

Fairfax Center Area Study

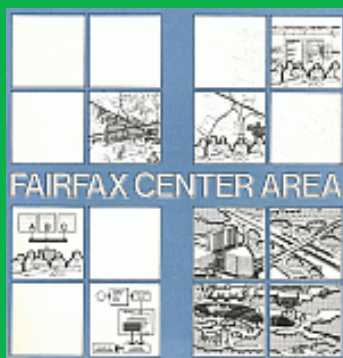
Phase I

Community Outreach Report

Braddock District

February 2014





Cover of the 1982 Fairfax Center Area Comprehensive Plan

Purpose

The following report contains a summary of feedback from public outreach efforts, which should assist staff and the working group in finalizing the scope of work for the initial phase of the Fairfax Center Area (FCA) study. This phase is examining the Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the transition areas (the low density and suburban neighborhood areas, peripheral to the suburban center) in the FCA. The second phase of the study will focus on Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the suburban center portion of the FCA, as well as areawide policy guidance. The first section of the report describes the background of the study and details public outreach efforts that have taken place to date. The second section of the report documents community input received during the public outreach efforts and preliminary staff recommendations on how these ideas should be considered within the study.

Background

In 1982, the Board of Supervisors adopted a new Comprehensive Plan for the Fairfax Center Area that established a vision for the area to be a central node of development activity within Fairfax County. Since then, most of the area has been developed according to the Plan; however, Plan guidance for this area as a whole has not been reviewed since the Plan's initial adoption. The Fairfax Center Area study will provide an opportunity to review Plan guidance, ensuring that it remains accurate and relevant. To serve as a baseline of knowledge for the study area, an Existing Conditions Report was published in September 2013. This report provides background information on a variety of topics including areawide policies, land uses, and public facilities, identifying considerations for the study. As a starting point, the report identified the following tasks to be undertaken by staff to update existing Plan guidance:

- » Review Tax Map parcel number references, updating where necessary to reflect existing conditions in the study area;
- » Review language regarding policy guidance to ensure that it remains consistent with current county wide guidance;
- » Review recommendations to update those that have been implemented, such as the construction of public facilities or development of residential neighborhoods;
- » Consider showing baseline land use recommendations for the Fairfax Center Area on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map;
- » Evaluate the applicability of the Fairfax Center Area implementation tools, such as the incentive-based land use guidance and the development elements, within the transition areas; and
- » Determine if Plan recommendations for the transition areas should be moved to the underlying community planning sectors.

Additional Plan changes will be considered based upon the public input, as summarized in the Public Outreach Matrix, Appendices A and B.

Public Outreach

Following the publication of the [Existing Conditions Report](#) in September 2013, a series of live and virtual public outreach meetings were held. Announcements for these meetings were made through the [Fairfax County Land Use Planning Facebook page](#), the study-specific listserv, the [study webpage](#), and district supervisors' newsletters and email lists. The meetings were critical opportunities to gather public feedback on the issues identified in the Existing Conditions Report and input on other potential community issues to be considered in the study.

Fairfax Center Area Study Kick-Off Open House

A study kick-off open house was held on October 7, 2013, during which staff introduced the preliminary study parameters and process and presented the existing conditions for the area. Attendees were also asked to answer two questions about the Fairfax Center Area now and in the future:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses you presently see in the Fairfax Center Area, and
2. What are the opportunities or challenges you see for the Fairfax Center Area in the next 20 years?

A [virtual meeting web site](#) was created for community members who did not attend the open house to view the presentation and answer the questions. In summary, feedback from the Open House and the virtual meeting site addressed several topics, including land uses, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections, schools, parks and recreation, and the environment. The specifics of these comments and their applicability to the study, particularly in Phase I, are highlighted in the Public Outreach Matrix, Appendix A.

Braddock District Kick-Off Meeting

Subsequently, a Phase I Kick-off meeting was held for the Braddock District community on January 7, 2014 to gain additional community input. Staff reviewed the preliminary parameters of the study, study process, and policies pertaining to the Braddock District portion of the transition area, generally south of Lee Highway (Route 29), west of the City of Fairfax, and east of the Fairfax County Parkway. The subject area of this meeting is shown in the map on page four. In particular, the portions of this area planned for commercial uses were highlighted, as there has been interest in examining the potential for other land uses in the area.



Attendees at the Fairfax Center Area Study Kick-Off Open House

Study Kick-Off Open House:

When?

