Energy Centers

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an energy center?

An energy center is a facility that generates electricity near the businesses it serves. In New Albany, on-site energy centers may be proposed to provide dedicated power to data center campuses, using natural gas delivered by pipeline. Each proposal is reviewed by the State of Ohio through the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA).

AT A GLANCE

DEDICATED POWER
An energy center supplies electricity directly to the facility it serves, separate from the shared utility grid.

WHO DECIDES
The State of Ohio. The OPSB approves, modifies or denies projects. Ohio EPA issues air permits.

THE CITY'S ROLE
The City has no approval authority, but can participate in OPSB cases to protect local planning and zoning standards.

PUBLIC PROCESS
Standard OPSB reviews include a public information meeting, a public hearing and an evidentiary hearing.

AIR QUALITY
Ohio EPA must confirm a facility meets health-based air standards before construction can begin.

NO DRILLING OR FRACKING
Energy centers supplied by pipeline do not drill, frack or operate wells on their sites.

HOW PROJECTS ARE REVIEWED

OHIO POWER SITING BOARD: Siting Approval

The Ohio Power Siting Board reviews each application closely, with the state Departments of Health, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Development. Staff check every study, including noise, water, ecology and traffic, and the Board approves a project only when state standards are met, often adding conditions to protect the community. The process includes a public hearing where residents can testify.

OHIO EPA: Air Permits

Ohio EPA is the state agency responsible for issuing air permits for energy centers in Ohio. It reviews emissions controls, the combined effect of nearby sources and compliance with health-based air quality standards, with an opportunity for public comment before a permit is issued.

Agency roles

Agency	Role
Ohio Power Siting Board	Decides whether to approve, modify or deny the certificate to build and operate a facility
Ohio EPA	Reviews and issues air permits; also a voting member of the OPSB
City of New Albany	No approval authority; may intervene in cases to seek its planning and zoning standards as certificate conditions
U.S. EPA	Sets the national air quality standards that Ohio EPA applies and enforces

THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD PROCESS

Who has authority over energy center projects?

Under Ohio law, power generation facilities of 50 megawatts or more are approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board, not by villages, townships, cities, or counties. The Board is chaired by the Chair of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. Its voting members include the directors of Ohio EPA, Health, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Development, and a public member who is an engineer. Four state legislators serve as non-voting members.

What must the OPSB find before approving a project?

Ohio Revised Code 4906.10 requires the Board to determine the nature of the project's probably environmental impact and to find, among other things, that the project:

- Represents the minimum adverse environmental impact, considering available technology and alternative
- Complies with Ohio's air, water, solid and hazardous waste, and aviation safety laws
- Is consistent with regional electric grid plans and supports system reliability, where applicable
- Considers the impact on agricultural district land, where applicable
- Serves the public interest, convenience and necessity

To support these findings, every application must include detailed studies of noise, traffic, air and water, ecology and wildlife, cultural and historic resources, land use, geology, public safety, visual impact and economic effects. OPSB staff, working with state agencies, review each study before issuing recommendations. The Board may add conditions to any approval. In earlier New Albany cases, the City's planning and zoning standards were adopted as OPSB conditions.

How does a standard review work?

1	**Pre-application notice and public information meetings.** The developer notifies the OPSB and hosts two public meetings to share project information and answer questions.
2	**Application filed.** The full application is posted on the OPSB docket and placed in local libraries. Nearby property owners and tenants are notified by mail.
3	**Staff investigation.** OPSB staff, working with member agencies including Ohio EPA, review the application and publish a Staff Report with recommended conditions.
4	**Local public hearing.** Anyone may give sworn testimony. The OPSB sets the date and location and publishes notice in local newspapers.
5	**Evidentiary hearing.** Parties that formally intervened present evidence and cross-examine witnesses.
6	**Board decision.** The OPSB votes to approve, modify or deny. Parties may seek rehearing and appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court.

Are all projects reviewed the same way?

No. Ohio law, including House Bill 15 (2025), allows some projects to qualify for an accelerated review. Standard certificate applications include a public information meeting, a public hearing and an evidentiary hearing. Each case's OPSB docket shows which process applies.

How can residents participate?

Testify at an OPSB public hearing, or email a written comment to contactOPSB@puco.ohio.gov with the project's case number in the subject line. All filings are public at opsb.ohio.gov.

OHIO EPA: THE AIR PERMIT

Ohio EPA's mission is to protect the environment and public health by ensuring compliance with environmental laws.

Who issues the air permit?

Ohio EPA. Under the federal Clean Air Act and Ohio law, Ohio EPA is the state agency responsible for permitting and regulating air emissions in Ohio. Construction of emission sources cannot begin until Ohio EPA issues an air Permit-to-Install, and the OPSB cannot approve a project that will not comply with Ohio's air pollution laws.

Ohio EPA may issue an air permit only if the applicant shows the facility will use the best available technology, comply with all state and federal air rules, and not cause or contribute to a violation of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The Clean Air Act requires those standards to protect public health "with an adequate margin of safety," including for sensitive groups such as children, older adults and people with asthma. If a project cannot meet them, Ohio EPA cannot issue the permit.

How does Ohio EPA review an application?

1	**Application.** The applicant identifies every emission source and its maximum emissions.
2	**Air quality modeling.** Ohio EPA checks the predicted concentrations at and beyond the property line, added on top of existing and approved nearby sources, against the health standards.
3	**Technology review.** Ohio EPA confirms the best available controls are used and sets limits for each engine and pollutant.
4	**Draft permit and public comment.** The public can comment, and a hearing may be held. Notices are posted at epa.ohio.gov.
5	**Final permit and compliance.** The facility must operate within its limits, conduct stack testing, keep records and report to Ohio EPA. It needs a long-term operating permit and is subject to inspection and enforcement. Ohio EPA also operates air monitoring stations in the area, including one at New Albany High School.

