

10. District Heating

District heating systems have been in use in Montana since the turn of the previous century. Even today large central power plants send steam through tunnels under the sidewalks to heat a number of buildings in downtown areas or on Montana university campuses. But geothermal energy can be used to replace the steam and hot water needed in conventional district heating systems. Today, cities including Boise, Idaho and Klamath Falls, Oregon use geothermal water from wells instead of steam to heat groups of buildings. Montana communities including Baker and Poplar have conducted feasibility studies on geothermal district heating systems.



Geothermal water is piped for miles to heat buildings in downtown Boise, Idaho. Plastic pipe wrapped in special insulation reduces heat loss as the hot water flows from the geothermal well to the district heating system.

Photo by Jeff Birkby