Monday, October 7, 2013
7:00 PM

Where?

Fairfax County Government
Center Board Auditorium and
Forum

Braddock Open House:

When?

Tuesday, January 7, 2014*
7:00 PM

Where?

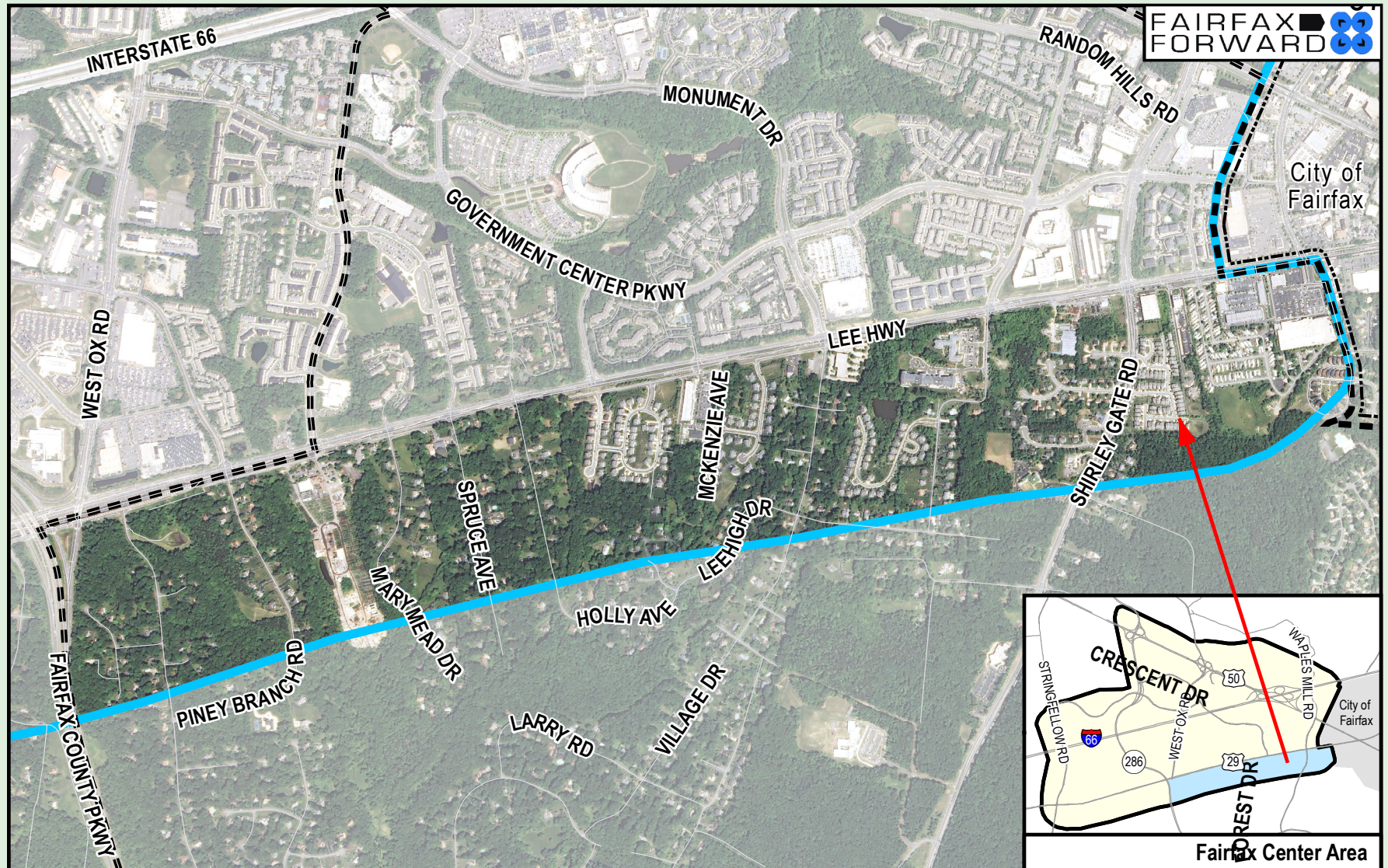
Fairfax County Government
Center Conference Rooms 4 + 5

*Meeting postponed from December
10, 2013 due to weather

Staff also presented the feedback from the October 2013 open house, and the attendees discussed additional issues specific to the transition area within the Braddock District by answering two questions:

