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**MICRON**

# **County promised great-grandmother she could stay in home forever. Now she's being pushed out for Micron**

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Azalia King sits amid many of her 20 grandchildren and 16-great-grandchildren at the home where she lives on Caughdenoy Road in Clay. The county is pressuring her to move by Oct. 1 to make way for the proposed Micron Technology campus despite a promise she could live the rest of her life there. Provided photo



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

Clay, N.Y. – When Glenn and Azalia King were approached by Onondaga County more than 20 years ago to buy their family farm for a proposed business park, they resisted.

The Kings had lived in their two-story house on Caughdenoy Road for 40 years, raising their six children and running a beef cattle farm.

The Kings felt pressured to sell to the county but didn't want to leave. So when the [Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency](#) bought the Kings' 47-acre farm in 2005, the agency made them a promise: The Kings would never have to move. They could

live out the rest of their lives in the family home. They'd never have to pay rent or property taxes.

Glenn, who served as a volunteer firefighter in Clay for 70 years, died in 2015. He was 88. Azalia, now 91, still lives in the house where many of her 20 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren gather for family picnics near the towering rhododendron bush in the back yard.

But, now, Micron Technology says it needs that house and back yard to start building a huge chipmaking complex of up to four factories. The King family home sits on the future site of the first factory.

So the county, once again, is threatening to push Azalia King out of her home.

King doesn't want to go, and her family has already rejected two offers from OCIDA, said Terry King, Azalia's son.

"I don't think at this point in her life Mom deserves to be displaced," King, who lives a half mile down the road, told Syracuse.com. "Mom deserves to stay. They signed an agreement for life use."

But the family is negotiating, King added, acknowledging the inevitable power of the county to force Azalia King to move.

The standoff pits an elderly widow against one of the world's biggest chipmakers, which is backed by billions of dollars from the federal government to return semiconductor manufacturing to the U.S.

The Micron project, if fully built over 20 years, would be the largest private development in New York state history and a critical step in U.S. efforts to become less dependent upon overseas factories to produce chips vital to the military and modern life.

Micron announced its \$100 billion plan nearly three years ago and is already 18 months behind its original timetable. The company, which could qualify for \$20 billion in taxpayer subsidies, is working to finish an environmental report and acquire all the necessary permits so it can start construction in November.

The house where King still lives is ground zero for the first phase. Micron said in a report submitted to the county in March that the house has to be vacant for construction to start.

Micron and OCIDA declined to comment for this story.





Azalia King still lives in this house on Caughdenoy Road, at the western edge of the 1,400-acre proposed Micron Technology campus. N. Scott Trimble | [strimble@syracuse.com](mailto:strimble@syracuse.com)

## **'Ridiculous' offer**

Back in 2005, the King property was the last piece of a puzzle that OCIDA was assembling for a planned 252-acre business park.

That park was never built. In the years since, OCIDA has amassed an unbroken tract of 1,400 acres for Micron stretching from Caughdenoy Road in Clay to Route 11 in Cicero. The company's planned complex would employ 9,000 people and sprawl across an area nearly three times as big as the New York State Fairgrounds.

Micron announced in October 2022 that it would build the country's biggest chipmaking plant on the site in Clay. When the company held an open house in August 2023 at North Syracuse Junior-Senior High School, Azalia King's son was there. Terry King remembers pointing out to Micron and OCIDA officials that maps of the proposed complex depicted a driveway over the spot where his mother still lived.

Yet nothing happened for more than a year, he said. Then, last fall, King said, OCIDA contacted the family to get Azalia King to leave.



That first offer, he said, was for just \$5,000.

The siblings, most of whom live within a few miles of their mother, flatly rejected it.

Months went by. Then OCIDA turned up a few weeks ago with a second, substantially higher offer: \$100,000, King said.

Terry King and his five sisters considered that offer, but turned that one down, too.

The siblings don't want their 91-year-old mother to be pushed out of her home of 60 years, he said. But they also want to avoid a court battle. King said the family lawyer called OCIDA's lawyer last week to restart negotiations.

"He told them that we'd be as ridiculous as their \$5,000 offer," King said. "If they want to go to the table, we'll go to the table."

## **The counteroffer**

The Kings countered this month with an offer of their own: \$10 million. That would include OCIDA buying a 6.5-acre parcel across the street that Azalia King owns, and that abuts Micron's planned rail yard.

Terry King said the family arrived at the \$10 million figure by multiplying what OCIDA paid per acre for a piece of land on Burnet Road, on the east side of the planned Micron campus.

"That's the bar (OCIDA) set," he said.

OCIDA hasn't responded, he said. The agency has said it wants Azalia King out by Oct. 1.

OCIDA has in its back pocket a legal process called eminent domain to get King out of the house. Eminent domain law allows governments to take private property for projects deemed to be in the public interest. Anyone whose property is taken or who is forced out is entitled to compensation either negotiated by the parties or decreed by a judge.

The eminent domain process, however, can take months.

Under the specter of eminent domain, OCIDA bought up dozens of houses on Burnet Road. All of those residents had to leave, and the homes were torn down.



Twenty years ago, the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency bought this house on Caughdenoy Road in Clay from Glenn and Azalia King, and promised the couple they could live the rest of their lives there. Now the agency is trying to force out Azalia King, 91, to make way for Micron Technology. Glenn Coin | [gcoin@syracuse.com](mailto:gcoin@syracuse.com) Glenn Coin | [gcoin@syracuse.com](mailto:gcoin@syracuse.com)

## Forced out before

This is the third time Azalia King has faced the prospect of being forced out of her home by the government. In 1964, Glenn and Azalia had to sell their dairy farm, on the west side of Caughdenoy Road, to the Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. for an electrical substation, county land records show.

