



110 Rockford-area softball stars in the making

SPORTS, 1B

Rockford Register Star

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Undergoing a \$29.2 million multi-phase reconstruction, 11th Street is pictured near 22nd Avenue on March 25, heading south in Rockford. PHOTOS BY SUSAN MORAN/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

11th Street project enters phase two this summer

Jeff Kolkey
Rockford Register Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

A second phase of the 11th Street reconstruction project from 18th Avenue to Charles Street is scheduled this summer even as Rockford completes the first phase of work that began last year. City Council will consider a \$9.7 million contract with Freeport-based Fischer Excavating Services to do the work for Phase 2. Also up for a vote is a \$593,000 engineering agreement with Fehr Graham for overseeing the work and daily inspections. The overall \$29.3 million

See **STREET**, Page 2A



Land deal protects rare prairie south of Rockford

Nida Tazeen
Rockford Register Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Natural Land Institute has acquired 149 acres surrounding its 4-acre Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve in Ogle County, according to a community announcement.

The preserve, located at 11500 E. Big Mound Road near Davis Junction, contains some of the finest remaining prairie in Illinois and provides habitat for endangered plant species. Less than 0.1% of Illinois' former 22 million acres of prairie remain, the announcement said.

The site also protects a historic settler cemetery with the graves of the Beach family, who were buried in the 1850s.

Sale of donated farmland funded purchase

The institute purchased the land with funds from the sale of 80 acres of prime farmland donated in 2025. The landowners, who wished to remain anonymous, stipulated that the proceeds be used to protect land that the institute otherwise could not acquire. Additional funds from the institute's Land Acquisition Fund were used to complete the purchase.

Long-term conservation of endangered habitats and plants requires a larger complex so isolated rare plants do not die out from inbreeding, according to the announcement.

Natural Land Institute staff met with the adjacent landowner to discuss acquiring buffer lands to help protect the preserve's resources. The landowner agreed to sell the entire 149

See **PRAIRIE**, Page 2A

Lawmakers leave Springfield before taking up Bears tax bill

Tom Ackerman
Springfield State Journal-Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD — A piece of legislation that could help the Chicago Bears build a new stadium in Arlington Heights failed to move out of the Illinois House before lawmakers left Springfield.

House Bill 910 would freeze property tax assessments on sites of "megaprojects" like the Bears' possible new stadium. It would allow developers to negotiate an annual payment with local governments instead.

Illinois Representatives will not be back until April 7 to further discuss the bill, which remains in the Illinois House. Before lawmakers left, Gov. JB Pritzker



Pritzker

said he wanted to see lawmakers take action soon.

"I think we all feel like this needs to happen sooner rather than later," Pritzker said on March 24 about the bill. "It is in the hands of the legislature."

The legislation was introduced as the

Bears are in talks with Indiana lawmakers to potentially move the team out of state.

Reached by The State Journal-Register, State Rep. Kam Buckner, D-Chicago, said some lawmakers are concerned about the assessed value of properties like the potential new Bears stadium,

See **STADIUM**, Page 2A

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