

# Public Sentiment

## 3 Things We Learned from Amazon HQ2-NY



Rendering of One Court Square, courtesy of ESD RFP Response

When news broke that Amazon was scrapping its expansion plans for Long Island City, my first thought was, “What a shame.” It wasn’t a blind belief that Amazon’s presence would only mean good things for the City of New York, but rather that we owed it to ourselves to carefully consider the rare opportunity.

Unfortunately, misinformation, a mis-alignment of values, and a startling lack of transparency got the better of the situation. The prospect of an HQ2 in NYC is gone.

So, what do we take away from it all? News coverage focusing on outrage over tax breaks and helipads misses the point. We need to go a level deeper and find the lessons that all governments and businesses should internalize before undertaking any major development project like this. Here are the three we’ve learned:

### 1. **Companies and governments, together, have to make the case.**

The HQ2 Plan promised some impressive benefits (25k jobs, \$27B in revenue). But the goods alone were not compelling enough. Amazon needed to assure New Yorkers it could deliver on these points. In conjunction, the City and State needed to assure New Yorkers they would be an accountable watchdog protecting local community needs and ensuring the company worked in good faith to hit its marks.

### 2. **Match Corporate Values with Community Values.**

Amazon’s reputation on things like tough working conditions and being friendly with ICE ran counter to many values strongly held by Queens residents. It seems no amount of funding for school programs or donated public space would have been enough to assuage concerns about what *kind* of company would be LIC residents’ new neighbor.

### 3. **Meaningful community engagement means less misinformation.**

The November 13<sup>th</sup> MOU was more than a year in the making. It contained a lot of technical information and research that most New Yorkers did not have the time to decipher (a New York minute, right!?). Providing an inclusive, trusted, and closed-loop process for soliciting and sharing information would have relieved frustrations and razed the rumor mill.

HQ2-NYC may have passed us by, but hopefully this experience can guide how other companies and governments might plan big-vision projects with community in mind.