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Ageing societies — Framework for smart multigenerational neighbourhoods —

Part 1: Requirements and recommendations

Vieillissement de la population — Cadre pour les quartiers multigénérationnels intelligents —

Partie 1: Exigences et recommandations

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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 314, *Ageing societies*.

Any feedback or questions on this document shall be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

0.1 General

In 1929, Clarence A. Perry's Neighbourhood Unit Concept introduced a new way of organising life for an industrialising society. At a time of rapid urban growth, Perry reorganised cities around people, bringing schools, services, and public space together within walking distance. This simple but powerful idea shaped how communities functioned for much of the twentieth century.

Nearly a hundred years later, societies across the world are entering a moment of comparable consequence. People are living longer than ever before, often with needs that change gradually over time and cut across health, housing, care, and community life. By 2050, more than two billion people will be aged 60 and over, while those aged 80 and above will have tripled. At the same time, the World Health Organization reports that one in six people globally experiences loneliness, a factor now recognised as having profound impacts on physical health, cognitive decline, mental wellbeing and premature mortality. These pressures are no longer peripheral; they are becoming defining features of everyday life.

An increasing body of evidence shows that multigenerational living provides a more effective foundation for addressing the challenges associated with longer lives and changing patterns of need. Across cultures, generations already support one another informally within families, neighbourhoods and communities. When people of different ages and abilities are supported to live in proximity and remain connected over time, outcomes improve for individuals and communities alike. Intergenerational settings strengthen prevention, reduce isolation and sustain independence, supporting younger people to learn and thrive while enabling older adults to retain purpose, autonomy and belonging. What has been missing is a standardised environment capable of supporting this way of living deliberately and reliably at scale.

Developed through a far-reaching process of consultation and consensus-building, the smart multigenerational neighbourhoods (SMNs) framework has been designed to respond to this gap. It represents a shift away from single-use, age-segmented models of housing and service provision towards neighbourhoods that can adapt as people's lives, relationships and needs change over time. Enabled by the rapid mainstreaming of digital connectivity, secure data exchange and artificial intelligence, SMNs make it possible to organise support around everyday life itself: coordinating care, promoting better health and wellbeing, and enabling prevention to become the norm rather than the exception. In doing so, the framework establishes a 21st-century organising logic for resilient, inclusive and people-centred communities, underpinned by clear governance, ethical practice and human oversight.

This document is part of the ISO 25553 series, a wider framework which together establishes a coherent approach to the planning, delivery and operation of smart multigenerational neighbourhoods. The framework supports alignment with established international priorities, including the World Health Organization Housing and Health Guidelines, the United Nations New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals, translating shared ambition into practical, neighbourhood-scale application.

0.2 Smart multigenerational neighbourhoods: a replicable and investible new asset class

SMNs are underpinned by digital infrastructure, a shared foundational utility, enabling persistent connectivity, secure data exchange, and AI-enabled intelligence under appropriate governance and human oversight. This 'digital plumbing' provides the connective layer through which homes, services, community settings and people can be linked, coordinated and governed over time.

In these people-centric communities, older adults are supported to live enriched, connected lives alongside young families, working professionals and children. The model supports social connection, lifelong learning and more preventative approaches to health and wellbeing, helping to address needs earlier and more proportionately, so that support can be timely, localised, appropriate and scaled to real-time need.

As this model is applied across different contexts, shared learning and evidence can be consolidated, strengthening the capacity of SMNs to adapt and remain functional over time.

0.2.1 A foundational utility

By treating digital infrastructure as a foundational utility, this framework enables forms of coordination that were previously infeasible. Services can be organised earlier, closer to home and with greater continuity across health, care, mobility and community settings. This enables smoother, more proportionate transitions between home, neighbourhood-based, virtual and clinical services, without defaulting to institutional escalation.

0.2.2 Through the life course

This life course approach recognises that wellbeing begins in childhood and remains essential throughout adulthood and later life. Smart multigenerational neighbourhoods are designed to support people of all ages and abilities, with particular attention to individuals with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities. In doing so, they enable what this document refers to as “agile ageing”: the capacity for people to live well, contribute and remain connected as their needs, capacities and circumstances change, without being displaced from the communities they value.

Its effectiveness depends in part on early planning, design and construction decisions that anticipate adaptability over time, allowing digital, social and service coordination to operate as intended rather than compensating for structural limitations.

In practical terms, this approach shifts support from episodic, crisis-driven intervention toward what can be understood as predictive maintenance for living. By recognising change early and sustaining capability over time, SMNs can support timely and appropriate responses to changing needs, reducing the likelihood of late, disruptive or overly intensive intervention, while preserving dignity, choice and independence under appropriate human oversight.

