

OPINION

JOHN S. KNIGHT (0694-1981)

DAVID LANDSBERG, PUBLISHER

AMINDA MARQUES GONZALEZ, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

MYRIAM MARQUEZ, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

JAMES L. KNIGHT (909-1991)

THE MIAMI HERALD | EDITORIAL

The waterfront in the public interest

OUR OPINION: Miami must ensure access is top priority in Marine Stadium redevelopment

Once again, a rare and precious resource — waterfront property owned by the city of Miami — is in the spotlight. The Miami Marine Stadium, crumbling and dilapidated, is ready for its close-up.

The city and the quasi-independent Miami Sports & Exhibition Authority are joining forces with Marine Stadium advocates, preservationists, environmentalists and other members of the public to consider the best way to make this property vibrant and inviting again. The stadium and the land that surrounds it have been unusable for too long. Finally, there is a proposal that could come to fruition — and should, as long as the public's interests and its input remain in the forefront of renovation

and development plans. The Friends of Miami Marine Stadium is a community-based group of advocates who have made it their mission to restore the historic venue. One member, Hilario Candela, designed the original stadium; others include the construction firm Skanska USA and the Heat Group, which, having experience operating the American Airlines Arena, would bring its expertise to the Marine Stadium.

Their proposal includes creating recreational green space east of the stadium and a marine museum to the west. The Friends would be solely responsible for raising the \$30 million needed to restore the stadium and for the continuing costs of maintenance; as well as coming up with the \$40 million es-

timated for the museum and for Stadium Green. The city, in return, will not have to contribute one penny to the project — nothing.

The authority, created in 1983 to promote sports, conventions and exhibitions, this week voted to create a steering committee that, with the city's approval, will, according to Mayor Tomas Regalado, do three things: define the mission of the stadium, raise funds and figure out how to make the stadium a self-sustaining entity.

We strongly urge the steering committee to add a fourth goal to its agenda. The city would be giving public land to the Friends of Marine Stadium, a thoughtful, well-intentioned group — but a private organization nonetheless. Therefore, the steering committee

should ensure that the public's access remains the top priority.

The steering committee's creation is the big step forward that Miami-Dade County needs to see. It has pledged \$3 million from general-obligation bonds for historic preservation. But it needs to see a roadmap first, and the deadline for the city to collect the funds is near. Mr. Regalado will give the County Commission a progress report and ask for more time. Unless they have a better idea for the stadium, county commissioners should have no problem agreeing to this.

The steering committee, the mayor says, will include representatives from Friends of Miami Marine Stadium, the Dade Heritage Trust, environmentalists and smart-growth groups.

There are legitimate community concerns that the city is looking to do an end-run around the will of Miami residents and turn over city-owned waterfront property to private developers without putting it to a vote. The so-called Carollo amendment to the city's charter requires that any waterfront development proposal with fewer than three bidders must be put on the ballot. In 2008, the city got around this by conveying land in Bicentennial Park to the sports authority, which is not bound by the charter rule, in order to put the new Miami Art Museum and Museum of Science there.

There's no guarantee this scenario will be repeated. Still, the public's interest must remain paramount.