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## Is Amazon grocery coming to Ballard?

- *Customers could save time by ordering groceries online, then retrieving them by car.*

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There's a rumor going around that the ever-secretive Amazon may be planning to build a drive-up grocery store at [5100 15th Ave. N.W.](#), a few blocks north of the Ballard Bridge.

The site is on the east side of 15th, and was the long-time home of the Chinese restaurant Louie's until 2014. The area is currently active with construction.

GeekWire first reported the story, and plans filed with the city support the claim, though ownership of the property is opaque. Here's the notion in a nutshell: Amazon customers could save time by ordering groceries online, then retrieving them by car.

Amazon never comments on new ventures until they launch, as was the case with its brick-and-mortar bookstore in University Village that opened last November. A second Amazon Books store has been announced for San Diego, but has not yet opened.

The company is also fast to pull the plug on projects that flop, such as the Fire Phone.

So whether or not Amazon actually opens a grocery, Bellevue retail consultant Laurie Demeritt, CEO of The Hartman Group, said, "Customers' willingness to access food in new ways is developing incredibly fast."

She cited delivery services like BiteSquad, UberEATS and Blue Apron that now complement — and often compete with — traditional grocery stores. Online ordering services, including AmazonFresh, provide "different channels" for consumers, she said.

Whether a possible new Ballard grocery would cannibalize an existing Amazon business is unclear, but Demeritt said Amazon could chase consumers' food dollars by different avenues. "Having different access points makes a lot of sense."

Significantly, she said the dominance of big-box groceries may be waning. According to her company's research, 50 percent of shopping trips involve two or more stops. Consumers "are going different places for different things," she said.

Thus, while the hypothetical Amazon grocer would be near Ballard's Fred Meyer, Trader Joe's and Safeway, that very competitive location might actually *help* the store — if shoppers are making several stops on one car trip.

Nationally, Amazon would not be first to test the drive-up grocery model. Archrival Walmart is already doing that in its hometown of Bentonville, Arkansas, but no expansion plans have been announced.

So if and when Amazon opens a Ballard grocery operation, there's no guarantee it'll go any further.