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MICRON

# Exclusive: Micron report details lasting impacts to Central NY: jobs, traffic, population, pollution

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This rendering of Micron Technology's planned chipmaking complex in Clay was included in the company's draft environmental impact statement filed in March. Route 31 is at the lower portion of the photo. Caughdenoy Road is to the left. Micron Technology



By [Glenn Coin](#) | [gcoin@syracuse.com](mailto:gcoin@syracuse.com)

Syracuse, N.Y. – The impacts of [Micron Technology's](#) immense chipmaking complex in the town of Clay would reverberate through Central New York for decades to come, the company's draft environmental impact report says.

Residential and commercial growth spurred by Micron could bring up to 64,000 new residents to the region. The local economy would get an annual \$16 billion boost, and local residents would have \$2 billion more in disposable income each year.

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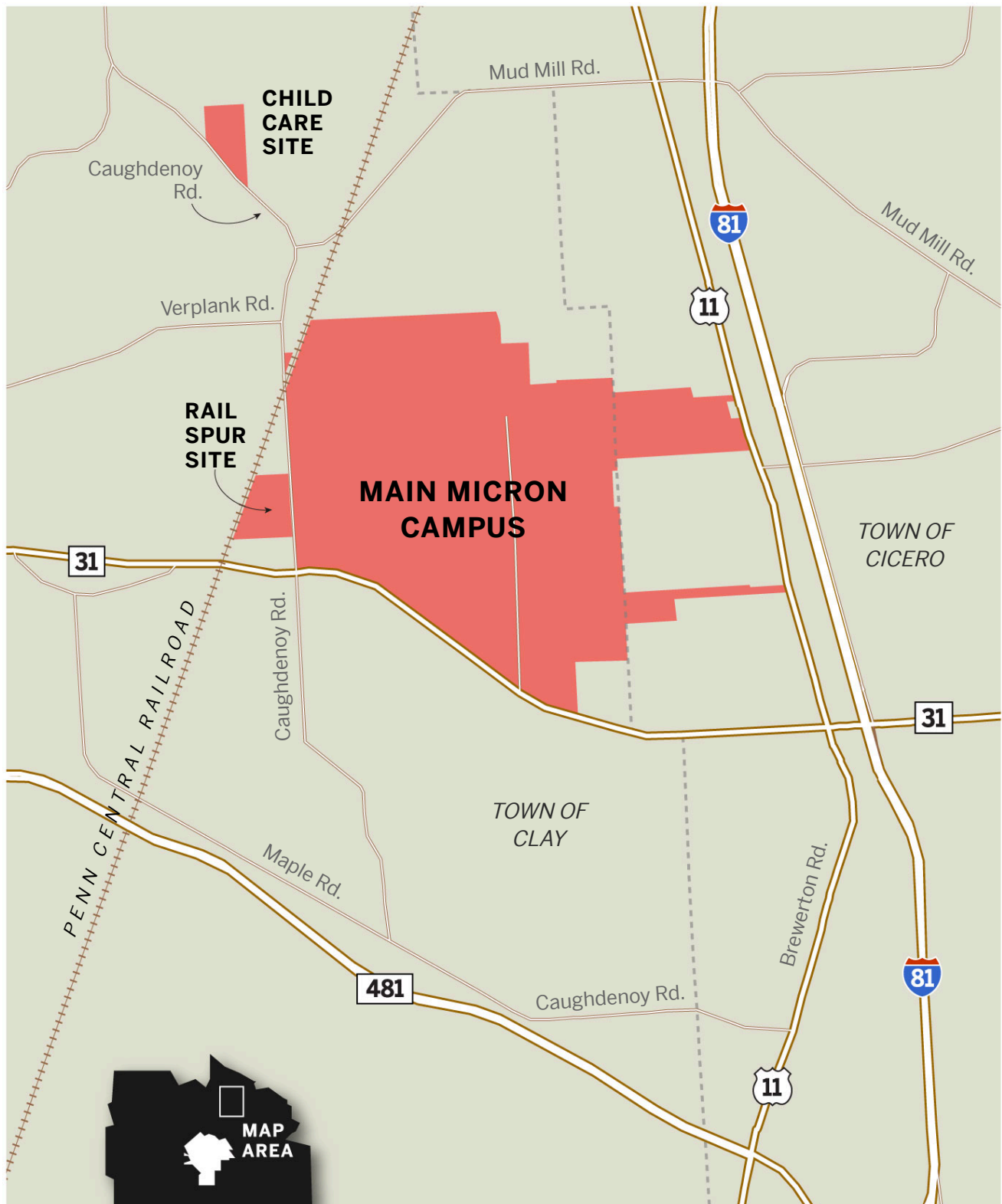
Syracuse.com has obtained the bulk of Micron's report, which the [county and other public agencies have refused to release](#) since December.