That substation, it turns out, was one of the key factors that lured power-hungry Micron to the site where Azalia King now lives.

After being forced to sell for the substation, the Kings moved across the street, buying 47 acres on the east side of Caughdenoy. There, they raised their children and ran a small beef cattle operation. Glenn worked at Jerome Fire Equipment, just up the road.



Then OCIDA came calling. Glenn King didn't want to get pushed off his property again, his son said.

"Dad said, 'I don't want to sell it,' " Terry King recalled. "(OCIDA) basically said, if we don't make an agreement, we're going to eminent domain you again."

Finally, in July 2005, the Kings sold under pressure. OCIDA paid them \$330,750, county land records show, and took possession of the farm.

The couple had to maintain the property, but they wouldn't have to pay rent or property taxes for the rest of their lives. OCIDA would take over the property after Glenn and Azalia died, or if they failed to occupy the house for six months, the agreement said.

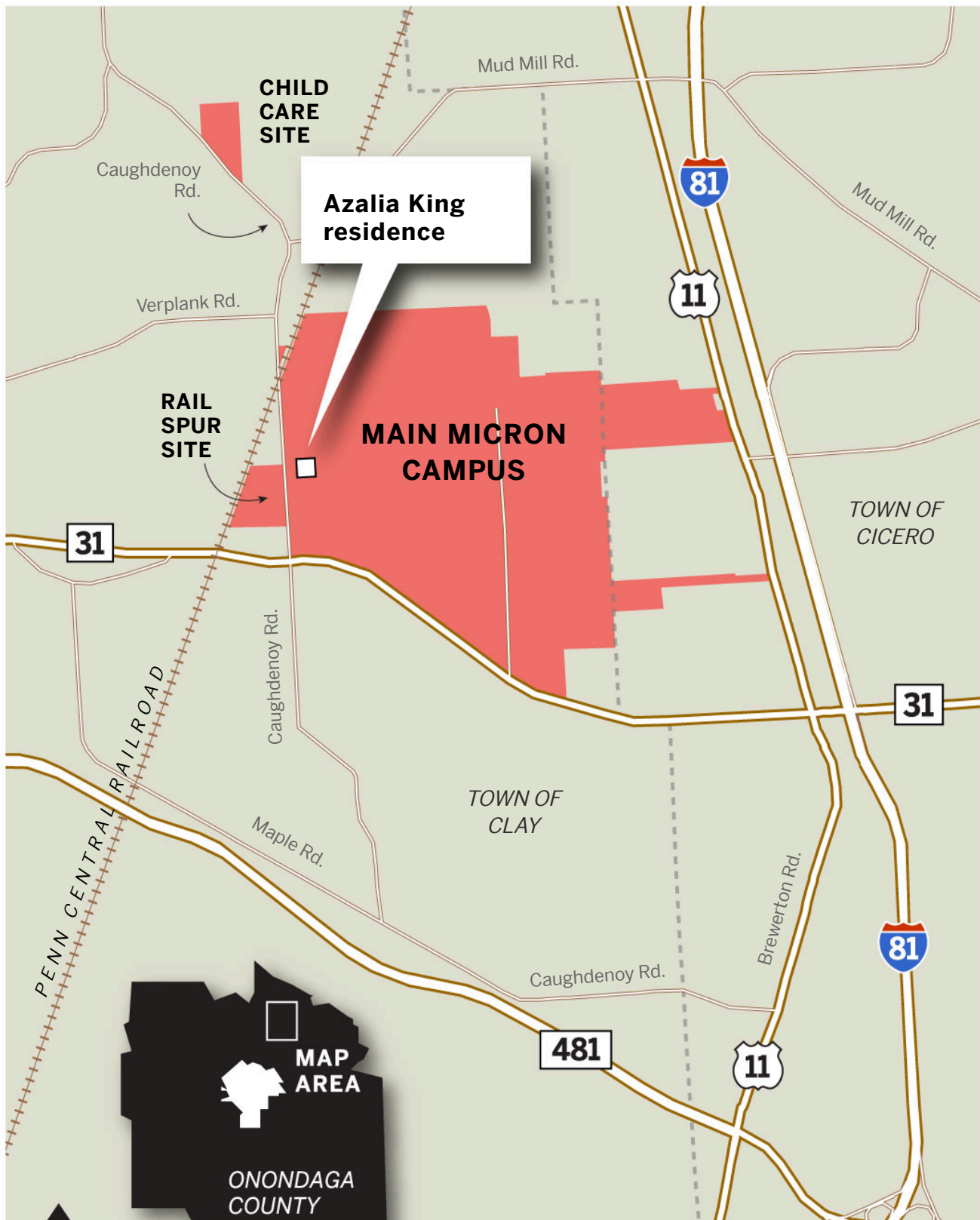
In a report filed with government agencies in March, Micron concedes that a resident of Caughdenoy Road "has life-long access rights," but the start of construction requires her "direct displacement." If the resident and OCIDA can't reach an agreement, Micron said, the agency would go to court and force her out under eminent domain.

Micron doesn't name King in the report, but she is the only person living on Caughdenoy Road in a house owned by OCIDA.

The county and other public agencies have refused to release the report, called a draft environmental impact statement, but syracuse.com has obtained the bulk of it.

Terry King said the siblings are trying to figure out where their mom would go if she is forced to leave. They're looking at apartments nearby, but they're not cheap: about \$2,700 a month, Terry King said.

"She has a morning coffee meeting with some of her friends every Tuesday, so you've got to have a place so she can continue to have a social life," he said. "We don't want to go far because our family's all close by."



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