

Why a Massive Warehouse on the Canadian Border?

Citizens Unite to Question Proposed Mega-Warehouse Presumed to be Amazon Just Upstream from Niagara Falls, New York

July 7, 2020 Grand Island, N.Y. — A new grassroots group, Coalition for Responsible Economic Development for Grand Island (CRED4GI), announced its formation last evening at a public hearing of the Grand Island (New York) Town Council.

CRED4GI suspects that an extremely large proposed warehouse — 3.8 million square feet with an officially stated capacity for 7,000 workers — on the small island is being built for Amazon.com, Inc. (“an ecommerce warehouse storage and distribution facility” that will operate 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, according to the developer’s proposal).

Amazon job openings are already widely posted for the warehouse and “Amazon facility” already appears on Google maps at the project site.

The coalition also suspects that in its scale and impact, the project would violate the island’s existing land use plan and harm the island’s ecologically sensitive environment, home values, quality of life and the Niagara River itself.

In October 2019, the Niagara corridor gained national prominence when it became the 40th Ramsar site in the US, putting it on par with the Galapagos and the Everglades. (The Ramsar Convention of UNESCO designates wetland sites of international importance.) The designation seeks to protect the Island’s incredible bird and wildlife diversity, including at least two endangered species.

“We demand that the developer officially reveal the identity of its client,” said CRED4GI co-founder Cathy Rayhill. “And we are very skeptical of the developer’s proposal, especially its claims that a facility employing up to 7,000 people and running trucks from 69 service bays 24/7 will have a minimal impact on traffic congestion, air quality and water pollution.”

“We are also struck that the Town Council has not performed a total cost/benefit analysis in order to assess the impact of this proposed project on home values and critical infrastructure,” said Rayhill. “TC Buffalo is seeking a property tax reduction from the Erie County Industrial Development Agency. We know from other communities that have Amazon warehouses; tax breaks of 10-20 years are common. Does that mean the rest of us will get stuck with lower home values and higher taxes to pay for more wear and tear on our roadways and other infrastructure? Being an island, our bridges are a critical life-line for our citizens.”

“We believe that community awareness and input have been suppressed during the pandemic. Our Town Council has failed to take compensatory and affirmative measures to engage taxpayers in what would be by far the biggest project in the Island’s history,” said Rayhill “But when we ask our fellow Grand Islanders, many share the same concerns.”

“That is why, in just a few days, hundreds of people have joined our Facebook group and signed our petition to build our coalition, said Rayhill “CRED4GI will have its first community meeting this coming Friday, July 10.”

“I am struck that Amazon apparently wants a mega-warehouse on the Canadian border,” said Greg LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First, a non-profit watchdog group on economic development. “Is this facility actually a platform for delivering to the province of Ontario? Is Amazon avoiding Canada’s superior labor laws and environmental safeguards by locating on Grand Island? Will Americans bear the poor wages, dangerous conditions and truck pollution for Canadians’ Prime convenience?”

Project facts and links:

- The developer’s proposal and related materials: <http://www.tcbuffalograndisland.com/>
- Warehouse footprint: 823,522 square feet
- Floors: Five Floors (the equivalent of nine stories in height)
- Total floor area: 3,783,124 square feet
- Loading docks: 69
- Trailer parking spaces: 219
- Car parking spaces: 1,855
- Workforce: capacity for 7,000 (initially up to 1,800 at a given time)

Facts about Grand Island

- Population: about 21,000
- Size: 33.3 square miles
- Environmental sensitivities: Ramsar Designation, Various types of Wetlands, wildlife, endangered species, the Niagara River, critical bird migration flyway and habitat recognized as a globally significant Important Bird Area, jointly identified by the United States and Canada.
- Proximity to trans-border bridges to Canada: 3 border crossing bridges are proximal to Grand Island (Peace Bridge, Rainbow Bridge, Lewiston-Porter Bridge).