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Sewers for Micron and expected population growth in Onondaga County could cost \$1 billion

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Rendering shows Micron Technology Inc.'s planned semiconductor fabrication facility in Clay. Micron says the \$100 billion plant will create 9,000 jobs over 20 years and four times that many spinoff jobs. (Micron Technology)



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

Syracuse, N.Y. — Onondaga County plans to spend up to \$1 billion to treat wastewater from [Micron Technology's](#) planned chipmaking complex in Clay and the community growth expected to follow.

That's more than the county spent on the decades-long sewer upgrades that cleaned up Onondaga Lake. And the expanded sewer system for Micron-related growth could transform the small Oak Orchard water treatment plant in Clay into an operation as sprawling as the Metropolitan treatment plant, which dominates Hiawatha Boulevard and serves more than 250,000 residents.

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The county's plans to lay a sewer line north of Route 31 could radically transform the northern section of Clay into a busy network of businesses, suppliers and the kinds of dense housing and retail developments the county says will be needed when [Micron Technology](#) comes.

In the end, the \$1 billion cost will be split about evenly between an industrial wastewater system to serve Micron and an expanded municipal sewage system that would serve growth spurred by Micron.

The chipmaker would ultimately pay for its portion of the wastewater system, according to County Executive Ryan McMahon. County residents and businesses served by the expanded Oak Orchard system would be on the hook for the public portion.

The two plants would treat different types of wastewater. The municipal sewer lines and Oak Orchard expansion would be for waste from toilets, sinks, showers and similar sources. The industrial plant would carry water tainted with chemicals from manufacturing processes, including Micron's. The county would also clean water and send it back to Micron for use in non-manufacturing areas, such as cooling towers.

Micron plans to start construction next year on two massive computer chipmaking plants at the corner of Route 31 and Caughdenoy Road. The company said it could build up to four fabrication plants, or fabs, by 2041.

The county in April created a "local development corporation" that will build the industrial wastewater treatment plant at the White Pine Commerce Park, where Micron plans to build its factories. That plant would be exclusively for Micron's use, and the company would pay for it, either upfront or through user rates over time, McMahon said.

The industrial line would empty into the county's Oak Orchard Wastewater Treatment plant. The county, through the development corporation, is spearheading the construction of the broader industrial wastewater system, including the Micron plant, because the system would serve other industrial users in the county's system, said Justin Sayles, McMahon's spokesman. The system would consist of the industrial plant, the reclaimed water treatment at Oak Orchard, and the pipes that would convey water back and forth.

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The new, nonprofit corporation, Onondaga County Water Redevelopment Corp., has more flexibility in retaining consultants and construction firms than the county would, McMahon said.

McMahon said the corporation is already looking for a specialized company that will design, build and operate the industrial wastewater plant. Hiring one company to tackle the entire project should fast-track getting the Micron treatment plant online, he said.

"The LDC model was one where we could meet a unique schedule challenge, so we can do a design/build/operate," he said.

Construction is expected to start in April 2026, McMahon said. Micron has said it will start producing chips at fab one in 2028.

McMahon said "a star-studded cast" of international wastewater companies attended a recent open house at the county's Water Environment Protection offices to learn more about Micron's needs. Semiconductor plants use a wide variety of highly toxic chemicals, including "forever chemicals," that have to be treated or removed from the wastewater.

Local development corporations also have no limit on how much money they can borrow, unlike counties. McMahon said the corporation could borrow and then charge Micron a user fee to repay the money, or Micron might pay the entire cost upfront. He said that's under negotiation.

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Five of the seven directors of the corporation work directly for McMahon.

The industrial wastewater plant will be built at the northwest corner of the White Pine Commerce Park, on Route 31. Several industrial sewer lines will run about two miles underground, along and south of Ver Plank Road, from White Pine to Oak Orchard.

The industrial wastewater system will also include a process to clean water and send it back to Micron, reducing the amount of water the company needs to withdraw from Lake Ontario. The recycled water won't be clean enough to use in the exacting process of chipmaking, but it can be used in cooling towers and other non-process uses.

Micron says it could use to 48 million gallons of water a day at full buildout, more than the entire city of Syracuse. McMahon and Micron officials say that number could be reduced through recycling water. Eventually, he said, other industrial users could also use reclaimed water.

The other half of the \$1 billion sewer bill is earmarked for regular municipal sewers and the expansion of the Oak Orchard Treatment plant, which serves the town of Clay now.

"That's going to serve the whole community," McMahon said. "That will allow for growth, not just for Micron, but from supply chain and from other residential and commercial development."

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Two high-pressure sewer lines will run from the southeast corner of Route 31 and Caughdenoy to Oak Orchard, said Shannon Harty, commissioner of the county's Water Environment Protection department, which runs the entire county sewage system. That's where the county Industrial Development Agency has bought more than 100 acres of land to house Micron suppliers.

Harty's department will also oversee the expansion of Oak Orchard. That will also handle Micron's non-industrial wastewater, such as from toilets and sinks, along with regular wastewater from homes and businesses.

Construction is expected to start early next year, and the sewer lines would be operational in early 2026, Harty said.

"We're anticipating that the municipal pump station is really going to (serve) commercial, residential, the infill development around Micron," Harty said. "We're looking at it as a mixture of apartments, hotels, restaurants and housing."



Onondaga County plans to expand the Oak Orchard Wastewater Treatment Plant, in Clay, to accommodate Micron Technology and the projected business and residential growth. Glenn Coin | gcoin@syracuse.com

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