

Arlington Heights is the Bears Best Option For New Stadium

The Chicago Bears have proposed a monumental \$5 billion project to build a new, state of the art stadium on the city's lakefront. This ambitious plan, while potentially transformative for the area, raises significant financial and logistical concerns. Given the current economic climate and the city's historical and modern challenges, it would be best for the Bears to move to an alternative location in Arlington Heights and should be funded by the Bears, NFL and local stakeholders.

Soldier Field, although it is rich in history, it is increasingly seen as inadequate for modern game day needs. Its open air design restricts its use to fair weather events, limiting revenue generating opportunities during Chicago's harsh and long winters. The stadium's current infrastructure cannot support the high demand for amenities and services that contemporary sports fans expect. Replacing Soldier Field with a modern facility would allow the Bears to host major events such as the Super Bowl, NCAA Final Four, and even large scale concerts. A brand new stadium will significantly boost the local economy.

The proposed new stadium in Chicago offers a solution to these limitations with a dome design that will give the Bears the opportunity to use the field year round and a modern structure that will enhance fan experiences. The additional infrastructure improvements, including green spaces and better access to the Museum Campus, would further contribute to urban revitalization. However, the financial practicality and the burden on taxpayers who are not interested in the new stadium let alone having their city taxes go toward it is too important to ignore.

The Bears' proposal is part of a broader trend among NFL teams to modernize their facilities. Teams like the Los Angeles Rams and Chargers have built SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, a suburban area close to downtown Los Angeles, while the Minnesota Vikings and Atlanta Falcons have developed new stadiums near their old locations. These projects have successfully integrated urban revitalization efforts and enhanced regional economic impacts.

In Chicago, other sports teams have also pursued new or upgraded facilities. The Chicago White Sox and Cubs have renovated their stadiums, enhancing their appeal while. Wrigley is now a historical landmark so they have to stay within those restrictions. Unlike these teams, the Bears' proposal involves a complete relocation and redevelopment, which could significantly transform the lakefront and bring along challenges with it.

Soldier Field's previous renovation, completed in 2003 at a cost of \$609 million, has left a lasting financial burden on Chicago taxpayers. The renovation was funded through bonds issued by the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, and taxpayers are still paying off these bonds.

According to [NBC Chicago](#), taxpayers still owe \$589 million today. A little over 10 years has barely made a dent in the total cost. This ongoing financial obligation raises concerns about undertaking another large scale stadium project that might similarly rely on public funding and extend the financial strain on residents.

The Bears' current lease at Soldier Field runs through 2033 which just adds more complexity to their plans for a new stadium. The response to the Bears' new stadium proposal has been mixed among Illinois politicians and leaders. Mayor Brandon Johnson has expressed strong support, citing the project's alignment with the city's development goals and its potential economic benefits without raising taxes for residents. In contrast, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker is skeptical, particularly regarding the financial aspects and reliance on public funding. The reality is, most taxpayers do not believe a new stadium is top priority.

Building on the lakefront is an area with significant environmental, aesthetic, and recreational value, making any development subject to intense scrutiny. Historically, projects along the lakefront have had to balance development with preservation, a challenge that persists today. The opposition from nonprofit Friends of the Parks regarding the proposed lakefront stadium is understandable, as the lakefront holds significant environmental and recreational value. Even though Soldier Field would turn into a mixed shopping area and have green spaces available to the public, it might be best to reject the idea of relocating the new stadium right next door. Moving the stadium to Arlington Heights could lighten these concerns by offering a separate location for development while preserving the lakefront. This approach would satisfy the desire for the Bears to have a modern stadium and protect Chicago's waterfront.

The Bears in Arlington Heights makes sense. They have already invested money there and is more practical. There is offers ample space for a new stadium and surrounding infrastructure, reducing the constraints of the lakefront. There will be more room for parking and less congestion in the city. Additionally, developing in Arlington Heights would alleviate the financial burden on Chicago taxpayers.

According to a [CBS article](#), Arlington Heights village officials came up with a deal that would give the Bears tax liabilities of about \$6.3 million in the first year and \$3.6 million for the second. Three school districts offered the Bears one assessment of the property for five years (\$5 million/year), but they did not accept.

The Bears and local stakeholders should collaborate to fund the new stadium and infrastructure. This approach not only minimizes public financial risk but also ensures that those who directly benefit from the development share in its costs. A privately funded stadium in Arlington Heights would mean that the only tax dollars used would go to maintenance, such as sewers, roads, lights and not on stadium construction.

While the vision of a new lakefront stadium is appealing, the practical and financial challenges make Arlington Heights a more viable option for the Bears. By moving to Arlington Heights and securing private funding, the Bears can build an exciting stadium that meets modern demands without imposing a significant financial burden on taxpayers.