The report says [Micron's complex could create tens of thousands of new jobs](#), including 9,000 at Micron that pay an average of \$100,000. Most of those workers—about 6,000 – would be local residents, according to the report, which Micron was required to compile under state and federal laws.

But there will be challenges, the report says: The influx of thousands of construction workers and new residents would squeeze an already tight housing market, making it even harder to find an affordable place to live. Traffic would overwhelm local roads unless expensive improvements are made, including widening major roads and building two new highway interchanges. Local governments would collect \$500 million more per year, but property taxes could still rise as the demand for services does, Micron's analysis says.

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As business and residential growth booms, more than 10,000 acres of forests and grasslands — an area two-thirds the size of Syracuse — is likely to disappear. Micron's operations and voracious appetite for power would spew so much global-warming carbon dioxide that the project could jeopardize the state's climate change goals.



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Micron plans to spend up to \$100 billion on the complex and would receive about \$20 billion in taxpayer subsidies. The complex would be the largest chipmaking plant in the country and the largest private development ever in New York state.

Those details and thousands more abound in the exhaustive report, called a draft environmental impact statement. Micron submitted the report to the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency and the U.S. Department of Commerce in March.

Micron's report is a critical step in the company's plans to build the Clay complex and begin tapping into subsidies from the federal, state and county governments.

The report, compiled by consulting firms paid by Micron, makes the case that the company can build the massive complex while reducing environmental and social harms. That argument assumes that public agencies and utilities – and ultimately taxpayers and users — are willing to make major investments in infrastructure over the next two decades.

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The report details the impacts the project could have on everything from air quality to housing to wetlands to wildlife. Micron also had to suggest actions to help reduce the impacts, such as setting aside land for bats and birds displaced by the project.

Much of what's in the report has been documented previously, including [the amount of water](#) and [electricity the chip complex would consume](#). The environmental statement also contains a wealth of information not previously disclosed, including the need for a new highway exit and access road off Route 481 and an updated, detailed timeline of construction over the next two decades.

The county and the commerce department are reviewing Micron's report and could ask the company to make changes before the report is formally released to the public. That release is scheduled for the first week in June.

The public will have at least 45 days to read through and comment on the environmental statement. Activists have asked for four months, given the size and scope of the report.

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But Micron is on a tight timetable. The environmental review process could take months, and Micron says it plans to start clearing trees from the site in November.

The report, commissioned by Micron and submitted to agencies that have promised Micron billions in subsidies, often paints a rosy picture of the massive development's effects. Time and time again, Micron insists that the impacts of its massive complex, combined with a variety of development projects already on the drawing board, would "not be significant."

With proper mitigation measures and "best management practices," Micron claims, the combination of the Micron complex and dozens of proposed developments nearby would have no significant impacts on traffic, electric and natural gas supply, forest and grasslands, streams and wetlands, climate change, air quality, emergency services, and solid and hazardous waste disposal, among others.

That assumes the public picks up the tab for the roads and utilities like water and wastewater that will accommodate Micron's outsized potential impacts.

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An 11-page table lists “best management practices” Micron promises to enact to reduce the project’s impacts. Those include keeping hazardous chemicals tightly contained, limiting hours of construction, using energy-saving measures to cut electrical use, maximizing recycling of trash, staggering work shifts to reduce peak-hour traffic, helping to train local emergency medical crews on toxic chemicals used in the fabs, and operating an onsite medical clinic for worker safety.

Micron also makes a number of pledges that are short on detail, such as researching ways to reduce toxic chemicals in its processes.

Here are some of the highlights of the report.

