

*The Latest*

# A Key Criteria for Amazon Headquarters: A Local Community College

Erie is making a pitch to land the second Amazon headquarters in North America. Now, even Erie business leaders concede the effort is the longest of long shots. For starters, the Seattle-based tech and online retail giant is looking for an area with more than 1 million people.

Yet while we can't rapidly increase our population, there is one key move we could make to better position Erie as a viable option to companies like Amazon that are looking to expand operations: **Create the Erie County Community College.**

Consider this excerpt from a recent USA Today article about Amazon's search for a second headquarters.

*Having strong local universities and community colleges "will be critical," said Brookings Institution scholar and cities expert Bruce Katz, head of the Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking, a collaboration with the New York-based Project for Public Spaces.*



The key takeaway is this: To even be in the game for companies considering expansion, Erie County must have the necessary educational and economic infrastructure in place to meet the needs of a wide range of employers across multiple industries.

On the education front, Erie already has strong local universities. What's missing is a community college to provide a more affordable option, while also meeting the specific needs of employers through targeted curriculum and training programs.

An Erie County Community College would not only help level the playing field nationally, but also in the state. There are 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania, all of them clustered either in southeastern or southwestern Pennsylvania. Butler County Community College is the closest one to Erie.

That means Erie County residents and businesses have long been footing some of the bill for these schools through their state tax dollars.

We've shared in the cost of community college education. Now it's time we also share in the many benefits.

No, the addition of a community college wouldn't likely land us Amazon's headquarters. But it would significantly increase our chances of becoming a viable option for a wide range of businesses looking for communities where they can grow and thrive.