

# The Citizen

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## HOUSING

# PROJECT PROPOSED



ROBERT HARDING, THE CITIZEN

The house at 40-42 South St. in Auburn. The owners are planning a \$4.3 million project to rehabilitate the house, which was damaged by a fire in 2022.

## \$4M plan would rehabilitate Auburn apartment house

**ROBERT HARDING**  
robert.harding@lee.net

The owners of an Auburn apartment house that was damaged by fire in 2022 are seeking tax abatements for a \$4 million project to rehabilitate the building.

The Auburn Industrial Development Authority will consider approving \$81,510 in tax abatements — a sales and use tax exemption and a mortgage recording tax abatement — for the project at 40-42 South St. led by 4042 South LLC.

4042 South LLC consists of three co-owners — Brendan Grillo, Drew Savino and Stephen Surace.

No payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT, would be granted for the project. However, the owners will pursue property tax abatements that are available for affordable housing projects.

AIDA's board will vote on the resolution during its monthly meeting at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at Memorial City Hall.

According to an overview of the project and supporting documents, it will cost \$4.3 million and create two jobs — a full-time maintenance worker and a part-time building manager.

When completed, the building will have 22 apartments — 18 studios and four one-bedroom units. All apartments will have a living area, open kitchen, bathroom and closet.

The apartments would be available for workers earning up to 60% of the area's median income. The projected rents would range from \$876 for a studio to \$960 for a one-bedroom apartment.

Part of the financing for the project would come from the state Small Building Participation Loan Program and state historic tax credits. The property will be managed by Housing Visions, a Syracuse-based nonprofit that specializes in affordable housing.

The project overview notes that the project would not increase property tax revenue for the city of Auburn and other jurisdictions, but the tenants "would bring additional people downtown and provide some sales tax benefit as they buy groceries and goods locally."

Because the project did not need to go through the city's usual site plan review process, which would've involved the Auburn Planning Board, AIDA is the lead agency for the environmental review.

There are certain factors AIDA is considering before signing off on the project. According to the authority's documents, the project meets certain guidelines — it won't be owner-occupied housing, it will create more than 10 housing units and the owners have not had properties foreclosed by the city for unpaid taxes.

However, the report does mention that the owners have had delinquent property taxes in the last three years and they've had code violations on unspecified properties within the last five years. In one case, a property was condemned in February 2023. It's unclear if that will prevent AIDA from approving the tax benefits for the project.

If approved, the project would help address the need for affordable housing and reactivate the apartment building at 40-42 South St. The building has been condemned since a fire occurred there in July 2022. Five tenants had to be rescued from the apartment house.

Government reporter Robert Harding can be reached at (315) 282-2220 or robert.harding@lee.net. Follow him on X @RobertHarding.

## GOVERNMENT

# New approach being taken in effort to expand broadband

**ROBERT HARDING**  
robert.harding@lee.net

OWASCO — Cayuga County Legislature Chairman Jonathan Anna declared, "broadband is not dead," after the state canceled a \$26.1 million project for Cayuga and Cortland counties.

Speaking at the county Legislature's final meeting of the year, Anna, I-Sterling, explained the new approach after Empire State Development, which oversees the state's ConnectALL initiative, determined the initial project could not move forward.

The Legislature approved two resolutions on Thursday — one to formally

terminate the county's involvement in the canceled project, including its \$7 million commitment, and another to pursue a state grant through ConnectALL's Regional and Local Assistance Program. The county could receive up to \$249,999 for the development of a plan to expand broadband access.

According to Anna, the grant will help determine whether a portion of the original project could be completed using some of the federal funding that was initially awarded to Cayuga and Cortland counties.



KEVIN RIVOLI, THE CITIZEN

Cayuga County Legislature Chairman Jonathan Anna talks with Legislator Mark Strong before the start of the public hearing preceding the final vote to approve a \$198 million budget for 2026 that will raise the property tax levy by 12.5%.

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