1. Several themes emerged from feedback received at the October Study Kick-Off Open House and the Virtual Open House. Some strengths include the area's close proximity to major transportation routes, its variety of housing options, and the pastoral nature of areas south of Lee Highway. Some suggested improvements include the need for better signage for existing parks, more active recreation opportunities, more schools, improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, and an expansion of multi-modal transportation options.
 - a. Is there anything else to add?
 - b. How do these ideas apply to Land Units T, U, and V?
2. Do you think the recommendations for areas presently planned for commercial uses in Land Units U and V align with your future vision?
 - a. If yes, why do you think the current recommendations are appropriate?
 - b. If no, what alternatives would you suggest?

Materials from the meeting and a comment form also were made available online in a [virtual open house](#) format. The specifics of the comments received from the meeting and the website, along with their applicability to the study, particularly in Phase I, are highlighted in the Public Outreach Matrix, Appendix B.



Transition Area - Braddock District

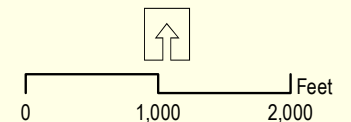
Fairfax Center Area Study - Phase 1

Key



Braddock District Boundary

Fairfax Center Area Boundary



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The following matrix lists specific ideas shared by attendees of the Fairfax Center Area Study Kick-off Open House and Virtual Open House. Ideas in the matrix are organized by topic. Preliminary staff recommendations on how these ideas should be considered within the study are organized as follows:

Examine in Phase I - this idea should be considered during the first phase of the Fairfax Center Area study

Examine in Phase II - this idea should be considered during the second phase of the Fairfax Center Area study

Examine in Phases I and II - aspects of this idea should be considered during both phases of the Fairfax Center Area study

Comment(s) noted - idea does not need to be addressed within the Fairfax Center Area study for the reasons noted

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Land Use		
Land uses	Desire a larger commercial office presence	Examine in Phase II - Higher density commercial office is planned within the suburban center portion of the Fairfax Center Area.
	Encourage boutique retail in area	Comment noted - The Comprehensive Plan does not specify specific retail tenant types, but supports a variety retail forms including ground floor retail and neighborhood-serving retail uses. No action needed.
	Good mix and proximity of uses, both retail and residential	Comments noted - In accordance with the current Comprehensive Plan recommendations, there are a mix of uses within the Fairfax Center Area. These include a variety of residential, retail, and office uses. No action needed.
	The area is well-contained; you can get everything you need here	
	Variety of retail	
	Good variety of food options, both inexpensive and health food	
	Many convenient health facilities, such as dental and surgery (more than there used to be 15-20 years ago) - important to aging in place	
	Close to the Government Center	
	Good variety of housing types and price points	

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Transportation		
Transportation facilities and impacts	Traffic is an issue in this area	Comments noted - Transportation policies in the Comprehensive Plan support the provision of adequate access and capacity within the roadway system. These policies also require the mitigation of adverse impacts upon the transportation system by new development. No action needed unless land use changes are considered within the study.
	Infrastructure needs to keep pace with growth (roads) and utilization	
	Well-located for split commutes (access to both Loudoun County and DC)	Comment noted - The foundation of the initial Fairfax Center Area plan was based upon the area's access to major transportation arteries, including I-66 and US Route 50. No action needed.
	Good place for commuters since there is good access to major roads	
Implementation of existing Comprehensive Plan recommendations	Implement Comprehensive Plan recommendation for walkway over I-66 from Fair Oaks Mall to Fairfax Corner	Comments noted - Improvements recommended in the Comprehensive Plan are generally implemented through the rezoning process. Proffers and road fund contributions received through this process fund the eventual construction of these projects. No action needed.
	County does not seem to put in sidewalks and bike paths without getting money from proffers - citizens are not paying enough taxes for these improvements	
Public transit	Expand public transit to areas along Route 29	Examine in Phase II - Look at in context of larger areawide transportation recommendations.
	Add BRT on I-66 between Vienna to Stringfellow/Centreville	Comments noted - The Comprehensive Plan supports an Enhanced Public Transit Corridor along I-66. A study, led by the Virginia Office of Transportation Public-Private Partnerships, is underway to examine future improvements to the I-66 corridor, including transit enhancements. Funding sources for the studied improvements will be identified at a later time. No action needed.
	Expansion of Metro to Centreville - how will this be funded?	

