

THE CASE FOR #238, A REFERENDUM TO KEEP THE SONY OPEN IN MIAMI

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The Miami Herald Editorial

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The stiffest competition at the high-stakes Sony Open tennis tournament on Key Biscayne might not be on the court. Other cities, in other countries are vying for the high-end names — Venus, Serena, Roger, Maria — that make the event, played annually at Crandon Park such a lure.

But the Crandon Park Tennis Center needs to be renovated and expanded if it is to keep pace with state-of-the-art stadiums elsewhere — and if this community is to keep the lucrative Sony Open here. Thanks to the Save Our Parks charter amendment, voters throughout Miami-Dade will have a say on a deal that does not cost taxpayers one penny. Sony needs two-thirds of voters to approve to move forward.

The ballot measure would extend the lease of the Sony Open and approve \$50 million of upgrades to the tennis center in Crandon Park paid for by the tournament. The “Park Partnership” referendum stipulates that the upgrades would come at no cost to taxpayers. The project — which would include four permanent buildings to replace tents — is to be funded with revenue from the tennis center and tournament and private funds. In addition, it will be a public facility for 49 weeks of the year.

The Sony Open is spoken of in the same breath as Wimbledon, the U.S. Open, French Open and Australian Open. In economic terms, it’s a player. This year, the tournament drew 326,000 people. Almost 20 percent of them were tourists who booked 15,000 hotel room nights. And the 7,000 hours of TV coverage in 180 countries was priceless. Voters should approve this measure. They will have to make their way to the end of this year’s long ballot to find the referendum, but it’s in their best interest. The Herald recommends YES to No. 238, the “Park Partnership” referendum.
