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Miami Marine Stadium rehab deserves nod from city commission

Miami Herald Editorial

HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com

The future of the Miami Marine Stadium should be decided Thursday by the City Commission. The historic 1963 stadium, left in disrepair since Hurricane Andrew, deserves to be restored to the architectural and recreational jewel that it is.

The commission should follow through on the recommendation by a blue-ribbon panel of preservationists, environmentalists and community leaders. For more than five years the nonprofit Friends of Miami Marine Stadium, which includes the building's architect, Hilario Candela, and Friends founder Don Worth, have been working on a \$30-million renovation plan to bring this private-public partnership to fruition on Virginia Key. It would include a waterfront park and marine museum and exhibition center.

The only public funding would come from Miami-Dade County's preservation fund, which already set aside \$3 million for the stadium when voters approved it. Valid questions about the stadium's use in the delicate bay have been answered. This is not a sewer treatment facility at the water's edge. It's an iconic stadium built specifically for aquatic events, and it has passed the test of time.

The city's charter allows for the quasi-independent Miami Sports & Exhibition Authority, which has joined forces with Friends, to form such public-private partnerships that guarantee waterfront access to the public — without the city having to bid it out. Indeed, this project already intends to break up some of that asphalt and return the waterfront to the public — all without one cent from taxpayers. The private investors intend to charge for events — they are putting up their money, after all — but they also would provide free public access to various areas around the stadium and to some events.

This is a labor of love — and a commitment from key community and business people — to bring back a one-of-a-kind stadium. After more than 21 years of neglect, commissioners can help the stadium become a self-sustaining venue for concerts and recreation. Let's do it.

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