

**OEC ACTION FUND COMMENTS**  
**IN SUPPORT OF SOBE MORATORIUM**  
Wednesday, December 20, 2023

The OEC Action Fund applauds Youngstown City Council for introducing legislation that would establish a moratorium on any facility that converts, or attempts to convert, pyrolysis, gasification or combustion of tires, plastics and electronic waste in the city. We support this ordinance and encourage all members of Council to do the same. This is an important step towards environmental justice, and I thank Council and the Brown Administration for their leadership. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of SOBE Concerned Citizens and all members of the community who have been leading the fight against the proposed future operations of SOBE Thermal.

As this legislation does not stop SOBE Thermal's proposal forever, we are committed to supporting the continuing work of the City Council and the Brown Administration in carefully examining the public health and environmental impacts of this proposed project.

Youngstown and Mahoning Valley have experienced a legacy of environmental injustice over the past century, continuing into the present. Whether from industrial pollution caused by the steel mills, a history of extractive out-of-town businesses, or the recent train derailment in East Palestine, the region has been hit hard. The communities throughout the region deserve a future built on renewable energy and sustainable economies, rather than fossil fuels and sacrifice zones.

As the OEC noted in its [technical comments](#) respectfully urging the Ohio EPA to deny the proposed SOBE Thermal Energy Systems permit, "based on the environmental justice needs of the community, the expanded use of syngas and methane gas for community heat is the wrong direction for Youngstown." We understand that at present, much of downtown Youngstown relies on steam from this facility for heat, and the community can't turn it off overnight. At the same time, the city can develop a concrete, deliverable plan to transition toward a heating system powered by fossil-free energy. Expanding and retrofitting the legacy facility for the long-term does not achieve this goal. We at the OEC Action Fund look forward to being part of the conversation in charting Youngstown's future.