Downtown Seattle Celebrates Strong Year of Growth

Economic report unveiled at State of Downtown Economic Forum; highlights jobs, development and transit use on the rise in Downtown.

SEATTLE – (February 25, 2015) – Nearly 1,200 of Seattle’s business and community leaders gathered today at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel in Downtown Seattle for the 2015 State of Downtown Economic Forum, the Downtown Seattle Association’s (DSA) annual report card on the Downtown economy.

Themed “Next is Now,” this year’s forum examined the strengths and challenges of 2014, while addressing the immense opportunity ahead for Downtown to redefine the urban experience with a confluence of development, technology and transportation projects poised to shape Downtown’s future.

In his first State of Downtown address, newly appointed DSA President & CEO Jon Scholes highlighted Downtown’s successes in 2014 — the influx of people, jobs, businesses and the cranes reshaping the skyline.

“In Downtown Seattle, we’re benefitting from these shifts in preferences and demographic trends in historic ways. Today, we are seeing record levels of investment, and residential and employment growth. While the stats are striking, in many ways this success should not surprise us,” said Scholes. “The growth of good fortune we’re experiencing today in Downtown Seattle is not by accident, but because public and private leaders have understood what is necessary to create and sustain a great urban place. Downtown’s success shows in the rise of residents and visitors in Downtown, as well as in the booming number of workers who commute to Downtown every day.”

Scholes also discussed the importance the Downtown Parks Initiative, which embraces new partnerships, new ways of raising revenue and new approaches to managing and programming Downtown parks. Scholes said the DSA looks forward to building on the success in Westlake and Occidental parks this summer through a new agreement with the City and partners at the Alliance for Pioneer Square, the Seattle Parks Foundation and Friends of Waterfront Seattle. The DSA and partners will fill these spaces with more color, activities, programming and people.

During his address, Scholes announced the results of the recent Commute Seattle mode split survey. In 2014, the number of people commuting Downtown via transit and other alternative modes increased to 69 percent*. More people are choosing to commute via public transit, which shows a continued decrease in the percentage of drive-alone commuters. According to census data collected by The Seattle Times, Seattle is one of only five cities in the U.S. where fewer than half the commuters drive to work alone.

Forum attendees also received a copy of the DSA’s 2015 State of Downtown Economic Report including statistics and comparative year-over-year analysis on Downtown’s economic drivers. The 23-page report – which highlights the indicators of Downtown’s economic health – is organized into four sections that represent key indicators of a healthy, vibrant urban core: living, working, shopping and playing Downtown. The 2015 report shows metrics are on the rise in each of the four sections.
Highlights from the report include:

- More than 23 million people visited Downtown Seattle in 2014
- Seattle is the fastest-growing city in the United States, according to the Census Bureau
- In 2014, pedestrian traffic was up 21 percent from past years
- Downtown Seattle Retail Trade was 22 percent higher in 2013 than in 2009
- Downtown has added an average of 25 new jobs per day
- Nearly 65,000 people live Downtown
- Total number of households Downtown has increased nine percent since 2010; projected to increase an additional 10 percent over the next five years
- Downtown now has nearly 12,000 condominium units and 33,000 apartment units

During his keynote presentation, author Benjamin Barber presented his thoughts on advancing Downtown Seattle’s most pressing issues through local citizen engagement and other perspectives from his book, *If Mayors Ruled the World*.

“Cities are increasingly networked into webs of culture, commerce and communication that encircle the globe. These networks and the cooperative complexes they embody can be helped to do formally what they now do informally: govern through voluntary cooperation and shared consensus,” writes Barber in his book.

The event’s Innovators Showcase helped attendees develop a stronger understanding of new technologies currently available in addressing important Downtown issues. Three innovators — KERB, Nextdoor and Parkt — provided previews of their technology and their relevance to Downtown Seattle.

Print copies of the 2015 *State of Downtown Economic Report* are free for DSA members (limit five), and available to non-members for $35 (payable by credit card only) by contacting the DSA at 206-623-0340. Additional research on Downtown’s economy and more is available at the [Downtown Seattle Association’s website](http://www.downtownseattle.org).


*Editor’s Note: Event photos and post-event interviews with Scholes regarding Downtown Seattle’s economic health are available upon request. Please contact James Sido 206-484-9921 (cell) or JamesS@downtownseattle.org.*

*The other alternative transportation modes are ridesharing, walking and biking.*

**About Downtown Seattle Association (DSA)**

Established in 1958, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) is a member-based non-profit organization that champions a healthy, vibrant urban core. By advocating on behalf of business, non-profit, arts and residential interests throughout Downtown Seattle, DSA ensures that Downtown is a world-class place to live, work, shop and play.

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