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Triangle asks Amazon to look at seven sites for its new headquarters

By Craig Jarvis And Zachery Eanes - October 17, 2017

With just two days to go, Triangle economic development officials on Tuesday mailed their pitch to Amazon to build its second headquarters here.

States and local leaders across the country have scrambled to put together proposals that would convince the online retail giant to deliver a massive economic investment. Amazon gave the hopefuls until Thursday, and said it would make its choice known next year.

After last-minute editing, the Triangle's proposal was sent by Federal Express.

"Now we just play the waiting game," Ryan Combs, executive director of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, said in an interview Tuesday.

The partnership, an association of economic development agencies, submitted seven sites for Amazon to consider. Combs declined to say where the sites are in the region.

Scott Levitan, president and CEO of Research Triangle Foundation, said on Tuesday, "There are a number of sites within the Research Triangle Park that are included in the proposal."

The park has the space and other qualifiers that meet the requirements of the massive project.

Geoff Durham, president and CEO of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, on Tuesday confirmed that at least one site in Durham located outside of RTP was included in the bid.

Seattle-based Amazon says it will spend \$5 billion on construction and hire up to 50,000 people at a second headquarters, and invited regions in the United States and Canada to collaborate to produce proposals.

The announcement has led to weeks of feverish pitches to attract Amazon's attention, including posting short videos online and, in the Triangle last week, a day of tweeting the Triangle's various attractions.

Combs said local officials saw what other states and cities were doing, and so invited major employers, universities and others to brainstorm ideas in a meeting.

“This was an inside-out project,” Combs said. “Usually we don’t know who is the person you’re marketing to. Amazon turned economic development on its head. We wanted to put our best foot forward and this was a way to do that, we thought.”

Charlotte, the Triad and other regions of North Carolina have submitted their own proposals.

“We feel great,” Combs said. “We really do feel like we’ve got a good shot in this.”

John Boyd, a site selection consultant in New Jersey, said it’s reasonable that the project could end up somewhere in North Carolina.

“I expect Raleigh and Charlotte to be looked at very closely by Amazon because of the state’s positive business climate (i.e. low taxes and new incentives), its premier labor market and access to world-renown colleges and universities and growing IT sector, and because Amazon is already a sizable employer in the Tar Heel State and has a solid working relationship with the state’s economic development leaders,” Boyd said in a recent email.