Through coordination across home, community and facility-based settings, SMNs support continuity of everyday life, enabling people to remain connected to place, relationships and purpose as circumstances evolve over time.

0.2.3 A common language

A shared language and operating logic enable smart multigenerational neighbourhoods to be replicated, compared and scaled with greater consistency and confidence. It allows value to be understood and assessed across health, social, economic, environmental and digital domains, supporting more coherent decision-making by public bodies, housing organisations, developers and investors. In this way, SMNs can be recognised as a scalable and sustainable new asset class, capable of delivering long-term public value.

0.3 Application across diverse contexts

This framework is intended to support consistent application across diverse geographic, social, economic, cultural and governance contexts. It recognises that SMNs are developed, managed and sustained under different institutional arrangements and at varying stages of maturity.

The framework provides a common reference point that can be applied to new development, regeneration and the enhancement of existing neighbourhoods. It is designed to accommodate variation in local capacity, resources and technological readiness, while maintaining coherence through shared objectives, defined requirements and aligned recommendations.

Application of this framework is therefore adaptive rather than uniform. While the overall system logic and intended outcomes remain consistent, implementation pathways may differ to reflect local needs, assets, culture and priorities. This approach supports comparability, learning and replication across settings, while enabling responsible decision-making at neighbourhood scale.

0.4 System logic and operating model

Smart multigenerational neighbourhoods are characterised by the coordinated interaction of multiple components, enabling decisions across disciplines to reinforce one another in ways that raise standards of health, care and wellbeing across the life course, and across diverse urban–rural contexts.

By harmonising the following interdependent domains, this framework establishes a structured basis for coordinated planning, delivery and ongoing operation at neighbourhood scale, supported by standardised and interoperable digital infrastructure:

— Planning and placemaking: land use, density, mixed typologies, distributed public services, access to green/blue infrastructure.

— Built form and physical infrastructure: adaptable, accessible, future-ready dwellings and facilities.

— Digital infrastructure: secure data environments, interoperability, sensing, responsible AI and service coordination platforms.

— Service integration: joined-up health, care, housing, mobility, safety and community services within a coordinated governance structure.

— Social innovation: participation, inclusion, intergenerational cohesion, cultural continuity and locally governed collaboration.

Together, these domains form a coherent neighbourhood-scale operating model, organised as a connected system of systems in which decisions in one domain reinforce outcomes in others. This enables SMNs to operate coherently, adapt over time and respond earlier and more proportionately to vulnerability, while providing a shared reference through which disparate professional disciplines can align decisions at neighbourhood scale.

The framework establishes a stable, system-level structure that enables standards, services and innovations to be integrated, adapted and evolved over time.

A shared system logic supports coordination, learning, comparison and replication across diverse contexts, while allowing local priorities and governance arrangements to shape implementation. This approach enables neighbourhoods to operate effectively with a high degree of local autonomy, under conditions of complexity and change, while benefiting from cumulative improvement, reduced risk, greater resilience, and clear governance, accountability, and human oversight. The practical implications of this approach are illustrated in Parts 2 and 3 of the ISO 25553 series.

NOTE This framework provides a practical means of applying system-wide approaches developed within ISO documents on sustainability in cities and communities, including ISO 37101 and ISO 37105, as well as the indicator frameworks set out in ISO 37120, ISO 37122 and ISO 37123. By situating these documents within a neighbourhood-scale model, it supports more coherent planning and alignment across domains that are often applied in isolation.

