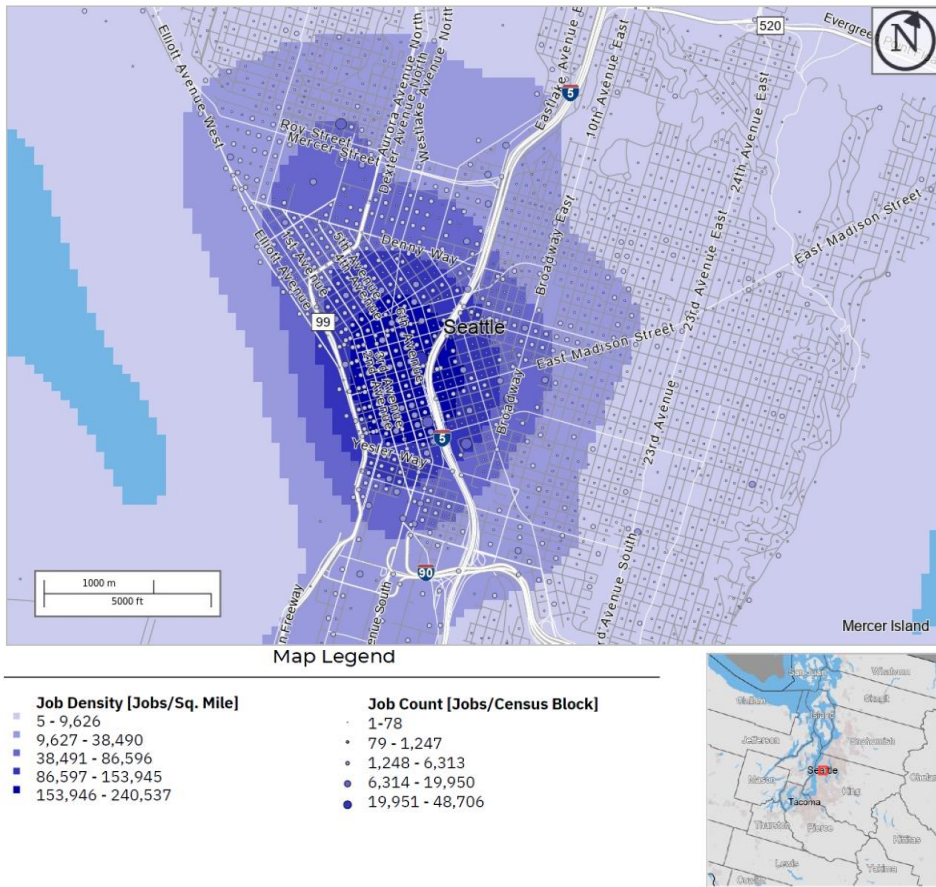


Figure 4: Job Density Map, South Lake Union, Seattle, 2019. Source: US Census Bureau's OnTheMap. Available at: <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov> (Accessed: December 20, 2022).

Another relevant effect in the transformation of Seattle is the commute, since the city has managed to reduce trips in single occupancy vehicles by up to 9% (from that 34% of people who traveled alone in 2010, to 25% in 2017) (Commute Seattle, 2018). The decrease in SUV vehicles has been distributed mainly between a 6.1%

increase in the use of public transport prior to the covid crisis: from 42% in 2010 to 48% in 2017. Another significant change that Seattle has undergone is an increase in the city's public resources. In 2020, the city's total budget was \$6,509,732 for all funds adopted in 2020, while the arts, culture and recreation budget allocation was \$414,288, equal to 6% of the total budget. This represents a considerably higher figure, practically double the figure 10 years earlier. In 2011, based on proposed expenditures: all funds were \$3.9 billion, while the arts, culture, and recreation allocation was \$262,100, equivalent to 7%. A comparison of these figures to Arlington's FY2020 budget (Arlington County, 2020) of \$1,900,623,820, allocates part of its funds to the Office of Parks and Recreation with \$43,103,220, to Economic Development (including cultural affairs) \$8,735,645, and Arts General Fund Support \$3,192,635, showing similar budget proportions in Arlington and Seattle. The disaggregated investments of Amazon in recent years, from the start of the company to 2018, not only in Seattle but throughout the US, Virginia was the state with the largest number of investments, with \$35 billion.

