



2018 IDA Award Submission: Look Ahead Video
Category: Marketing & Communication
Submitted by: The Downtown Seattle Association (DSA)

Overview: Downtown Seattle is experiencing record growth and investment. It seems everywhere you look there are cranes. Private investment is fueling everything from hotels and restaurants to an expanded Amazon campus downtown. At the same time, downtown Seattle is benefiting from investment in a variety of public projects, including:

- a multi-million-dollar redevelopment of Seattle’s historic waterfront featuring an expanded aquarium, an updated ferry terminal and other public amenities;
- a \$1.7 billion addition to the Washington State Convention Center which will welcome more conventions and visitors;
- family-friendly improvements to urban parks and public spaces.

The amount of development occurring in Seattle has been compared to construction levels in cities preparing for the Olympics. And while most DSA members and stakeholders view this development as positive, there are those who remain frustrated with the impact on mobility, and those who question whether the city is changing too much, too fast.

Over the past couple of years, DSA President & CEO Jon Scholes found himself fielding countless questions from members asking, “what will downtown look like when this current phase of development is complete?” He approached the DSA Communications & Marketing team with an idea: could we create a video using renderings of major projects to paint a picture of the future, allowing people to envision Seattle’s skyline post-construction? And, importantly, could it be produced in time for DSA’s State of Downtown event on Feb. 14, 2018?

Execution: With the assignment in hand, the DSA Communications & Marketing staff approached Spark Creative – a small, local company that had produced similar projects for DSA in the past. Meeting in January, we discussed objectives, content and tone. We wanted an upbeat, energetic piece that would show momentum and give viewers a sense of the “light at the end of the tunnel.” Importantly, we wanted to create a video that could live on well past State of Downtown, particularly on social media.

The DSA Communications & Marketing team, with consultation from the CEO, determined what to feature in the video. Significant effort was taken to avoid focusing only on private development projects so as not to imply favoritism to some DSA members over others. Rather, we wanted to highlight iconic downtown landmarks and feature projects with broad community benefit.

DSA staff then reached out to members and partner organizations – including architectural firms, government agencies and nonprofit organizations – to secure project renderings. The three-person Spark team captured project footage via drone and more traditional methods. They then layered in renderings with animation and special effects and set the piece to music for final review and approval by DSA. Careful consideration was given to required production and distribution formats. We needed one version for the large LED screen used at the event and one version for social media.

Unfortunately, the Seattle weather did not cooperate during our scheduled winter production timeframe, so shooting was pushed into late January and early February. The final video came in right under the wire, delivering on Feb. 12, 2018.

Outcome: As planned, the [look ahead video](#) premiered at our annual economic breakfast as part of Jon Scholes' State of Downtown address to 1,200 guests. Having created something similar for the 2017 State of Downtown, we expected this piece to be very well-received. And, by all accounts, it has been.

In the hours following the breakfast, the DSA team posted the video to Facebook and YouTube. Since the event, it has been viewed more than 70,000 times on DSA's Facebook page and shared more than 1,200. The video has been viewed almost 6,500 times on the DSA YouTube Channel, including a few times internationally. Additionally, a local news anchor posted the video on her Facebook page. Her post was viewed 58,000 times and shared 745. The video was also picked up by local media:

KIRO-TV (local CBS affiliate), Feb. 15, 2018

[Video provides a look into the future of downtown Seattle](#)

The Urbanist, Feb. 20, 2018

[Sunday video: A look ahead in downtown Seattle - 2018 and beyond](#)

Respondents to our post-State of Downtown event survey rated the quality of the videos shown at the breakfast (this was one of three) a 4.6 out of 5. This is the highest rating of any event element (including keynote speeches) in this event's decade-plus history.

This video, in our view, is highly replicable in other markets. Weather dependent, it can be shot and edited fairly quickly, which is important in a city where the skyline is changing rapidly. This piece was produced on a relatively small budget (\$5,000) and most definitely has 'legs.'

This video has had – and will continue to provide – utility for DSA throughout the year in meetings with developers and other companies considering investing in downtown Seattle. We've found this to be an effective vehicle for visually communicating the transformative projects coming to the nation's fastest-growing large city.