



greater
miami
chamber
of commerce®

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Francis Suarez
3500 Pan American Drive
Miami, FL 33133

Dear Mayor Suarez,

It has come to our attention that Jungle Island's new ownership plans to transform their attraction into a true, eco-tourism experience by constructing a privately-funded hotel. The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce supports this plan and recognizes its significant revenue and job creation opportunity for the City of Miami.

Jungle Island, a Miami treasure for 82 years, has been enjoyed by tens of thousands of local residents and visitors, including luminaries such as Steven Spielberg, President Jimmy Carter and Sir Winston Churchill. In April 2017, it was sold to locally-owned, locally-based ESJ Capital Partners, who has displayed willingness to invest millions of dollars to further Jungle Island's already strong community commitment. However, later that year, Hurricane Irma caused extensive damage and forced the park to close. However, ownership has responded with plans to open renovated food and beverage stations, water activities, an indoor trampoline park, and Tree Walk Village, an aerial play and rope course experience. In 2019, the third phase will include a zip-line, Crystal Lagoon and lazy river. This renewed, enhanced Jungle Island is a win-win for our community and an on-property hotel would provide another tourism amenity.

Jungle Island is privately-owned, but it is built on Watson Island, which is city-owned, and a public referendum is necessary to approve the construction of a hotel. It is our understanding that Jungle Island's ownership is fully-committed to privately finance construction, which would not create an undue financial burden on Miami residents. The hotel would be a modest 130 feet and would be built near the MacArthur Causeway, not near residential properties. Jungle Island would also generate a new tax revenue stream for the City of Miami.

This new hotel and reinvigorated Jungle Island would be a true, world-class destination for our residents and tourists and would create much needed jobs. The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce urges the City Commission to support Jungle Island and approve referendum language for our fellow residents to weigh in on this decision. Thank you for your time and consideration. If I or our Chamber can be helpful to you, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Alfred Sanchez
President and CEO

Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce

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