US – NBC has joined forces with AltspaceVR to broadcast the presidential debate in virtual reality (VR).

> Viewers were able to watch using Samsung Gear VR, Oculus Rift, HTC Vive headsets or in 2D on a Mac or PC

> The Rockefeller Center was recreated in virtual reality and renamed the Virtual Democracy Plaza

This week NBC helped the American electorate engage with the presidential debate more emphatically through VR. The news channel, with the assistance of VR software company AltspaceVR, recreated the Rockefeller Plaza as a virtual space named the Virtual Democracy Plaza.

All VR viewers were assigned an avatar with which they were able to chat with friends and engage in Q&A sessions with a panel of experts. Avatars were split between ‘rooms’ and could choose either to remain with other members of the public or occupy an invitation-only space with friends.

NBC, which is hosting a range of additional VR events in the run-up to the election, hopes the VR experience will encourage people to engage with the election in a more positive way. By stimulating debate between members of the public in a way that feels less anonymous than text-based chat rooms and forums it hopes the conversations will be less aggressive and more constructive.

**The Big Picture**

People are increasingly using technology to connect more meaningfully with the world around them. For more, see our Virtual Browsing microtrend.