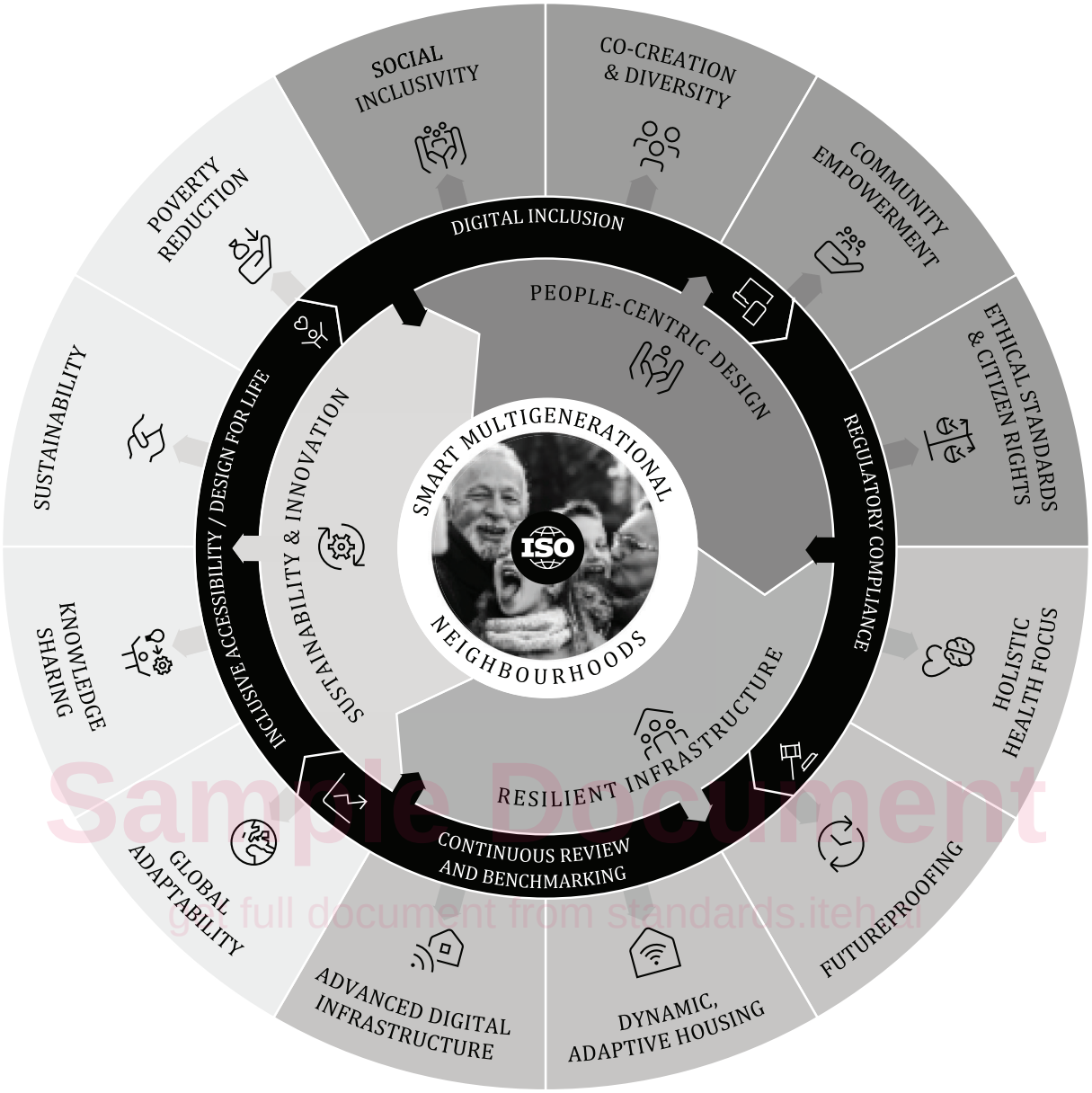

Figure 1 — Smart multigenerational neighbourhood (SMN) framework wheel

The framework illustrated in Figure 1 presents the system-level operating logic that underpins smart multigenerational neighbourhoods.

0.5 Structure of this document

The framework developed in the ISO 25553 series intends to support the planning, delivery, management, evaluation and long-term evolution of smart multigenerational neighbourhoods.

This document (Part 1) establishes the core requirements and recommendations for organising neighbourhoods as dynamic, people-centred systems, in which planning, design, services, digital infrastructure and governance work together to support human capability, autonomy and participation across the life course. It provides a common reference point for coordinating housing, services, digital infrastructure and governance at neighbourhood scale, encompassing the social, economic, cultural and care-related activity that shapes everyday neighbourhood life.

Part 2 provides practical guidance, illustrative use cases and implementation pathways to support the application of this document across different contexts.

Part 3 establishes approaches to evaluation, learning and replication, supporting evidence-based improvement and long-term system performance.

Together, the three parts are intended to operate as an integrated framework, enabling smart multigenerational neighbourhoods to be planned, implemented, evaluated and refined in a consistent and evidence-informed manner.

NOTE ISO 25553-2 and ISO 25553-3 are intended as follow-on documents. ISO 25553-2 focuses on practical guidance and demonstrator use cases, while ISO 25553-3 focuses on evaluation, learning and impact measurement.

0.6 How to apply the framework's requirements and recommendations

This document establishes a shared system reference for organising neighbourhoods around people across the life course. It defines the structural relationships between place, services, digital infrastructure and governance, providing a stable orientation through which complexity can be navigated and solutions developed with confidence over time.

Requirements are indicated by the use of "shall" and define the essential conditions that give the system its integrity and coherence. They establish a consistent baseline that enables different actors, disciplines and solutions to operate within a common, ISO-aligned framework.

Recommendations are indicated by the use of "should" and provide guidance on how the framework can be applied, extended or strengthened in practice. They support adaptation to local context, capacity and stage of development, while remaining aligned with the core system logic.

