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# Laborers union to build new training center in DeWitt with eye toward I-81, Micron projects

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Apprentices learn how to erect scaffolding at the Upstate New York Laborers Training Center in Oswego. (Provided photo)

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By **Rick Moriarty | [rmoriarty@syracuse.com](mailto:rmoriarty@syracuse.com)**

DeWitt, N.Y. — Laborers Local 633 is planning to build a new training center in DeWitt as it looks to expand its membership to take on the upcoming Interstate 81 and Micron construction projects.

Laborers are the first workers to arrive on a construction site and the first to leave. They clear the area, pour the foundation, excavate trenches and install water, sewer and drainage pipes. When they're done and gone, the carpenters, electricians, plumbers and others arrive to put up the building.

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Fully trained laborers earn about \$31 to \$34 an hour, plus benefits. Successful candidates must have two main things — a high school diploma and a willingness to work outside in all weather.

Currently, Local 633 provides classroom instruction via its apprenticeship program at its headquarters at 7051 Fly Road.

But its hands-on training is provided about 40 miles north at the Upstate New York Laborers Training Center on Route 104 in Oswego, which is shared with five other laborer locals.

Gabe Rosetti, business agent for Local 633, said the union wants to be able to provide hands-on training closer to Syracuse, where it expects to draw dozens of new members to work on the I-81 project.

The laborers local has 600 members. Rosetti said the union would like to increase that by 50 to 100 members so it can supply the workers that will be needed for the I-81 and Micron projects.

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“We’re definitely going to need more people,” he said.

The state Department of Transportation is planning to demolish the elevated portion of I-81 through downtown Syracuse and replace it with a ground-level boulevard. The massive, multi-year project is expected to create hundreds of construction jobs.

The DOT has set a goal of having 15% of the overall employment hours on the project being performed by residents of targeted areas of the city who have recently experienced economic hardship or barriers to employment.

Having a hands-on training center in nearby DeWitt will make it easier to recruit Syracuse residents to the union's apprenticeship program, Rosetti said.

He said the union is also expecting to see an increase in demand for workers from Micron Technology's planned semiconductor plant in Clay, though to a lesser degree than the I-81 project. The Micron project is expected to create thousands of construction jobs — especially electricians and plumbers — over the next 20 years.

Local 633 is the third union in Onondaga County that plans to expand its training facility to help meet an expected increased demand for labor because of the I-81 and Micron projects. The others are the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters in Salina and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 43 in Clay.

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The laborers plan to double the number of apprentices in its training program from 20 to 40, Rosetti said.

The apprenticeship program consists of 288 hours of classroom instruction and 4,000 hours of on-the-job training. It typically takes three years to complete.

The training includes safety requirements; pouring concrete and asphalt; erecting scaffolding; installing water, sewer and drainage pipes; jackhammering; demolition; and asbestos and lead abatement.



An apprentice participates in a hazardous waste handling class at the Upstate New York Laborers Training Center in Oswego. (Provided photo)

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Applications to the apprenticeship program are accepted from 9 a.m. to noon on the third Wednesday of each month at the union's office on Fly Road. The union receives 50 to 75 applications a year but now admits only about five people a year so it can be sure there will be jobs available for them, Rosetti said.



