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Storm season will wind to a close this fall, but there's one – and ONLY one – Hurricane that Middle Keys locals can't wait to see.

There's still work to be done, but business partners Cesar Sandoval, Bernardo Ornelas and Oscar Islas say the plan is to have the Hurricane Bar and Grill, shuttered for years since the COVID-19 pandemic, up and running – hopefully in time for Fantasy Fest.

To get a few “must-asks” out of the way: Yes, the Marathon staple will still have a stage for live music. And yes, Wing Night is coming back (even with Trash Can sauce). And for whoever thought the restaurant would be a transplanted Lazy Days, the waterfront favorite is staying right where it is.

But the Hurricane has been gutted, in every sense of the word, from top to bottom – the floors, the ceilings, the equipment, plumbing and electric systems, all of it – and Sandoval told the Weekly he can't wait for the community to see the results of years of hard work.

“We started with ‘Let's just open the Hurricane in six months and be done with it,’” he said. But as word spread of the restaurant's reopening, stories from locals chronicling a history dating back to the 1950s made the new owners change their minds.

“We've got Lazy Days on 11th Street, we've got Paradise Flavors on 96th Street, so we've taken advantage of the city, and now it's time to give back,” said Sandoval. “We thought this would be the way to do it – giving back something that's been here since the '50s, restoring what's already here and keeping the history. That's the goal: bring back something old, but modernize it.”

“We didn't know how expensive it was going to be,” he admitted with a laugh.

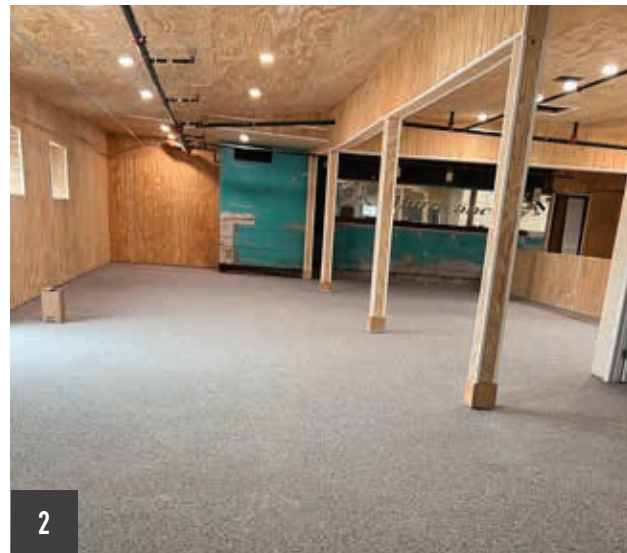
The restaurant's left side will remain a sports bar and late-night music venue, complete with a massive new TV array, stage, pool tables and arcade games. And while the right half will continue as a sit-down restaurant, the addition of a raw bar and more upscale alcohol offerings lend a different atmosphere.

The building's back deck presents another opportunity for live music, along with hosting yoga and zumba classes. A juice bar will be available for post-workout refueling, and Sandoval said the plan is to install lawn games and a kids' playground next to the deck.

Local art graces everything from the doors to the walls, painted by Marathon favorite Shannon Wiley and muralist Christopher Orr – plus contributions expected to come from Marathon High School students.



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STORM ON THE HORIZON

‘The Hurricane’ is set to reopen this fall



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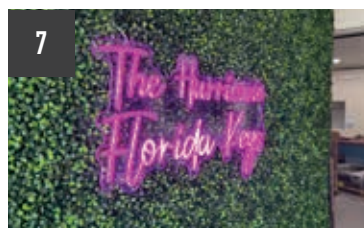
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The menu is set to include American cuisine, steaks, seafood and sushi, but Sandoval said the ultimate goal is to bring in rotating offerings for timely celebrations of other cultures' dishes.

“Mexican dishes, Haitian dishes, Caribbean dishes, Cuban dishes, depending on what's going on in the world for that time of year,” he said. “We also want to make people aware of things that actually happen outside of the Keys. We're very separated from the rest of the world, and it's really good in a lot of ways. But we also need to be more aware of what's going on in the real world.”

The restaurant's projected sit-down hours are 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. for the right side, with the sports bar side open from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.

1-2. A top-to-bottom renovation for the Hurricane included everything from walls to ceilings, basic systems and equipment. CONTRIBUTED

3. A mahi mural by Christopher Orr is the backdrop to the Hurricane's sports bar side.

4. Brand new kitchen equipment is nearly ready to fire up the Hurricane's new-look menu.

5. A raw bar will offer a new twist to the Hurricane's sit-down dining offerings.

6-7. New art and marine-themed tables will greet patrons on the Hurricane's sit-down dining side.

8. Co-owners Cesar Sandoval, left and Bernardo Ornelas, right, pose with artist Shannon Paul Wiley, the mind behind much of the Hurricane's freshly-painted decor.

Photos by ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly