



A MEETING OF MINDS: Max Rothman, president and CEO of the Alliance for Aging, listens to speakers at Miami-Dade's first Age-Friendly Summit in the Newman Alumni Center at UM.

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Aiming to get wiser as population gets older

Miami-Dade's first Age Friendly Summit drew more than 150 people, including elected officials and policy wonks wrestling with the challenges of a county projected to get grayer.

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To make neighborhoods safer and more accessible to older adults, cities must make these communities more attractive to everyone, speakers said during a conference on Tuesday. And to accomplish a dizzying list of age-friendly goals, groups — sometimes competing for the same resources — will have to band together for the common good.

"Communicate your issues not just as age-friendly issues but as issues that are essential to the quality of life for everybody," said M. Scott Ball, an expert in urban



PLANNING MODE: Gail Holley, of the Florida Department of Transportation, speaks during Miami-Dade's first Age-Friendly Summit at UM on Tuesday.

design and civic development who has led master planning projects around the country. "Age friendly is not enough to make the

changes. But bicycle friendly, pedestrian friendly, children friendly, they can be."

Ball was the keynote speaker at Miami-Dade's first Age Friendly Summit, which brought more than 150 people to the University of Miami Newman Alumni Center. The attendees included elected officials as well as policy wonks wrestling with the challenges of a county projected to grow grayer. The summit was organized by the Age-Friendly Initiative, a collaborative program of nonprofit agencies, funded in part by Grantmakers in Aging and the Pfizer Foundation.

Experts estimate that the U.S. 65-and-older population will more than double to 89 million by 2050. In Miami-Dade, which already has the largest population of older adults in Florida, three

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The Miami Herald, 5/13/15

At summit, leaders plan for Dade's aging population

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out of 10 people here will be at least 60. This demographic tsunami has sent cities and towns scrambling to devise and implement age-friendly policies.

In its third year, Miami-Dade's Age-Friendly Initiative is only one of five similarly broad-based programs that seek to accelerate local efforts to make communities "great places to grow up and grow old." Several private and public entities, including the Health Foundation of South Florida, the Alliance for Aging, Urban Health Partnership and Miami-Dade County, have been working together to push for reforms in transportation, housing, and other areas.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez kicked off the summit by challenging attendees to sign the "Mayor's Chal-



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SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS: Harve Mogul, president and CEO of United Way of Miami-Dade, attends Miami-Dade's Age-Friendly Summit on Tuesday.

lenge," a pledge to take concrete steps to make

both public and private spaces friendlier for older adults. He said that his administration, through partnerships, has made caring for the aging population a

top priority and urged the audience — many of them municipal officials and senior staff — to do the same.

"Our commitment is that we won't take our eye off the ball," he said.

Many speakers gave Miami-Dade high marks for efforts that address the concerns of older adults, but they also warned that much more needs to be done. Rodney Harrell, director of livable communities for AARP's Public Policy Institute, presented the advocacy organization's Livability Index, a recently launched interactive online tool that helps people determine how well states, cities and even neighborhoods meet their lifestyle needs.

Miami-Dade scored a 48, slightly below the national average. But Harrell also told summit attendees that the key pieces were already there, and that partnerships were essential to getting the job done.

"The information we got in this room has to go far

beyond this room," he said.

Several panelists outlined the specific steps that have already been taken to make Miami-Dade more age-friendly — adding park programs that target the 55-and-older set for example — while others warned about an impending crisis. Miami-Dade has lost 6,900 affordable housing units since 2000 and stands to lose thousands more, making housing a huge economic issue for those living on a fixed income.

John Feather, CEO of Grantmakers in Aging, said the job of changing a community can be "difficult to get your hands around. There are a lot of factors that make it work," but he urged those gathered to persist with their efforts by drawing up short and long-range plans. Smaller projects can turn into quick successes, allowing for momentum for the bigger projects.

"This is a real messy process," he added. "It's a real complicated thing."

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