

Get ready for more soccer and hotter temperatures



An umbrella is one way to lessen the oppressive heat's effects at the FIFA Fan Fest in Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta. An early-summer heat wave has metro Atlanta and the majority of the state in its grip. PHOTOS BY ESTELA MUÑOZ/AJC

Stalled housing bill seen as big step

Affordability aid and fewer regulations could help more families purchase homes.

By Amy Wenk
amy.wenk@ajc.com
and Tia Mitchell
Tia.Mitchell@ajc.com

The bipartisan housing bill that sailed through Congress with overwhelming majorities is in limbo after President Donald Trump withdrew his support.

While lawmakers wait to see if Trump signs the bill, homebuyers, builders and banking industry leaders are combing through the massive package of regulations.

The 11-county metro Atlanta region needs 367,000 new homes by 2035 to support estimated job and population growth, said a study by the Atlanta Regional Commission. Of those, about 116,000 homes are needed at rents below \$1,300 per month.

Proponents of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act say it's the most significant effort to address housing in decades. Critics say the bill doesn't go far enough.

"This bill does a lot of different things, but it really doesn't get at the most essential problem, which is the lack of affordability," said Alex Schwartz, emeritus professor for The New School for Social Research in New York. "It's almost all regulatory in nature."

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution interviewed several stakeholders, including local affordable housing advocates, to get their take on the housing bill's strengths and challenges.

Housing continued on A8

Fiery debate over property taxes could define state elections

Republicans say homeowners need relief. Democrats say raising the sales tax is not the answer.

By David Wickert
dwickert@ajc.com

Georgia's special session ended last week. But the battle to define what happened is just beginning.

The five-day special session was dominated by a heated debate over property taxes, an extension of a yearslong dispute roiling Democrats and the Republicans who control both chambers.

Democrats blocked dozens of GOP-backed bills that would have given voters a chance to swap higher sales taxes for lower property taxes.

Republicans say homeowners desperately need relief from rising taxes, and they see raising sales taxes as a sensible way to pay for it. Democrats say the Republican plan would hurt low- and middle-income Georgians, who would end up paying more in taxes.

There is evidence to support both perspectives. An Atlanta Journal-Constitution analysis found median property tax bills are up 20% or more in 117 of Georgia's 159 counties in recent years. They're up more than 50% in some counties, including Clayton and Rockdale in metro Atlanta.

Property continued on A8

The combination of high temperatures, humidity and Atlanta's urban heat island raises the chance of heat-related illnesses among World Cup fans and Peachtree Road Race runners.

By Drew Kann • drew.kann@ajc.com
By Kristi E. Swartz • Kristi.Swartz@ajc.com

Since it was announced the 2026 FIFA World Cup would take place in North America during summer – one made even hotter by climate change – the potential impact of heat on the tournament has been a concern.

In Atlanta, players taking the pitch inside the climate-controlled confines of Mercedes-Benz Stadium (temporarily renamed Atlanta Stadium for the tournament) are protected from temperatures outside. But for fans attending matches or watch parties around the city, it's a different story.

For the first time since the World Cup kicked off, Atlanta is set to endure a spell of potentially dangerous summer heat that could last a week or longer. Experts say the combination of soccer revelry, high temperatures and Atlanta's trademark humidity poses health risks that attendees and event organizers need to pay attention to.

The conditions also could affect runners in another marquee Atlanta event: the Northside Hospital Peachtree Road Race, which is scheduled for the Fourth of July. Extreme heat and humidity forced organizers to end the race early in 2024.

Heat continued on A7

MORE INSIDE

- » Why humidity makes Atlanta's heat feel even hotter, A7
- » How to avoid dehydration and heat-related illnesses, A7



Youngsters play at a splash pad at the FIFA Fan Fest. Those who need to be especially careful in the heat include the elderly, those who are pregnant and kids.

World Cup ticket troubles for fans are on the rise

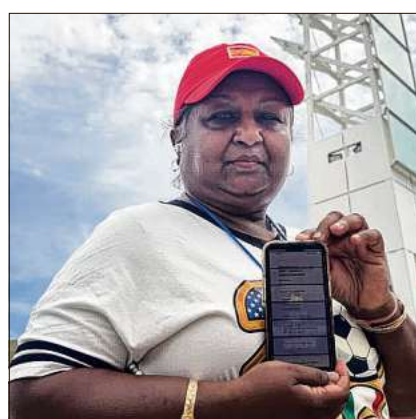
FIFA and third-party platforms point fingers at each other amid the fallout.

By Zachary Hansen
zachary.hansen@ajc.com

The atmosphere inside Atlanta's World Cup matches so far has been electric, featuring pulse-pounding moments.

But an unlucky few, had to settle for listening to the crowds from outside Mercedes-Benz Stadium (temporarily renamed Atlanta Stadium for the tournament) despite paying to get in. The tickets they bought through third-party websites never materialized.

"I didn't want a refund, I didn't want



Bina Ramroop holds proof of the ticket she bought through StubHub for the June 15 World Cup Group H soccer match between Spain and Cape Verde in Atlanta. EMILIE MEGNIEN/AP

my money back," Bina Ramroop told The Associated Press after the tickets she bought for the Spain-Cape Verde game through StubHub were never transferred, leading to a refund. "I wanted to go to the game."

The World Cup group stage was marred for fans whose experiences mirrored Ramroop's, leading FIFA and third-party platforms like StubHub to point fingers at each other amid the fallout. And that was when the matchups had been known months in advance and tickets were relatively affordable, even if prices set records compared to previous World Cups.

Ticket resales are projected to increase as the tournament's knockout

Tickets continued on A4

TODAY'S TOP STORIES INSIDE



SUPREME COURT, A3

Trump's firing power expanded, except for Fed

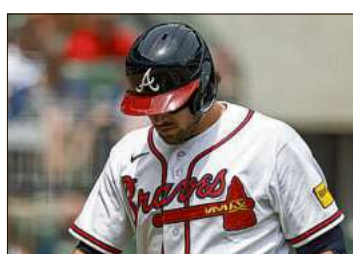
Justices carved out an exception for the Federal Reserve, preventing the president from immediately firing Lisa Cook, a Fed governor, Georgia native and Spelman College alumna.



GEORGIA, A6

Report notes weather issues in wedding crash

Skies were potentially rainy and foggy around the time a helicopter carrying a newlywed couple left their North Georgia wedding venue. The groom and pilot were killed.



MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM, B1

High-salary players dragging Braves down

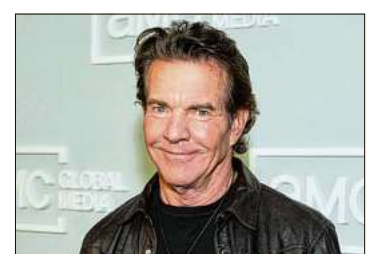
Shortstop Ha-Seong Kim's hitting ranks at the bottom among eligible big leaguers. Third baseman Austin Riley hasn't been much better at the plate.



FALCONS, B1

'A lot more to come,' star tight end says

Kyle Pitts officially signed a \$54 million extension Monday, keeping him with the team through at least 2028. "I'm here for hopefully the rest of my career," Pitts says.



LIVING, C1

Dennis Quaid to shoot new series in Georgia

AMC is partnering with NASCAR for the stock car racing drama "Thunder Road." The series is scheduled to begin production in August at Riverwood Studio in Senoia.

INDEX