## **Scale is immense**



A look at the planned site of Micron Technology's computer chipmaking plant in Clay. June 27, 2024. (N. Scott Trimble | [strimble@syracuse.com](mailto:strimble@syracuse.com)) N. Scott Trimble | [strimble@syracuse.com](mailto:strimble@syracuse.com)

The environmental review assumes Micron will build four fabrication plants, or fabs, over the next 16 years. Each fab is 150 feet high and sprawls across 28 acres. The entire complex, including utility buildings and offices, would cover nearly 1,000 acres, an area nearly three times bigger than the New York State Fairgrounds.

The dimensions of the project detailed in the environmental report are jaw-dropping. Every fab would rest on 6,300 pilings, each 20 feet long and up to 5 feet in diameter, driven into bedrock. The complex would require 11,600 parking spaces – more than Destiny USA — to accommodate employees working in five separate shifts. (A plan to put parking garages below ground was abandoned, the report says, after Micron discovered the water table was too high.)

When fully built, the complex would have 16 million square feet of office, fab and ancillary building space. That's nearly four times as big as Boeing's airplane factory in Washington state.



To build the Micron complex, 4,200 construction workers would be needed at any one time for much of the next 16 years.

When all four fabs are at full capacity, estimated to be 2045, Micron says it would process 52,000 silicon wafers each week, generating a billion or more memory chips every year.

## New roads, exits



Micron Technology says the Route 31 and I-81 interchange, in Cicero, should be rebuilt as something called a diverting diamond interchange to move traffic faster as Micron gets ready to build a huge chipmaking complex at Route 31 and Caughdenoy Road. (N. Scott Trimble | [strimble@syracuse.com](mailto:strimble@syracuse.com)) N. Scott Trimble | [strimble@syracuse.com](mailto:strimble@syracuse.com)

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The building and operation of the vast Micron factory complex would generate an unprecedented surge of traffic, particularly in the towns of Clay and Cicero. So many cars and trucks would use local roads that most intersections would experience gridlock without major improvements.

In the environmental report, Micron proposes two new interchanges that allow traffic on and off highways. One would be on Interstate 81, in Cicero, north of Route 31. The second would be on state Route 481 in Clay, west of the existing Caughdenoy Road interchange.

Additionally, Micron suggests two more highway changes to existing traffic patterns: an expansion of the Route 481 exit at Caughdenoy and a reconfigured exchange at I-81 and Route 31.

The company has also proposed widening routes 11 and 31, and building a new access road from Route 481 to the Micron campus, at Route 31 and Caughdenoy Road.

## **Greenhouse gases emissions**

Micron says the direct and indirect effects of the chipmaking complex would annually emit nearly 5 million tons of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas. That's equal to the emissions of about 500,000 cars.

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The 5 million tons include more than the direct emission from the Clay plant. It also includes emissions from all power plants where Micron would buy electricity.

The company pledges to buy carbon-free electricity that would offset half of those emissions.

Even with buying green electricity, Micron's power needs would be responsible for nearly twice as much carbon dioxide emissions as all vehicles generate in Central New York now.

Micron's added emissions would increase by nearly 30% the amount of greenhouse gases that all New York's industries combined emit now. The company's analysis shows that this one project alone could threaten the state's ability to reach goals of the state's climate change law, an effort championed by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

The company plans to install rooftop solar panels on some buildings, which would generate just a sliver of 1% of the electricity needed for the fabs. Officials have said previously they can't put panels on top of the biggest buildings, the fabs, because of potential leaks and vibration.

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## Chemicals and hazardous waste

Chipmaking requires two basic raw materials: One, silicon discs the color and diameter of a vinyl phonograph record; and two, chemicals, many of them hazardous.

At full production, Micron's four fabs would store onsite up to 56 million gallons of chemicals, mostly corrosives. That's equivalent to 1 million 55-gallon drums.

Some of those are known as "forever chemicals" and have few regulations on their use. [Micron says it's working on finding alternatives to those chemicals](#), but in the meantime will keep using them.

The company will build a pretreatment plant on site, and then pipe most of its waste to an industrial wastewater plant nearby to be built by Onondaga County.

