

Amazon's hiring of 1,500 in Pittsburgh region provides boost during pandemic

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Allegany County Executive Rich Fitzgerald speaks at the 2019 groundbreaking of Amazon's fulfillment center in Findlay.

Amazon announced Tuesday that more than 1,500 people will be hired to work in its new 1 million-square-foot fulfillment center and a new delivery station, both of which are in Findlay and are set to open later this year.

When Amazon broke ground on the fulfillment center in October, the company expected to create 800 jobs. In its announcement, Amazon said it plans to hire about 1,000 people at the fulfillment center and hundreds more at a new delivery warehouse.

The center will be in operation for the 2020 holiday shopping season. But the economic climate between then and now is vastly different because of the coronavirus pandemic.

For Airport Area Chamber of Commerce President Chris Heck, the Amazon news is a bright spot. The pandemic halted what had been a period of growth, he said.

“Hopefully we can get back to where we were,” Heck said.

From fall of 2019 until March, the airport chamber had been adding new 17 members each month. “I felt like nothing could go wrong, and then everything just literally stopped,” Heck said. “It’s going to be a slow economic rebound.”

Amazon will be one of the economic engines that drive the rebound, Heck said.

It is one of the few companies that have seen a surge in business during the pandemic, as its rapid delivery of a wide variety of items is appealing as people are urged to stay home.

The company had about \$89 billion in sales and \$5 billion in profit in the second quarter in the midst of the pandemic.

The company runs on fulfillment centers like the one it built in Findlay and then those items are taken to what the company calls delivery stations from which a fleet of delivery vehicles and independent contractors sort and deliver products.

Amazon’s plans to hire come as the company has severed ties with several of the companies that work as independent delivery contractors.

Those moves have resulted in the expected layoffs of 64 people from Courier Distribution Systems operations in Aleppo, effective Oct. 16, according to Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act filed this month with the state.

The jobs pay a minimum of \$15 per hour and include benefits. Amazon employees more than 16,000 people in Pennsylvania.

“We are excited to continue our growth and investment in Pennsylvania with a new fulfillment center and delivery station in Allegheny County,” the company’s Findlay site leader, Robert Plemmons, said in a statement.

Allegheny County provided no direct incentives to lure Amazon to Findlay, but the state is awarding Amazon \$1.6 million in tax credits once it creates the jobs.

Amazon also operates a technology hub on Pittsburgh’s South Side. Pittsburgh was among the 20 finalists for Amazon’s 2017-18 competition for a second headquarters.

“I certainly think Amazon likes doing business here and we’ll see more of this in the not too distant future,” Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald said. “Even pre-covid days, these are the kind of jobs that we are looking for. It’s obviously a good opportunity for our people to get these jobs.”

Amazon has partnered with local agencies including the Airport Area Chamber, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and others throughout the process.

“I am very excited about where this is going,” Heck said.

Pittsburgh Regional Alliance President Mark Thomas said that the pandemic has spurred a more collaborative relationship among the various economic development groups and companies like Amazon.

“I think you’ll see they want to continue to invest and increase their presence in the area,” Thomas said.

Information about openings at Amazon are online at [amazondelivers.jobs](https://amazon.com/delivers/jobs).

<https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/amazons-hiring-of-1500-in-the-pittsburgh-region-provides-a-boost-during-pandemic/>