What pollutants does Ohio EPA review?

Pollutant	What it is	How it is limited
Fine particulate matter (PM2.5)	Tiny particles that can be inhaled deeply	Must meet federal health standards: 9.0 $\mu g/m^3$ as an annual average and 35 $\mu g/m^3$ over 24 hours. Natural gas burns with very low particulate emissions. *The standard was set in 2024 and upheld by a federal appeals court in June 2026.*
Nitrogen oxides (NOx)	Gases from combustion that contribute to ozone	Engine limits, typically with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) controls
Carbon monoxide (CO) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs)	Products of incomplete combustion	Limits, typically with oxidation catalysts
Air toxics, such as formaldehyde	Pollutants with specific health thresholds	Reviewed under Ohio's toxic air contaminant rules and reduced by oxidation catalysts
Sulfur dioxide (SO_2)	A gas from sulfur in fuel	Very low, because pipeline natural gas contains almost no sulfur

What do large annual emission totals in permit applications mean?

Those figures are a facility's "potential to emit," a regulatory ceiling calculated as if every unit ran at full power 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Permits are written to that ceiling so the limits are conservative. Actual emissions are typically lower because units run only as power is needed.

ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND NATURAL GAS SUPPLY

Energy centers supplied by pipeline do not drill, frack or operate wells, and they must meet health-based air standards before they can be built. The table below responds to claims in materials circulating in the community.

What you may have heard	The facts
"These projects frack Ohio's state parks."	Energy centers do not drill, frack or own wells, and do not lease or control public land. Leasing of state land is decided by Ohio's Oil and Gas Land Management Commission, a separate state body.
"Companies are privately fracking for their own gas."	No. Energy centers buy pipeline-quality natural gas delivered through a regulated pipeline, the same way other businesses and homes receive gas.
"Fracking risks will come here."	Drilling, well pads and injection wells are not part of an energy center. These facilities are enclosed power plants inside established business parks.
"These plants are approved with no public notice or hearing."	Projects in the OPSB's standard review include a public information meeting, a sworn public hearing and an evidentiary hearing.
"The emissions numbers show massive pollution."	Quoted numbers are often a permit ceiling assuming every unit runs at full power all year. Ohio EPA must confirm a facility meets health-based air standards, with cumulative modeling of nearby sources.
"Gas engines are outdated and inefficient."	Modern gas engines are among the most efficient options for on-site power. They are paired with emission controls where required.
"The pollution will harm local health."	Ohio EPA cannot issue a permit if a facility would cause a violation of national air standards, which are set to protect sensitive groups.

Does natural gas power affect the environment?

All power generation has some impact. Regulators determine whether a project's impacts are minimized and within legal limits. The OPSB must find a project represents the minimum adverse environmental impact, and Ohio EPA must find it meets air standards.

Will an energy center use local water?

Water needs vary by technology; some engines are air-cooled and do not require continuous use of local water supplies. Any waste must be disposed of under applicable regulations.

What about wildlife and natural areas?

Environmental studies of each site are part of the OPSB application and Staff review.

Will there be odors?

Natural gas burns cleanly and does not produce strong odors when combusted.

COMMUNITY AND SAFETY

Are these facilities safe for nearby neighborhoods?

Energy centers are designed to industry safety codes, with gas detection, fire suppression and automated shutdown systems. Operators coordinate emergency plans with local fire and police.

What about noise?

Designs can include enclosed engines and noise-reducing equipment. Noise must meet the limits set in the OPSB certificate, including local standards adopted as conditions.

How will traffic be managed?

Construction traffic is coordinated with local authorities and is typically greater than traffic once a facility is operating.

What are the local benefits?

Construction jobs, permanent skilled positions, local contracting and tax revenue that supports schools and public services.

ENERGY CENTERS AND THE GRID

Why build power on site?

Central Ohio's electric grid is under heavy demand. Generating power on site means a data center does not draw that load from the shared grid, reducing pressure on the local utility system.

Will this affect my electric bill?

A privately funded, behind-the-meter energy center is dedicated solely to the facility it serves and is not included in residential utility rates.

Why natural gas engines instead of large turbines?

Modern gas engines are efficient, start quickly and follow a facility's load closely. Running many smaller units means only the engines needed operate at any time.

Could a facility be expanded later?

Any expansion would require a new or amended OPSB certificate and updated Ohio EPA permits, each with public notice.

ABOUT THE POWERCONNEX NEW ALBANY 3 ENERGY CENTER

The PowerConneX New Albany 3 Energy Center is a proposed natural gas power facility that would supply electricity only to an EdgeConneX data center on the same site in the Licking County portion of the New Albany International Business Park. It is under the OPSB's standard certificate review.

Project facts

Item	Details
Developer	PowerConneX, an affiliate of EdgeConneX
Capacity and site	Up to 430 megawatts on about 30 acres
Equipment	30 natural gas generator engines, four small "black start" engines and emergency backup generators + BESS
Purpose	Main power source for the data center campus on the same property
Target operation	First Quarter 2028
OPSB case	Case No. 26-0361-EL-BGN (standard certificate review)

LEARN MORE & STAY INVOLVED

Questions or comments: contactOPSB@puco.ohio.gov (include the project's case number)

City of New Albany: newalbanyohio.org/natural-gas-power | Ohio Power Siting Board: opsb.ohio.gov | Ohio EPA: epa.ohio.gov