



JIM BATES / THE SEATTLE TIMES

*Stan Gent, chief executive officer of Seattle Steam, says the new gas-powered turbine will produce 50 megawatt-hours of electricity, roughly equivalent to the energy used by 12,000 homes. The company heats 191 buildings in downtown Seattle and on First Hill.*

# NEW TURBINE TO GENERATE JOBS

**SEATTLE STEAM** | After more than 80 years, the company will be in the business of making electricity again after an advanced energy-efficient generator is installed.

**BY KAITLIN STROHSCHNEIN**  
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

Seattle Steam stopped producing electricity in 1925. Now it plans to start again, installing an advanced turbine that generates heat and power in its

historic Post Street plant, one of the oldest working buildings in downtown Seattle.

The combined turbine will sit in the building's hot, dirty second story, where a coal-fueled electric generator ran

more than 80 years ago.

Seattle Steam estimates that buying and installing the new gas-powered generator will cost \$75 million, partly funded by an \$18.75 million grant from the Department of Energy

under the federal stimulus plan.

The project will create 225 construction jobs in Seattle and 163 U.S. manufacturing jobs during the next three years, Seattle Steam estimates.

The gas-powered turbine can produce 50 megawatt-hours of electricity, roughly equivalent to the energy used by 12,000 homes, said Stan Gent, Seattle Steam's CEO.

While making electricity, the new turbine will generate heat, which in turn will be used to produce steam. That will supplement the five other steam generators feeding the company's network of pipes to heat 191 buildings in downtown and First Hill.

"When you make electricity and heat at the same time, it's a much more effi-

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# ◀ Steam

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## SEATTLE STEAM

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### New turbine to let company make electricity again

cient process than just making heat by itself," Gent said. "The secret is, you have to be able to use the heat."

The generator's efficiency makes it as renewable as "wind and tidal power, except it's much cheaper," he said.

Nancy Hirsh, policy director for the Northwest Energy Coalition, a business alliance that promotes renewable energy and conservation, said natural gas isn't considered the "greenest" fuel but that it's not the worst.

Using the heat left over from producing electricity is "a very positive step forward," Hirsh said. "It is an opportunity that is not often captured in boiler systems."

Seattle Steam plans to sell the electricity to Puget Sound Energy, although the companies haven't yet negotiated a formal contract, Gent said.

Puget would buy the electricity "if the price is right," but at this point, a deal is "not a foregone conclusion."

Seattle City Light also requested a proposal last August but didn't respond to Seattle Steam's offer, Gent said.

Puget wrote a letter of endorsement for the project that was included with the application for the federal stimulus money. The company is "very enthusiastic about the development of more alternative power sources," said spokesman Roger Thompson.

He said Puget expects the area's energy needs to increase significantly over the next 20 years due to a population increase of 1 million, economic expansion in the Puget Sound area and the retirement of aging power plants.

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