

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

CHICAGO BEARS



Soldier Field, as shown from the sky on Dec. 15. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

New strain, ultraviolet light improve Soldier Field turf late into season

By Dan Wiederer | Chicago Tribune

You know the old saying: The grass is always greener ... at Soldier Field? That's for real nowadays. When the Chicago Bears last played at home Dec. 10, quarterback Justin Fields detailed his 11-yard touchdown run against the Detroit Lions by describing the open field he saw in front of him before he took off. "When I stepped to the right a little bit, I just saw green grass," Fields said. And for once, that wasn't just an expression. The playing surface at Soldier Field — historically knocked for being chewed up and unreliable deep into the season — is different, much improved and, yes, greener. "It's funny you say that," Fields said after beating the Lions,

"because when I stepped on the field, I noticed how green it was. Whoever is keeping up with the field is definitely doing a great job of handling the grass and making sure it's good to go when we go out there." After consultation with the Bears in 2022, the Chicago Park District changed from a Kentucky bluegrass playing surface to a Bermuda-hybrid field. With two home games left — Sunday against the Arizona Cardinals and New Year's Eve versus the Atlanta Falcons — the field at Soldier Field figures to be in great shape, especially for December. To optimize the conditions, ultraviolet lights have been part of the regular treatment plan to lengthen the growing season.

Turn to Soldier Field, Page 2

"Whoever is keeping up with the field is definitely doing a great job of handling the grass and making sure it's good to go when we go out there."

— Bears quarterback Justin Fields

Stadium drive stalls — for now

Options open as talks continue with Arlington Heights

By Robert McCoppin
Chicago Tribune

Another Chicago Bears season is drawing to a close with no breakthroughs in sight for a new stadium — but those involved on all sides say they're working on it. And a new draft document among the team and Arlington Heights officials suggests potential progress. Last month, the village held an online meeting with the Bears to discuss a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, according to documents the Tribune obtained through a Freedom of Information request.

The online gathering included invitations to Bears President and CEO Kevin Warren and general counsel Cliff Stein, along with Arlington Heights Mayor Tom Hayes and other village officials. A memorandum of understanding is a written agreement between parties, typically outlining mutual expectations. It is not necessarily legally binding. In this case, the draft document, which was not released, could address property taxes for the former Arlington International Racecourse for the years 2023 and 2024, among other issues.

In February, the Bears closed the deal to buy the site for \$197 million, with plans to build an enclosed stadium there as part of a massive \$5 billion residential and entertainment development. After the deal, Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi's office

Turn to Bears, Page 2

UN approves resolution for speeding aid to Gaza

US, Russia abstain from vote as death toll surpasses 20,000

By Edith M. Lederer
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. Security Council adopted a watered-down resolution Friday calling for immediately speeding aid deliveries to hungry and desperate civilians in Gaza but without the original plea for an "urgent suspension of hostilities" between Israel and Hamas.

The action came as health officials in Gaza reported Friday that the death toll among Palestinians has topped 20,000 from Israel's offensive to destroy Hamas and follows a report released Thursday by 23 U.N. and humanitarian

agencies that Gaza's 2.2 million population is in a food crisis or worse and 576,600 are at the "catastrophic" starvation level. The vote in the 15-member council was 13-0 with the United States and Russia abstaining. The U.S. abstention avoided a third American veto of a Gaza resolution following Hamas' surprise Oct. 7 attacks inside Israel. Russia wanted the stronger language restored; the U.S. did not.

Still, "It was the Christmas miracle we were all hoping for," said United Arab Emirates Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, who sponsored the resolution. She said it would send a signal to the people in Gaza that the Security Council was working to alleviate their suffering.

Turn to Gaza aid, Page 6



Elaine Pierce, center, recently opened her Oak Park home to a half-dozen asylum seekers in need of housing, including Jose, left, Claudia, right, and her 4-year-old son Matias. "It's complete family, no question," Pierce said. "They're wonderful." TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Migrants' first Christmas in area made a little brighter

Oak Park woman celebrates holiday with new arrivals

By Angie Leventis Lourgos
Chicago Tribune

The Nativity set inside the house in Oak Park was complete with all the typical figurines, except one conspicuously missing piece: The baby Jesus won't be displayed until Christmas Eve, per a long-standing tradi-

tion from Venezuela brought by a group of migrants who found an unexpected home in this western suburb.

They set up the creche a few days before Christmas with their host, 69-year-old Elaine Pierce, a retiree with terminal cancer who recently opened her three-bedroom home to a half-dozen asylum-seekers in need of housing.

Over the summer, Pierce had read in her church bulletin that a local nonprofit was seeking food

and blankets for new arrivals, as busloads of asylum-seekers were sent to Chicago from southern states, spurring a local migrant crisis that continues to mount. Pierce had offered to let a few new arrivals live in the extra rooms of her roughly 1,000-square-foot house, where she'd previously been living alone.

"What they really needed was a place to stay," Pierce said. "I just thought this was the right thing to

Turn to Migrants, Page 4



Feels like a musical, it is a musical

The new screen adaptation of Alice Walker's novel "The Color Purple," based on the Broadway show, delivers in many ways. **Review, Arts & Living**

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 50 Low 48

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 8

