



EDITORIALS

The Herald recommends Francis Suarez for mayor of Miami

MIAMI HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

OCTOBER 31, 2017 09:30 PM

UPDATED OCTOBER 31, 2017 09:33 PM

Miami Commissioner Francis X. Suarez thinks micro and macro. He has a well-grounded street-level view of what it takes to live in Miami, leavened by some blue-sky visioning of what it will take to make it a city that works for everyone.

In short, he's poised to be a very good mayor for the city. And if he continues to follow his slow, but steady political path, he could even be a superb one.

And here's what's most heartening — Suarez, an attorney, has earned a shot at the city's top spot.

Yes, he runs bearing one of Miami's ubiquitous political surnames, but he's not hanging on to his daddy's coattails (though, the influence of his father, former Miami mayor and now County Commissioner Xavier Suarez can't hurt).

The younger Suarez has actually been elected to office. He's even accomplished some things while there.

In other words, there's little sense of dynastic entitlement, a refreshing pivot from other city of Miami races. Rather, it's the next logical step. He has a record to run on — and it's a solid one.

Suarez has three opponents in the mayor's race. None threaten to outrace the commissioner's well-oiled machine. However, one — Cynthia Jaquith, a member of the Socialist Party — is singularly focused on the needs and concerns of working-class Miamians. They are an increasingly neglected population being pushed out by the high cost of living and development. Her focus, too, is refreshing, and Suarez would do well to make this a demographic one to which he pays attention.

Candidate Williams Alfred Armbrister Sr. ran for a commission seat in 2015. And as he did two years ago, Armbrister, though invited, skipped his candidate interview with the Editorial Board. Businessman Christian Canache, the fourth hopeful in the mayor's race, likewise did not attend the interview.

Suarez is set to assume a city that's on much firmer financial footing than the one he encountered when he was elected to the commission in 2009, as the Great Recession bore down. He was elected then, he says, without the support of labor, clearly because he didn't tell it what it wanted to hear: that pensions and salaries wouldn't be touched despite the financial squeeze. "I saw the bubble bursting," he told the Editorial Board. He won, and made tough decisions for the greater good of the city. Eight years later, AFSCME Local 1907 is listed among several other labor supporters.

He sees housing as a significant way to address income disparity, having already shepherded through an amendment to the Miami21 development guidelines that, he says, created 1,000 affordable-housing units in one tax cycle.

Suarez is the only non-mayor to have served as vice chair of the Transportation Planning Organization and is credited with naming its major initiative — the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit — SMART — plan.

Fighting crime is high on his to-do list, already having pushed for installing Shot Spotter in neighborhoods and hiring more police officers. He links a city that's safe for residents to being attractive to investors, too.

This is not Suarez's first run for mayor. In 2013, we were impressed with his resolve to not run a tainted campaign. When two aides pleaded no contest to charges of unlawfully submitting absentee ballot requests, Suarez pulled out of the race. He showed the kind of integrity that should serve the city of Miami well.

For Miami mayor, the Herald recommends **FRANCIS X. SUAREZ**.