The Chicago Bears’ epically inept unveiling of plans for a new indoor stadium to replace Soldier Field will go down in Chicago lore as one of the loudest backfires in the history of the city.

The initially stated $3.2 billion stadium budget turns out to be less than half the cost of the complete project. The promise that Chicago taxpayers wouldn’t pay a penny was far from true. And giddy cheerleading by Mayor Brandon Johnson did more harm than good.

The whole matter unraveled soon after the Bears concluded their hourlong dog-and-pony show filled with more razzmatazz than a Blue Man Group performance. Illinois House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch said he couldn’t get votes for their stadium project even if he tried. Gov. J.B. Pritzker declared the plan a nonstarter.
A cardinal rule in any negotiation is to avoid getting to “no.” Once that word slips out, getting to yes gets much harder. Pritzker hasn’t entirely written off the possibility of a stadium deal, perhaps somewhere down the road, so the question now is what it might take to resuscitate an idea that nearly died on arrival.

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