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Bike and pedestrian connectivity	Better bike and pedestrian connectivity is needed so people are not just reliant on the public transit schedule	Examine in Phase I - consider adding Plan language to foster connections to suburban center portion of the Fairfax Center Area; Examine in Phase II - Look at pedestrian and bicycle facilities in context of larger areawide pedestrian and bicycle connections, incorporating recommendations from the Bicycle Master Plan into the Comprehensive plan for this area.
	Need to have a way to get around without cars - right now it is hard to bike to BJs or Giant	
	Enhance multi-modal transit options and access, to include walking and bicycling	
Parks		
Parks and open space	Open space available	Comments noted - In accordance with the current Comprehensive Plan, efforts were made to preserve stream valleys as open space corridors throughout the Fairfax Center Area. No action needed unless land use changes are considered within the study.
	Parks are not abundant but they are present	
	Like having access to streams and creeks nearby, a best-kept secret of the area	
	Need more active recreation opportunities including those for senior citizens and a diverse population	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Park Authority to further evaluate these ideas.
	Better wayfinding to parks	
	Need more parks and better identification of those that are here already	
RECenters	Add a RECenter within the Fairfax Center Area	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Park Authority to assess future needs and obtain information on FCPS's future planning efforts.
Trails	Need a complete trail map, integrating parks and transportation data	Examine in Phase II - Look at within the context of areawide transportation and trails recommendations to develop a unified map for the Fairfax Center Area.
Schools		
School facilities	Overcrowding in schools at all levels - opportunity to add schools to this area	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Public Schools to assess future needs and obtain information on FCPS's future planning efforts.

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Libraries		
Library facilities	Add a library within the Fairfax Center Area	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Public Library to assess future needs and obtain information on FCPL's future planning efforts.
Environment		
Noise	Noise control - plane noise from Dulles Airport and helicopter noise from the Helipad	Comment noted - The Comprehensive Plan currently contains policies related to noise levels at Dulles Airport and development. These guidelines are delineated by noise contours, measured in decibels, proximate to the Dulles Airport. The Fairfax Center Area is not within these noise contours. No action needed.
Stormwater	Impact of stormwater runoff concentration on Resource Protection Areas	Examine in Phase II - The Comprehensive Plan currently contains policies that encourage the reduction of stormwater runoff and support the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas such as stream channels and wetlands. An update of these policies within the context of areawide environmental recommendations is appropriate to ensure that the recommendations remain current, particularly in light of updated statewide stormwater management regulations.
	Don't pave paradise especially when runoff is a problem	
	Do not want to see large stormwater ponds in lieu of onsite detention/retention	
Water Quality	Good Occoquan Watershed protection policy	Comment noted - Comprehensive Plan environmental guidance related to the Occoquan Watershed has guided the protection of water resources in this part of the county for over 30 years. No action needed.

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Character		
Low-density areas	Area does not have a city-feel; has low-density areas that are like a small town with trees	Comments noted - In accordance with the current Comprehensive Plan recommendations, portions of the Fairfax Center area are recommended to be developed as suburban neighborhoods and low-density residential areas. No action needed.
	Like the pastoral nature of the areas south of Route 29	
	Like that there are parts of the area without streetlights and sidewalks	
Public Safety		
Public Health and Safety	Clean	Comments noted - Comprehensive Plan policies support the location of police and fire and rescue facilities to ensure efficient and effective coverage to serve the county's population. No action needed unless land use changes are considered within the study.
	Perception of safety	
	Good emergency response capacity	
Miscellaneous		
Miscellaneous	Great supplier of tax base for the county	Comment noted. No action needed.
	Reduce polling place lines	Comment noted - Will be forwarded to the Fairfax County Office of Elections. Polling place procedures are not a comprehensive planning issue.
	Get younger people involved in planning to “make the room less gray”	Comment noted - The Planning Division, through Fairfax Forward, is seeking to expand public participation through a wider range of outreach methods. Included among these are a greater web presence for planning studies, to include options for online participation, as well the use of social media such as Facebook to provide study updates and announce public meetings. No action needed.