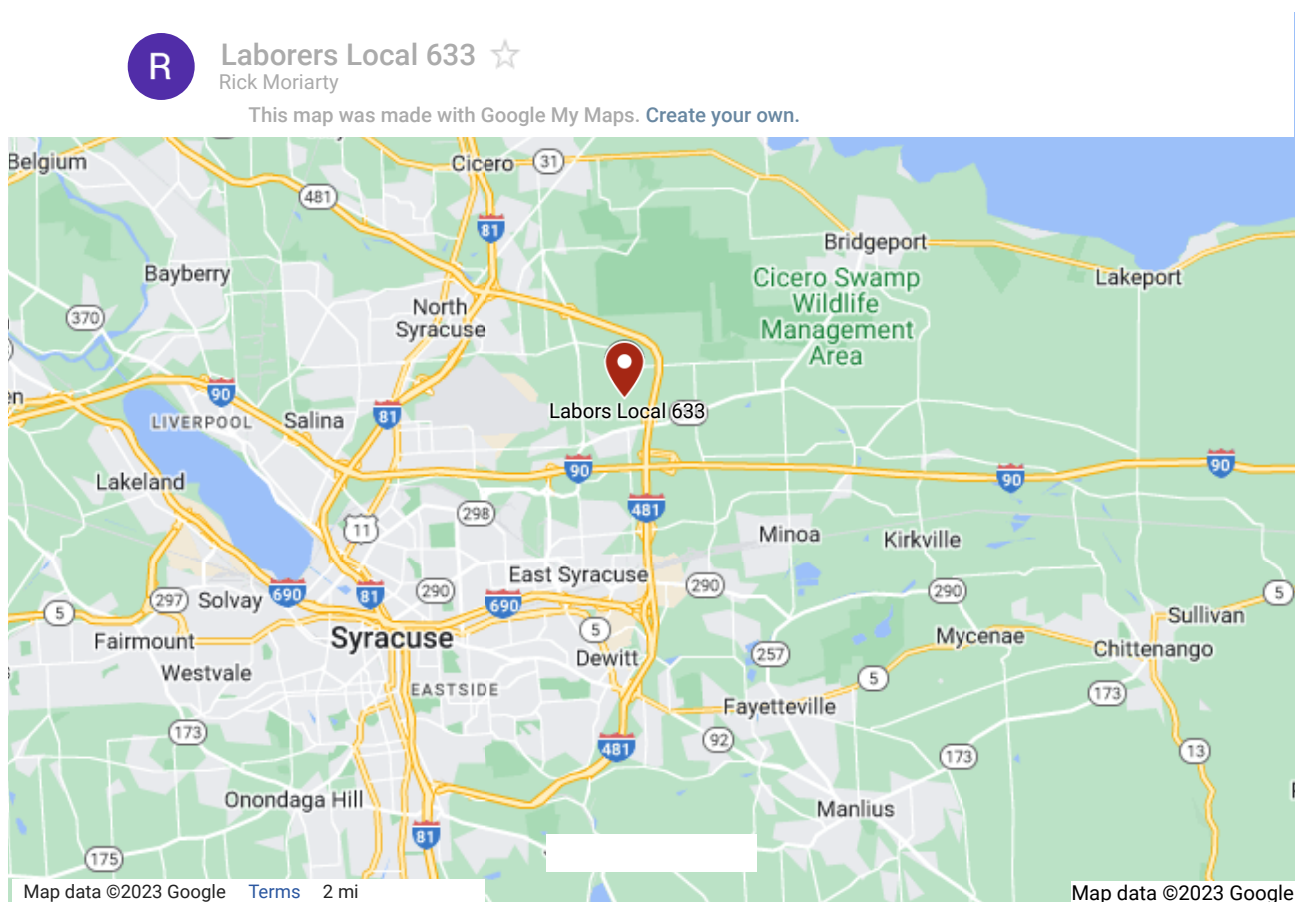
“It all revolves around the work,” he said.

Journeyman with Local 633 — union members who have completed their training — are paid \$31 to \$34 an hour, depending on the job and location of the work. Pay for apprentices starts at 70% of journeyman wages and increases as they complete their training.

All members also receive a benefits package that includes health insurance and pension.

Applicants must be 18 or older, have a high school degree or GED, and be willing to work outside in all kinds of weather. Rosetti said preference is given to applicants with previous construction training and experience.

Design plans for the new center are not yet complete, but Rosetti said the union would like to begin construction in the spring and complete it by next fall.



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*Rick Moriarty covers business news and consumer issues. Got a tip, comment or story idea? Contact him anytime: [Email](#) | [X](#) | [Facebook](#) | 315-470-3148*

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