

Amazon's Climate Change Arena Is a Net Zero Carbon Stadium That Makes Ice Out of Rainwater

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Amazon has secured the naming rights to Seattle's KeyArena, which will henceforth be known as Climate Pledge Arena in honor of the ecommerce platform's 2019 pledge to achieve net-zero operations by 2040.

The venue, which is currently undergoing redevelopment, will be the "first net zero carbon certified arena," according to Amazon. In fact, the retail giant said the original 44-million-pound roof will be reused to "significantly reduce the embodied carbon of the building."

Climate Pledge Arena will be home to the WNBA's Seattle Storm as well as Seattle's new National Hockey League franchise, which will play its inaugural season in 2021.

Climate Pledge Arena will have all-electric operations and it will be powered with 100% renewable electricity, according to a company statement. Amazon said events will be fully net zero carbon thanks to forestry projects in partnership with organizations like The Nature Conservancy.

Inside, the arena will use reclaimed rainwater to make ice, which the release called "the greenest ice in the NHL." Climate Pledge Arena will also use compostable containers and a minimum of 95% of waste will be diverted from landfills "on

a weight basis.”

Additionally, at least 75% of food will be locally sourced on a seasonal basis and “all viable unused food” will be donated to local program, tickets to NHL and WNBA games will also double as free public transit passes and, in a rare move for Amazon, it said carbon emissions and sustainability performance of the arena and events will be publicly disclosed.

“Instead of naming it after Amazon, we’re calling it Climate Pledge Arena as a regular reminder of the importance of fighting climate change,” said Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in a statement. “We look forward to working together with Oak View Group, a new Climate Pledge signatory, and NHL Seattle to inspire global climate action.”

The 18,100-seat venue is expected to host 200 events each year.

KeyArena was originally built for the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair, according to the Seattle Mayor’s office. Financial services company KeyCorp bought the naming rights in 1995. The NBA’s Seattle Supersonics—now the Oklahoma City Thunder—played there from 1995 to 2008. Attendance was about 550,000 annually.

Amazon did not disclose how much it shelled out for the privilege of renaming the stadium beyond noting it made a “significant investment [with sports and entertainment company] Oak View Group.” (Personal finance company SoFi reportedly spent \$400 million for the naming rights to an NFL stadium in Los Angeles, which is slated to open this summer.)

Amazon announced its climate pledge in September 2019 following pressure both internally and externally for action.

The pledge asks companies to:

- Regularly measure and report greenhouse gas emissions
- Implement decarbonization strategies like efficiency improvements, renewable energy and materials reductions
- Neutralize any remaining emissions with “additional, quantifiable, real, permanent and socially beneficial” offsets

At the time, a group calling itself Amazon Employees for Climate Justice called the pledge a “huge win,” but they also said it—and Amazon’s actions to that point—were not enough. In a blog post about a planned strike, the group noted even if Amazon makes 50% of its shipments net-zero carbon by 2030, we won’t necessarily see a decrease in emissions compared to existing levels given Amazon’s rate of growth.

“As long as Amazon uses its power to help oil and gas companies discover and extract more fossil fuel, donates to climate-denying politicians and think tanks, and enables the oppression of climate refugees, employees will keep raising our voices,” the group said in a statement. “We must also consider: Which parts of our supply chain aren’t included when Amazon reports our emissions? We look forward to working with leadership to understand these questions and to working to ensure transparency and accountability.”

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