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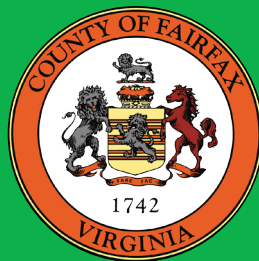
Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Land Use		
Land use along Lee Highway	Keep Land Unit T residential	Examine in Phase I - Consider these ideas as potential land use alternatives are identified for commercially planned areas. Complete an impact analysis on land use alternatives.
	Eliminate office uses in Plan guidance	
	Mixed-use development should not be ruled out on commercially-planned parcels	
	Restrict commercial uses to neighborhood-serving uses	
	Bundle commercial uses as-is so that high-rises do not end up in low-density areas, such as the Merrifield Garden Center	
	Interim uses can differ from the ultimate vision of the corridor	
Density/intensity	Expansion of residential uses along Lee Highway should be discouraged; maintain existing character	
Plan implementation	Do not support the existing incentive-based Plan guidance in this area	Examine in Phase II - Consider this idea in the context of areawide guidance for Plan implementation.
Streetscape		
Streetscape along Lee Highway	Create a unified streetscape along Lee Highway with amenity features	Examine in Phase I and Phase II - Consider adding streetscape guidance for Lee Highway to the Comprehensive Plan.

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Transportation		
Transportation facilities and impacts	Land Unit V is affected by traffic generated by new development because of the bottleneck at the county/City of Fairfax boundary	Comment noted - The transportation analysis for proposed changes to land use recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan considers overall trip generation, peak hour trip generation, and takes into account planned transportation improvements. Coordination will continue to occur with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation and the City of Fairfax on the testing of land use alternatives. No action needed unless land use changes are considered within the study.
	Need to better consider the traffic impacts of new development, especially at peak hours	
	Create interconnectivity between subdivisions	Comment noted - Transportation policy in the Comprehensive Plan recommends that the operational efficiency of transportation facilities be maximized. Accessibility between residential developments to facilitate circulation and emergency access is encouraged. No action needed.
Service drives	Service drives may not be the best use of land - the area occupied by them may be better used to create bike and pedestrian opportunities	Comment noted - Comprehensive Plan guidance for the Fairfax Center Area recommends that the use of service drives be minimized within the Fairfax Center Area, but provides guidance for service drives in situations where they are necessary. Service drives are required by the Zoning Ordinance along Primary Highways such as Lee Highway. No action needed.
Implementation of existing Comprehensive Plan recommendations	Make sure the Waples Mill/Lee Highway/Shirley Gate interchange gets built	Comments noted - Improvements recommended in the Comprehensive Plan are generally implemented through the rezoning process. Proffers and road fund contributions received through this process fund the eventual construction of these projects. No action needed.
	Build an overpass over Lee Highway at Monument Drive	

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Lee Highway access	It is difficult to make left turns from residential streets onto Lee Highway	Comments noted - The design phase of the Lee Highway widening project has been completed. This project will consolidate access points along Lee Highway and will provide enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access along the corridor. No action needed.
	Improve crossing and signalization on Lee Highway for pedestrians and bikes	
	Create a bike and pedestrian refuge in the middle of Lee Highway	
Bike and pedestrian connectivity	Need good bike and pedestrian connections across Lee Highway	Examine in Phase I - Consider adding Plan language to foster connections to suburban center portion of the Fairfax Center Area; Examine in Phase II - Look at pedestrian and bicycle facilities in context of larger areawide pedestrian and bicycle connections, incorporating recommendations from the Bicycle Master Plan into the Comprehensive plan for this area.
Public transit	Need more local mass transit connections into the Government Center Area, not just connections to Vienna Metro	Examine in Phase II - Look at in context of larger areawide transportation recommendations.
Parks		
Parks	Consolidate Piney Branch Stream Valley Park to create a continuous park	Comment noted - Current Comprehensive Plan guidance recommends the preservation and dedication of stream valleys. Consolidation of the stream valley park would be possible if privately-owned properties along the stream valley redevelop. No action needed.
RECenters	Build a RECenter in the Fairfax Center Area	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Park Authority to assess future needs and obtain information on FCPA's future planning efforts.
Schools		
School facilities	Construct additional schools in the Fairfax Center Area	Examine in Phases I and II - Coordinate with the Fairfax County Public Schools to assess future needs and obtain information on FCPS's future planning efforts.

Topic	Specific Ideas	Recommendation
Miscellaneous		
Wildlife	New development element to control deer population	Comment noted - Comprehensive Plan policies do not cover the management of wildlife such as deer. The county has a Deer Management Program administered by the Fairfax County Animal Services Division to help control the deer population. No action needed.

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A Fairfax County,
Virginia publication



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