Micron says it will take precautions to ensure those chemicals are used, stored, transported and disposed of safely.

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The Micron complex in Clay would generate 50,000 tons of hazardous waste each year with all four fabs running. That waste could be shipped to facilities from Massachusetts to Texas, the report says.

Micron says it is “evaluating possible wastewater treatment options” and “would develop procedures for handling various wastes, leaks and spills,” but doesn’t elaborate.

## Housing shortages





The Micron complex, and the community growth it would spur, “would generate housing demand at a scale not experienced since the 1970s,” the report states. File photo, 2021. Rick Moriarty | [rmoriarty@syracuse.com](mailto:rmoriarty@syracuse.com)

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With the rapid influx of construction workers and employees of Micron and spinoff businesses, houses and apartments might get more expensive and harder to find than they already are, the report acknowledges. As demand grows, though, the report suggests that builders would rise to the moment and build more housing.

The Micron complex, and the growth it would spur, “would generate housing demand at a scale not experienced since the 1970s,” the report states.

The increased housing demand, particularly in the towns of Clay and adjacent Cicero, could push up rents and house prices, pushing out some residents who can no longer afford to live there, Micron concedes.

But a housing shortage should be temporary, Micron’s consultants speculate, as builders ramp up construction to meet the growing demand. And because the first two fabs don’t start operating until the end of the decade, builders and landlords have several years to catch up.

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The report even optimistically views the worsening housing shortage as a silver lining: With increased demand and higher rents, landlords would be more willing to fix up older properties and even build new housing in the city of Syracuse, “where housing conditions have been deteriorating for some time.”

To combat the housing shortage, it would be up to the state and county to ramp up their housing initiatives with grants and other programs, Micron writes. Governments could also draw from a \$500 million pot of money called the Green Chips Community Investment Fund, of which governments will raise \$150 million, the report suggests.

## Bats and birds



Micron Technology would destroy more than 200 acres of wetlands, like these along Burnet Road, in the town of Clay, and fill in more than a mile of stream banks to build a semiconductor manufacturing complex. Glenn Coin | [gcoin@syracuse.com](mailto:gcoin@syracuse.com)

The Micron site is inhabited by several endangered and threatened species, including the Indiana bat. The presence of those bats has delayed the project because Micron can't clear trees while the bats might be roosting there, from April 1 to Oct. 31. After that, bats are assumed to be hibernating in nearby caves.

In the environment report, Micron pledges to buy 1,200 acres of conservation easements to preserve habitats for the bats, and to donate up to \$1 million in grants for bat research. The company will also give \$50,000 to build gates across bat caves to keep people out.

At least two species of threatened birds of prey, the northern harrier and the short-eared owl, were also found on the site.

Altogether, Micron plans to buy or preserve about 2,200 acres to replace habitat destroyed by the building of the chip complex, the report promises.

## Utility projects





This National Grid substation off Caughdenoy Road in Clay could provide power to the White Pine Commerce Park being developed nearby by Onondaga County. (Rick Moriarty | [rmoriarty@syracuse.com](mailto:rmoriarty@syracuse.com))

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The massive plant and the growth that could follow would require significant expansions of water, electrical, natural gas and wastewater services. The report details what it calls “connected actions”:



- **Water.** Micron would use 48 million gallons of water a day, more than all 350,000 customers of the [Onondaga County Water Authority](#) use now. OCWA would have to build a second, 26-mile line from Lake Ontario to Clay to provide Micron with enough water. Early work on that project is already underway.
- **Wastewater.** [Onondaga County would expand its sewage treatment plant](#) on Oak Orchard Road and build a separate industrial wastewater treatment plant for Micron at Oak Orchard. The county has started building a pump station near the Micron campus.
- **Electricity.** [National Grid would expand the Clay substation](#) and run eight extra-high-voltage lines underneath the CSX tracks and Caughdenoy Road to the fabs. [Micron would use more electricity](#) than the states of New Hampshire and Vermont combined, [syracuse.com](#) has previously reported. National Grid has already applied to the Public Service Commission for permission.
- **Gas.** National Grid would also run a natural gas line to the Micron campus. That project is in the planning stages.

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**Micron's impact report is public information. Release it now (Editorial Board Opinion)**

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