

## COMMENTARY

*Stuart Blumberg and Don Worth*

# ‘*Truly iconic*’: Why voters should say yes to Miami Marine Stadium

Miami is a young city with a rich history. Just look at the Freedom Tower, Vizcaya and the Miami Marine Stadium — that’s right, the Marine Stadium. There’s nothing like it in the world.

Dormant for over 30 years, residents of Miami now have the opportunity to bring it back to life. On Aug. 18, voters will be asked to approve the referendum selecting Oak View Group (OVG, already unanimously approved by city commissioners) to operate and restore this 6,000-seat, one-of-a-kind venue, unique to Miami.

This is only the first step in making this a reality. Chosen through an intensive selection and vetting process, OVG is one of the largest management and entertainment companies in the world. The company has an excellent Miami track record — for the last 13 years, Oak View Group has successfully operated the Miami Beach Convention Center. It’s important to understand that the vote simply designates OVG as the operator. Once approved by the voters, a contract will be negotiated detailing costs, timelines, anticipated revenue to the city and potential job creation, all to be approved by Miami City Commission.

Why bring back Miami Marine Stadium? Once restored, it will be one of the truly iconic destination venues in the world, on par with the Hollywood Bowl, The Sphere in Las Vegas and Red Rocks in Colorado. Tourism is a pillar of Miami’s economy and the Marine Stadium will provide a bold, “new” attraction that cannot be imitated.

Just as important, the Marine Stadium will provide enormous community benefits. When last in operation, the stadium acted as community hub, with events such as Easter sunrise services, Fourth of July events and graduations. The stadium can also help “democratize” the waterfront, providing opportunities for all Miamians who cannot afford expensive waterfront real estate to enjoy it. One simple idea: treat the Marine Stadium as a park during selected hours so families can watch the rowers at sunset and the buildings in Miami’s superb skyline light up.

The stadium — designed by Cuban-born architect Hilario Candela — will be as symbolic of Miami as the Sydney Opera House is to Sydney, Australia and as transformative to Miami as New York City’s High Line and Miami’s Underline.

These are bold claims, but we are confident they are true. The stadium is the ultimate trifecta: its architecture gives it the “wow,” its history gives it the soul and the visceral experience of walking up the ramp into the sunlight, cantilevered over the water, always astonishes people. The stadium provides authenticity, something that people now crave in our AI, digital age.

During our 18 years of advocacy, we have brought many promoters, producers and event organizations to see the Stadium – and the reaction is always the same. They are stunned when they stand at waters’ edge, dazzled, and don’t understand why it has not been restored.

The stadium has received support from organizations as diverse as the World Monuments Fund, Tourism Cares, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association and the Miami Rowing Club.

As the late Jimmy Buffett, whose concerts at the stadium were classics, said a few years ago, “We had a great time at the Marine Stadium. Let’s do it again.”

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