This balanced approach between fixed requirements and flexible guidance allows for immediate action while fostering long-term, sustainable planning.

The framework serves as a stable foundation, enabling interoperability, learning and evolution, while ensuring that emerging services, tools and delivery models remain safe, secure, resilient and aligned with principles of ethical governance, transparency and public trust.

Further guidance on practical application, including implementation pathways, demonstrators and integration with other standards and delivery approaches, is provided in ISO 25553-2. Approaches to evaluation, evidence and replication are addressed in ISO 25553-3.

0.7 Target users of this framework

This framework is intended to serve the wide range of public, private and civic actors whose decisions, investments and activities shape everyday neighbourhood life.

It provides a shared operating framework through which diverse contributions – made by different parties, at different times and for different purposes – can be aligned, integrated and accumulated into coherent outcomes at scale.

By making coordination visible and outcomes legible, the framework supports those with responsibility for neighbourhood systems to act with greater confidence and foresight. This includes public authorities and agencies, asset owners and operators, service commissioners and providers, infrastructure and technology suppliers, investors, and community organisations operating under different governance, ownership and regulatory arrangements. In doing so, the framework enables more effective stewardship of change, supporting proactive investment, shared accountability and long-term value creation.

The following groups represent some of the many users who can apply the framework, either individually or in partnership:

— Public sector: local authorities, social housing providers, health and social care providers, and government bodies responsible for planning, commissioning, and sustaining community support frameworks.

— Building industry and designers: developers, architects, urban planners, accessibility consultants, landscape architects and contractors responsible for creating environments that are adaptable, inclusive and responsive to diverse community needs.

— Industry and research: technology developers, digital health innovators, research institutions, universities and professional bodies working on solutions that enhance accessibility, mobility and independent living.

— Civic society and community organisations: non-governmental organisations, social enterprises and community advocacy groups engaged in promoting social inclusion, participation and place-based initiatives.

— Funders and investors: philanthropic foundations, public funding agencies and impact investors supporting initiatives that advance social value, inclusion and community resilience.

This list is indicative rather than exhaustive, recognising that effective delivery depends on collaboration across a broad ecosystem of public, private and civic actors.

0.8 Primary beneficiaries

The application of this framework supports the creation of environments that enhance quality of life, accessibility and resilience for people and communities, including those who rely on support at home, in community settings and in residential or institutional care.

Primary beneficiaries include:

— Individuals: people of all ages and abilities, including older adults, people with disabilities, children and young people, and their families and carers.

— Communities: neighbourhoods benefiting from stronger social ties and more effective use of shared resources.

— Service providers: organisations delivering health, care and community support, including home-based and community services, and residential or institutional care provision, benefiting from environments that support more integrated, preventative and person-centred approaches, and smoother transitions between settings. This includes improved coordination between residential settings and neighbourhood-based services, supporting continuity, safety and proportionate escalation when needed.

— Governments and policymakers: benefiting from a more consistent and coordinated basis for long-term decision-making and investment.

— Businesses, insurers and researchers: benefiting from clearer frameworks for innovation, risk assessment and evaluation.

0.9 Safeguarding a minimum standard of living

Developed through international consultation and consensus-building, this document establishes clear, foundational and equitable requirements to support a minimum standard of living for people of all ages and abilities. It is intended to safeguard fundamental rights while promoting inclusion, dignity, safety, autonomy and meaningful participation within the neighbourhoods where people live.

The framework is explicitly people-centred. It recognises individuals not as passive recipients of services, but as active participants in community life, supported to live, learn, move and contribute as their needs and circumstances evolve.

The framework also recognises that greater integration, digital enablement and system-level coordination introduce legitimate risks, particularly in relation to privacy, equity, trust and the use of intelligent technologies. Safeguards are therefore embedded as foundational conditions, including ethical governance, accountable decision-making and secure, interoperable data practices.

By defining how social, physical and digital systems are expected to align over time, this document provides the structural integrity required for neighbourhood-scale systems to operate safely and consistently. As the framework is applied, shared learning and evidence are expected to inform continuous improvement, strengthening resilience and supporting communities to respond effectively to future social, environmental and systemic challenges.

In summary, smart multigenerational neighbourhoods are designed to create environments in which people of all ages and abilities can live, participate and remain connected as part of everyday life. By integrating housing, services, public space and digital infrastructure at neighbourhood scale, they support shared experience across generations while enabling independence and continuity as circumstances change.

Within such environments, individuals remain visible, valued and engaged, not as passive recipients of services, but as active participants in community life. This approach helps to sustain purpose, dignity and social connection over time, translating system-level coordination into everyday lived experience.