In the case of Seattle, the metropolitan area also benefited from the proximity of Microsoft Headquarters in the adjacent city of Redmont; something that does not occur in Arlington with the same intensity. Certainly, the comparison does not correlate completely, considering it may be difficult to disaggregate and assign the spillover effects of the creative economy that each one of these large transnational companies generate in its territory. However, on the other hand, it is also relevant to highlight the importance of the U.S. government as a business partner and contract generator in the cyber-security innovation cluster in the D.C. area.

5. ARLINGTON COUNTY POTENTIAL RISKS

Even with these numbers, Seattle risks dying of success. The city's favorable status in the technology and innovation sector left a deep mark on the city, particularly on the African American population, which is now only around 15% of the Central District's population, compared to 21% that was when amazon arrived in 2010 (Balk, 2020). That is a wake-up call about possible effects in Arlington and Alexandria, on African American, Asian, Hispanic populations and other minorities. In addition, according to the job offers of the web Indeed (2020), Seattle is the city with the least competition for jobs. Based on the number of clicks per tech job posting, San Jose, San Francisco and Seattle top the "market favorability" list, considering these cities are awash with tech-savvy workers and companies, with "talent shortages" for technology and fewer wage jobs. The so-called "Great Resignation" effect following the pandemic may further aggravate the lack of human capital as the workforce adjusts to this disruption.

The diversity of the creative community can also be at risk if it is restricted. The VTU research and technology campus in Alexandria and the AHQ2 neighborhood is located less than a mile from the working-class neighborhood of Arlandria, will bring significant changes to the social and economic composition of surrounding

communities. This neighborhood dissects a dynamic mixed-used corridor with a rich history and eclectic character, known for its Salvadoran population. Furthermore, although 15.1% of the population in Arlington County identifies as Latino or Hispanic and 9% of Asian origin, only 4% and 3% respectively participated in Artspace's survey on affordable spaces for artists.

Related to the brand and narrative, there is a risk of diluting or losing a strong presence due to the ambiguous identity of the National Landing, always in the shadow of DC. Finally, in cities or counties with a presence as strong as Amazon, there is a risk of excessive dependence on one company, as happened in Seattle in the last decades of the past century with Washington Mutual and Boeing.

6. DISCUSSION, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Amazon's place-based development strategy in Arlington is an opportunity to reap the spillover effects of economic development, and to fulfill the demands of the upcoming workers and prosumers. The unifier effect could come from the future, instead of from the past, and technology can help shape this narrative, while integrating intangible attributes, heritage, cultural references and history, with new know-hows and skills that the company started to bring.

Arlington's challenges in terms of gentrification, affordable housing and displacement of AHQ2 are in full view. Although Amazon is expected to invest \$160 million for affordable housing, the number of resources could be insufficient, considering the possible negative effects of Covid-19 in a city with a strong impact of tourism and international connections, which could also affect vulnerable populations and local artists, with a subsequent loss of character and a threaten the intangible cultural heritage.

The experts interviewed for this paper expressed a series of potential initiatives and policy recommendations, reflecting the enablers to achieve spatial, economic, and social benefits related to culture and creativity based on the *Creative Cities Constraints Framework* (UNESCO, World Bank, 2021) and its categories: 1) Physical and spatial environment; 2) Human capital; 3) Networks and support infrastructure; 4) Institutional and regulatory environment; 5) Benefits of uniqueness; and 6) Digital environment.

