Smart City Expo Miami 2025 opens with a powerful call for citizen-centered cities

Global reach event for sustainable communities

MIAMI, FL, UNITED STATES, October 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Day 1 of the sold-out Smart City Expo Miami 2025, its 6th edition, brought together more than 350 participants and speakers from 20+ countries to explore what it truly means to reimagine urban spaces. Across keynotes, panels, and presentations at Miami Dade College's AI Lab, a clear message emerged: technology alone won't build better cities, people will – echoing the Expo's theme of "re-imagining urban spaces."

SCEM25 Day 1

Designing Cities That Include Everyone

> AI and technology are powerful, but our real task is to make cities more accessible, sustainable, and citizen-centered."
>
> *Bernardo Scheinkman - Founder & CEO - Smart Cities Americas*

Barcelona's Honorata Grzesikowska, CEO of Urbanitarium, opened with a challenge to rethink how cities shape our emotions and sense of belonging.
"Spaces don't just hold us, they mold us," she said, urging urbanists to adopt intersectional design that measures how people feel, not just how they move.

In a similar spirit, Alex Norman of Miami's Access Built reframed accessibility as an opportunity, not an afterthought. "Friction is the tax we all pay for bad design, " he noted. "Flow is the dividend we all share when design is inclusive. " His message landed clearly: when we design for the margins, everyone benefits.

From Scotland, May East asked a provocative question: What if women designed the city? Citing megatrends in urbanization, gender, and decarbonization, she called for "nature-positive and

gender-sensitive" design. "Don't use an old map to explore new territory," she said, inviting collaboration between men and women to build cities that serve all.

Governance, Engagement, and the Power of Community

Governance took center stage with Dr. Jonathan Reichental, who described today's "cognitive industrial revolution" as an opportunity to rethink how cities make decisions."The things we want to achieve are not limited by technology anymore, " he said. "Innovation is now everyone's job."

Raimundo Rodulfo, CIO of Coral Gables, shared a blueprint for engaging citizens at every stage, from ideation to implementation. His city's TechTank incubator and Smart City Lab are bridging talent gaps while involving residents through advisory boards and open data tools. "Engagement isn't a box to check, it's the engine of innovation," he said.

That spirit of co-creation was echoed in Port St. Lucie's panel on civic innovation. Deputy City Manager Kate Parmelee and her team described how human-centered design has transformed their city planning process. Through citizen summits and prototyping sessions, they've turned residents into collaborators – even co-creating solutions for protecting green space.

Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega underscored the importance of regional thinking and talent development in sustaining innovation. "We've always believed talent isn't just a vertical, it's across everything, " she said, pointing to AI training for 500 faculty members and partnerships with startups to strengthen South Florida's workforce.

And Angela Betancourt, founder of the Betancourt Group, reminded attendees that great communication is foundational to great governance. Her VOICE framework – Vision, Outcome, Information, Community, Empathy – offers a model for building trust from the ground up.

Technology with Purpose

From Kyiv, Anatolii Vovniuk shared how a single city app became a lifeline during crisis: a platform that unified services for 3 million residents amid air raids. "Don't wait for a crisis to build systems that truly serve people, " he cautioned, emphasizing transparency and simplicity as cornerstones of trust.

Meanwhile, Dr. Asma Mehan of Texas Tech University looked at how industrial transitions are reshaping cities like Turin and Detroit, from post-oil futures to cultural reinvention. And Jake Taylor of Urban Innovators Global explored the experience economy, warning that efficiency can't be the only metric for success. "Efficiency is the death of experience, " he said, calling for experiential urbanism that restores emotion and meaning to public life.

Happiness, Climate, and Culture Change

What good is a smart city if it's not a happy one? That was the question posed by Luis Miguel Gallardo, founder of the World Happiness Foundation. He outlined nine dimensions of city happiness and urged leaders to embed well-being metrics alongside GDP and emissions data. "The smartest cities," he said, "are the ones that put people's happiness first."

Addressing the climate clock, Sweta Gupta of Gridless Global pushed for decisive action on decarbonization, while Andy Boenau from the City of Richmond, Virginia outlined how culture change – not just infrastructure – drives safer, greener mobility.

Recognizing Leadership in Action

The day closed with the Sustainability Impact Awards, celebrating individuals and projects driving meaningful progress around the world:

 Book of the Year: The Art of the New Urbanism, by Charles C. Bohl and JamesDougherty
 Recognition of Tech Innovation Delivering Measurable Sustainable Outcomes: José Antonio Ondiviela, distinguished expert in smart city strategies and
human-centered urban development
 Advancing Regenerative Design: Anne Vanner, British architect setting a high standard for professional practice
 Sustainable Impact Award for Education: Madeline Pumariega, President, Miami Dade College
 Sustainable Impact Award for Community Building: Luis Miguel Gallardo, Founder & President, World Happiness Foundation

Day 1 proved that future-ready cities are already taking shape: built on inclusion, collaboration, and a shared commitment to reimagining urban space.

Bernardo Scheinkman
Smart Cities Americas
email us here
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/856771453