By 2025, older people will compose a greater proportion of our society than at any time in human history. In the next decade, age-related illnesses and labor dynamics threaten to strain our institutions and support systems in unprecedented ways, upending assumptions about what it means to age well. The biological and cultural benchmarks we’ve taken for granted are shifting fundamentally. To address the varied and competing needs of aging in the next 10 years, we’ll look to both social and technological shifts to holistically support four core facets of aging well—body, mind, wealth, and relationships. The human experience of aging hangs in the balance.

This map explores innovations that bring together shifts in society and technology to address people’s multifaceted needs. These fundamental shifts are often leveraged separately. But emerging efforts to combine them reveal opportunities for a holistic redesign of our aging experience. From programs enacted by our formal institutions to narratives and practices emerging within communities, this convergence holds the power to transform how we work, play, live, and die.

Consider this map a tool to redesign our future health, well-being, and technology in a truly person-centered way. By taking this multifaceted approach, we gain the insight to design products, services, and ultimately systems for future generations as we usher in an age of longevity.
A SHIFT IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The first shift emerges from a continued expansion in our technological capabilities—in advancing sciences, rapid technological innovation, and a range of new products and services aimed at enhancing the lives of older populations. These new tools enable us to redesign support systems for aging well. Among the key drivers of this shift are:

DIAGNOSIS BEFORE ILLNESS
Advances from neuroscience and genetics transform how and when we are diagnosed with health conditions. In many instances, such as with Alzheimer’s and other cognitive disorders, we’re gaining the ability to diagnose conditions long before even mild symptoms manifest. Likewise, tools from data science are enabling earlier risk identification and diagnosis. Together, these efforts align funding and focus on preventative medicine and well-being to push our understanding of illness and health upstream.

PRECISION INTERVENTIONS
New findings from the life sciences are not simply advancing diagnosis—they point the way to new treatments. For instance, over the next decade efforts to sequence the genetic makeup of every tumor will transform approaches to treatment through increasing precision of unique biomedical needs. At the same time, as these tools improve our ability to identify those who won’t respond to available treatments, they drive a search for interventions beyond the purely biomedical.

DISTRIBUTED HEALTH
With the rise of chronic illness in recent years and the distribution of care beyond hospitals and clinics, people of all ages have become accustomed to managing health questions through a wide array of strategies. From embracing consumer technologies to looking to social media to understand health conditions, the age cohorts that seek most care are accustomed to looking outside the clinic first to meet health and well-being needs. Experiments getting started under the U.S. Affordable Care Act may reveal models that are both more distributed and more coordinated.

RESTAGING LIFE GOALS
Already we see our current age cohorts breaking from traditional patterns around everything from retirement to physical activity, creating new strategies to approach aging. These efforts are extending the ways we approach end-of-life decisions, as increasingly widespread social movements are seeking to embrace the acceptance of death. This new narrative-building will extend people’s ability to redesign their own experience of aging well.

A SHIFT IN SOCIETY & CULTURE

The second shift disrupting our expectations of aging and creating new opportunities is primarily social—emerging from peer-to-peer networks that redefine goals, health strategies, life stages, and personal needs. Innovative social and cultural practices are catalyzing new kinds of personal and community strategies that enhance health, well-being, and joy as we age. Among the key drivers of this shift are:

NETWORKED SURROUNDINGS
As the cost of sensors and other computing technology declines, cars, offices, homes, and even our bodies can be measured and connected to broader networks. These advances create new kinds of innovation opportunities. We’ll be able to balance independence and support, from redesigning aspects of everyday life, such as eating utensils, to scaling aging-in-place technologies to become more accessible to all.

SUPER-CONNECTED COMMUNITIES
Aging offers opportunities for self-reinvention, enhanced and accelerated by our peer-to-peer networks. Our social networks are causing new practices around aging to spread faster and farther than ever. City- and community-based efforts build aging friendly communities from the bottom up. Super-connecting communities bridge geographies and age cohorts to improve health and well-being.

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We will differ, but to thrive in the coming decade we’ll need to incorporate all four into a coherent experience of aging well. To ensure a truly person-centered aging experience, we’ll design for four facets of aging well: 

1. **Mind**
   - Support intellectual and emotional well-being
   - Engage with a global platform for projects that promote early narratives, rituals, and social connections.
   - Develop new social safety nets that fill gaps left by traditional institutions.

2. **Body**
   - Strengthen physical capacity for living longer, but with more chronic illness.
   - Assistive technologies and online services will prioritize comfort, and enhance mobility.

3. **Society & Culture**
   - Foster strong relationships.
   - Establish a dynamic, holistic wellness program.
   - Develop new, customer-focused strategies.

4. **Wealth**
   - Support economic security and adequacy of income.
   - Increase access to employment opportunities.

These changes are cyclical and must be addressed in all areas of life to ensure the well-being of the future elderly. For the next decade, we must meet the needs of this population by designing for the experiences needed to thrive in the coming decade. This includes creating a multi-faceted approach to aging well, ensuring that all aspects of life are considered.

We’ve outlined four areas of focus to support this holistic approach: 

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A MAP FOR REDESIGNING AGING

Opportunities to redesign how we age into the future are within reach today. Whether you’re an established health-care player, an aspiring startup, or a community organizer, this map is a tool to inspire and guide you and your organization to move toward a future we’ll all want to age into.

ORIENT YOURSELF TO THE SHIFTS
Shifts in Science & Technology and Society & Culture drive changes in the experience of aging and present dynamic tools for redesign. Over the next decade these shifts will converge, with technology offerings fitting into people’s lives and cultural changes amplified through technology.

UNDERSTAND THE FACETS
Four facets of the aging experience—relationships, mind, body, and wealth—help root us in person-centered design. Balancing competing priorities contributes to a holistic, multifaceted perspective.

EXPLORE THE FORECASTS
Nine forecasts of the next decade explore innovations that illuminate multiple facets of aging and reveal actionable opportunities as shifts in technology and society converge. Each is supported by signals of their emergence today.

REDESIGN AGING
A process of Insight through Redesign guides you through a person-centered innovation. Iterative engagement with the facets, forecasts, and shifts reveals opportunities and offerings in support of holistic systems for aging well.

ABOUT INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE
We are an independent, nonprofit strategic research group with more than 45 years of forecasting experience. IFTF offers clients a deep understanding of the trends and discontinuities that will reshape well-being and health for the next 10 years.

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