Proposed Measure	Enabler
1. Leverage spillover effects from the tech sector in the arts and creative industries	
1.1 Seek active collaboration between the technology sector and creative entrepreneurs to promote interactions, collaborations, and strategic alliances.	E4
1.2 Re-use and adapt existing infrastructure: warehouses as art studios, libraries as co-work spaces, or pop-up art markets in temporarily underutilized spaces such as buildings under construction or vacant, etc.	E1
1.3 Leverage the upcoming VTU campus for business attraction by focusing on a “Talent-Oriented Development” strategy, through a National Tech Museum that leverages the investments in K12 and STEM, while displaying and celebrating the crossroads of entrepreneurship, arts, culture and technology.	E2
1.4 Leverage VT tech hub applied research and associated grants and funds	E6
2. Design and implement a cross- jurisdictional branding strategy and leadership	
2.1 Establish a regulatory body or committee that articulates a coordinated branding strategy that leverages the core brand attribute (DC area) with the uniqueness creativity of Arlington and Alexandria, in coordination with their business associations.	E4
2.2 Develop a metropolitan brand with a coordinated sense of ownership between Arlington and Alexandria, beyond administrative borders.	E5
2.3 Develop outreach and consultation mechanisms to involve the Arlington and Alexandria populations - online and in person - to integrate groups with limited participation in previous consultation processes.	E3
3. Develop a coordinated placemaking effort considering uniqueness	
3.1 Gradually implement changes in public art, urban design, and infrastructure, so that deeper changes are achieved in the medium and long term through tactical urbanism, mixing local, national and international artists.	E1
3.2 Support city branding efforts with urban design elements contributing to the attributes of the National Landing, taking advantage of well positioned cultural or brand attributes in the region (Arlington Cemetery, Smithsonian, The Washington Post, etc.	E1
3.3 Leverage Amazon resources: tied to 3.2, build on what The Washington Post, part of Amazon’s group represents and its contributions in terms of knowledge.	E6
3.4 Support nightlife initiatives that enhance the full potential and intensive use of bars, pop-up restaurants, and businesses at unconventional times.	E3
4. Leverage and Take Advantage of Funding Opportunities	
4.1 Leverage existing regulatory and tax opportunities such as Opportunity Zones, innovation districts & zoning, TIFs, and other forms of financing.	E4
4.2 Engage Amazon and JBG Smith in community events, art fairs and festivals, to attract local talent to spark interest in science, creativity, arts, culture, and programming.	E4
4.3 Attract and manage Venture Capital funds for creative entrepreneurs focused on the intersection of technology and creativity, such as gaming, coding, and design.	E6
5. Seek Integration by Anticipating Displacement	
5.1 Use Low-Income Housing Tax Credit for developers to supply affordable housing for artists and vulnerable communities. Continue with the 2nd phase of ArtSpace, exploring lessons learned from Baltimore by Jubilee and the leadership of MICA.	E4
5.2 Explore urban renovation as a tool for social inclusion within the joint area of Arlandria and Del Ray, in Alexandria.	E1

Table 3: Policy Recommendations. Source: Own elaboration upon interviews.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The center of the political debate and media attention since the announcement of the arrival of Amazon to Arlington, has gravitated around its effects on job creation and human capital, and on the impacts on the real estate market. But particular attention is required to the changes that will affect the cultural industries in one of the metropolitan areas with the greatest presence of organizations and workers of the so-called creative economy. The massive influx of resources and workers in the tech sector will enhance innovation and new opportunities for artists, cultural organizations, tour operators, restaurants and businesses. It is better to anticipate, plan and capitalize the opportunities in advance, so as to increase international business' perception as global hub.

Similar experiences can provide an overview of future scenarios. Seattle is an interesting example of how the evolution of the creative ecosystem and the combination of talent in urban spaces can generate strong interactions and creative exchanges, as well as spillover effects. Highly qualified employees persistently shown higher levels of consumption of cultural and creative goods and services, mainly on its cluster located in downtown's South Lake Union. Arlington may also embrace lessons learned from Artspace integrating into the life and identity of Arlington by shoring up a creative district cluster that could take advantage from tax incentives to retain subsidized housing for creative entrepreneurs. There is an underestimated source of spillover effects from the tech to the arts sector in Arlington, among citizens and business owners. The multiplicity of stakeholders could complicate the coordination of leadership and branding, but that challenge can be transferred into a significant opportunity to use tools such as placemaking, creative funding and value capture, and retention of disadvantaged communities, which would finally close the gap of what Arlington could do and what was proposed in 2018.

Arlington County has an opportunity to leverage the substantial benefits for residents and businesses associated with harnessing the county's existing creative economy workforce, but also to minimize the risks of real estate speculation, displacement and segregation. These benefits and opportunities go beyond the artistic and cultural field and will have an impact on the real estate market. If changes are faced progressively, in attention to a decided place-based development strategy, it will be possible to achieve the construction of a creative environment, that preserves the cultural essence of the city, while projecting it into the future.

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