

OPINION

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Local perspectives

• MIAMI

HOPES FOR MARINE STADIUM GET A BOOST

The Friends of the Miami Marine Stadium (www.marinestadium.org) reached another milestone this week when the National Trust for Historic Preservation included the modernistic structure on its annual national list of 11 most endangered historic sites. The chances of this having happened without the efforts of the Friends group were slim.

That said, the group still has an uphill battle to see the stadium restored and back in use as an event venue next to some prime Miami property — Biscayne Bay

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust, said the stadium was included after research found it to be one of a kind in the country. "It's an iconic building," explained Mr. Moe. "I've never seen anything like that design. Everything argues for the city putting muscle and mind behind a plan to bring it back to life."

Amen to that. Trouble is, the city has other ideas. It left the stadium in disrepair after Hurricane Andrew damaged it in 1992. This neglect has left it in need of millions of dollars of restoration work.

Meantime, city officials have pushed for using the

waterfront site and the unique U-shaped basin it fronts for commercial development. One plan would put a marina in the basin, which would destroy its use as a racing and aquatic-sports site and floating stage for concerts.

Last year, to stem the city's ambitions to turn the stadium into a commercial enterprise, Miami's historic preservation board designated the grandstand and the basin a historic site, which prevents demolition or alteration. The city is appealing the designation, a short-sighted decision.

The National Trust's designation adds heft to the local designation and raises awareness of the stadium's unique design and place in Miami's history. It was designed by Miami architect Hilario Candela in the 1950s. It's a fine example of mid-century Modern architecture, a style now getting its due from preservationists.

The city administration should accede to the architects and preservationists on the stadium's future and scrap plans for commercial development. Many Miami-ans and visitors have memories of exciting boat races and starry-night concerts at the marine stadium that they couldn't have seen anywhere else in the country. This legacy should be revived for future generations of Miamians.