

Miami To Amazon After HQ2 Snub: Call Us When You Want To Set Up A Latin American Hub

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Jeff Bezos went to high school in Miami, and Florida loves to dangle its lack of state income tax in front of out-of-state businesses. But despite those factors, South Florida was **unable to land Amazon's second headquarters**.



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Caoba, left, an apartment building that is part of Miami Worldcenter. The zigzag platform is part of Miami Central station, where Brightline rail service is set to begin May 19.

But that's OK, business leaders say; the city is ripe to welcome other businesses for now, and it will be here when Amazon is ready to set up a hub for Latin American operations.

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Plenty of critics said it was surprising that Miami even made Amazon’s shortlist of 20 finalist cities earlier this year, but the so-called “Magic City” has a miraculously undeveloped, blank-slate **downtown core that is currently being revived** and could be molded into a great base for a big employer. Not to mention the city’s geographical location makes it a no-brainer for any multinational company expanding business to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Still, a lack of public transportation, and the gridlock that has come as a result, might have counted as strikes against locating here, as could impending sea-level rise. Although the city is home to the University of Miami and Florida International University, a perceived dearth of talent could have been a negative as well.

“We are hopeful that after Amazon’s thorough review of South Florida’s competitive advantages that the company will continue to grow and invest here, particularly with an eye toward business growth opportunities in Latin America,” Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance CEO Bob Swindell, who helped fashion South Florida’s HQ2 bid, told *Bisnow*.



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From the 43rd floor of Paramount Miami Worldcenter, you can see the American Airlines Arena (the round building), where the Miami Heat play. The bridge leads to Port Miami. Also visible are a city marina, Bayside Marketplace, parks and Miami's historic Freedom Tower.

Urbanist [Richard Florida](#) told [GeekWire](#) that Amazon would be smart to use the data it collected during its HQ2 search and spread certain company functions around the country.

“It wouldn’t surprise me to hear in coming months, ‘We’re going to put a Latin American headquarters in Miami. We’re going to put a major artificial intelligence and self-driving vehicle facility in Pittsburgh. We’re going to create major distribution and logistics hubs in Nashville or Columbus or Indianapolis,” Florida said.

In fact, Amazon did announce [a 5,000-job operations hub in Nashville](#) along with the two 25,000-job second headquarters projects. “I think this was always about sourcing, siting much more than just a single headquarters.”

Amazon has had a significant presence in South Florida for years, operating out of several area warehouses. This fall, the company set out to hire 1,000 people for a massive [new 850K SF fulfillment center in Opa-Locka](#).

Miami Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Alyce Robertson said she was hopeful something like a Latin American Amazon hub could be possible in the future. She said the city is maturing fast, having doubled its downtown population in just a few short years and grown its tax base downtown from \$9.8B in 2010 to \$19B today.

It has even built a burgeoning tech scene, and was chosen as the first outpost outside of Silicon Valley for the incubator 500 Startups.

Although she was disappointed to learn Miami hadn’t been picked — “At like 2 in the morning, my phone went off,” she said — Robertson said she learned a lot about how to market the city to out-of-state businesses, and leaders throughout the region developed better working relationships.

Developer Nitin Motwani, whose 27-acre, \$3B Miami Worldcenter, including a shovel-ready office tower, could have been a logical site for an Amazon HQ, said that his team had only been “cautiously optimistic” about landing the deal.

“In the end, if the Amazon search leads even one more business to take a good look at Broward County, then that makes the past year well worth it,” Swindell said.