How big is 8,000,000 square feet? Exploring options for Amazon’s HQ2 project.
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Introduction
Currently, there is a trend among large corporations to build alternative or attractive office space types. Companies are adding elements to their headquarters or office space to make them appealing and exciting to not only their employees, but to the public. Microsoft is known for its glass domes, Apple is known for its giant ring-shaped building, and Google is the best known for its playground-like vibe of total employee work/enjoyment experience. These novelties have become part of the brands of companies.

In the past, cities have competed to host public attractions such as the Guggenheim Museum. Now, with the announcement of Amazon’s plan to build a second corporate headquarters, cities are competing to host offices. Not just any offices, though, the largest corporate presence the world has ever seen. 8,000,000 square feet of office space for 50,000 employees. This is double the size of Citibank in New York, the second largest corporate presence in a single city.

Over ten years, the 8m square feet of space will be built, but has been already planned and proposed by cities that want to host Amazon’s “HQ2.” I have been looking at the announced site proposals as well as case studies of campuses that are of similar scale to eventually lead to my own design for what I think HQ2 should look like. While most directly applicable to Amazon’s requirements, I intend for my design to end up as a universal, alternative corporate campus that benefits employee productivity and well-being.

Looking at Seattle: a corporate city

Looking at Tacoma, WA: case study matching RFP criteria

Could Amazon build 8m sq. ft. HQ2 in Tacoma, WA?

Sample office layouts

Tentative Conclusions
Because of the large scale of this corporate campus, I am proposing that HQ2 (or other future campuses of this size) be home to much more than just office space. Places for eating, recreation, hospitality, childcare, etc... should be included in HQ2. I am analyzing an existing campus for 50,000 people, University of Washington, to get an idea of how much meeting, housing, eating, and recreational space is present. As well as this, I will apply some of the building typology to my master plan.

Selecting a “finalist” site: Boston’s Suffolk Downs

Site location and campus layout experiments

References:
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- Forbes