

Evaluation of the 1989 Comprehensive Plan

The 1989 Farmers Branch Comprehensive Plan was prepared by Sedway Cooke and Associates to help achieve goals identified in the 1984 Forward Farmers Branch Plan document.

A necessary first step in preparing this Plan update was to critically examine the outcomes of the strategies recommended in the existing Plan. While the existing Plan includes citywide recommendations, the existing Plan will be updated in three geographic sections (west, central, and east side), beginning with the West Side Plan. Therefore, the following evaluation includes both citywide and West Side specific Plan outcomes.

1. Plan Outcomes

In evaluating the outcomes, the focus was on the following four implementation tools identified in the Plan:

- A. Regulatory;
- B. Improvement programs;
- C. Procedural; and
- D. Financial.

The following table summarizes the various sub-parts of the four key recommended implementation tools:

Regulatory	Improvement Program
Ordinance redraft and reorganization	Creek improvements
Adopt transportation management ordinance	Residential street landscaping
Adopt impact fee ordinance	Residential alley improvement
Adopt underground utility ordinance	Retail area revitalization
Adopt housing inspection ordinance	Transit area property acquisition
Provide housing incentives	Citywide thoroughfare improvement
	Eastside parking district
	Park acquisition and improvement
	Tax increment financing

Financial	Procedural
Revision of development impact fee	Adopt the Comprehensive Plan
Create assessment districts	Annual monitoring program
	Five year update program
	Upgraded city staffing
	Data management system

The items within shaded areas have not been completed.

A. Regulatory

1.) Ordinance Redraft and Reorganization

The current zoning ordinance was adopted in 1969. The Plan called for major zoning ordinance changes. While the Ordinance has not been revised, it has been codified into a single, more easy to use document. The codified version is also available on-line.

All rezoning applications since the Plan’s adoption in 1989 were examined to determine the degree to which the Plan’s recommendations were implemented.

Rezoning Outcomes on the West Side from 1989

	Year	Description	Approved/ Denied	Consistent w/plan	Acres
1	8/90	Ordinance 1899: Amend PD-67 to allow mixed use-commercial use.	Approved	Yes	6.92
2	7/93	Ordinance 2190: Amend zoning classification of 3 tracts of land from PD-24 to PD-61.	Approved	Yes	25.4
3	10/95	Ordinance 2234: Allow Light Industrial and commercial uses by right; Retail service uses would be allowed with a specific use permit; Reduction in landscaping requirements from 20 percent to 10 percent; Reduce F.A.R. from 4:1 to 1:1; All thoroughfares and street connections must be complete before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued; and Administrative site plan approval for all uses permitted by right.	Approved	Yes	46.7
4	10/95	Ordinance 2235: Amend from PD-50 to PD-72 allowing LI, commercial, and office uses.	Approved	Yes	148
5	5/96	Ordinance 2244: Residential development was eliminated; Manufacturing, industrial and outdoor storage permitted with a specific use permit; Broader range of commercial and retail as primary uses; Reduce F.A.R. from 4:1 to 1:1;	Approved	Yes	203
6	3/97	Ordinance 2306: A maximum of 2.5 million square feet of gross building floor area be permitted on 52.5 acres; Roadway requirements be in place prior to issuance of building permits; Adequate funding to cover costs of roadway improvements; Administrative approval for site plans which comply with PD-60 standards; and many roadway extension and access requirements.	Approved	Yes	148
7	5/97	Ordinance 2316: Amend PD-60 development standards as follows: Maximum building floor area; site plan approval required before building permit issued; Phasing – escrow account, construction of roadways.	Approved	N/A	226
8	8/98	Ordinance 2417: Amend PD-24; establish range of allowable uses; loading dock doors and truck courts, including truck/trailer maneuvering, staging, parking, storage shall not front I-35; outdoor storage of materials, equipment or merchandise of any type within primary or accessory building is prohibited.	Approved	Yes	133
9	8/98	Ordinance 2418: Amend PD-61 to prohibit hauling/storage company; motor freight terminal; parking lot truck; parking lot truck, clothing manufacturer or light compounding or fabrication; job printing or newspaper printing; laundry plant (commercial) distribution and warehouse; storage or sales warehouse and all general manufacturer and LI uses.	Approved	Yes	50.5
10	9/98	Ordinance 2422 (PD-72): Prohibit hauling and storage companies, motor freight terminals, truck parking lots, clothing manufacture, job printing, commercial laundry plants, distribution and warehousing, storage and sales warehouse, and all general manufacturing and industrial uses.	Approved	Yes	148
11	9/98	Ordinance 2423: Amend zoning classification from PD-22 to PD-78; establishing use and development standards requiring site plan approval.	Approved	Yes	377.5
12	9/98	Ordinance 2424: Amend zoning classification from PD-22 to PD-78; establishing use and development standards requiring site plan approval.	Approved	Yes	377.5
13	10/98	Ordinance 2421 (PD-50): Prohibit truck parking lots, distribution and warehousing, storage or sales warehouse, outdoor storage, clothing manufacture or light compounding or fabrication, job printing or newspaper printing, commercial laundry plant, and all general manufacturing and industrial uses, and delete any specifically associated development standards; Require a specific use permit for: wholesale office and sample room and office/showroom uses; and Allow all other currently permitted institutional, accessory, entertainment, retail service, office and commercial uses to continue to be permitted without additional restriction.	Approved	Yes	203

Rezoning Outcomes on the West Side from 1989

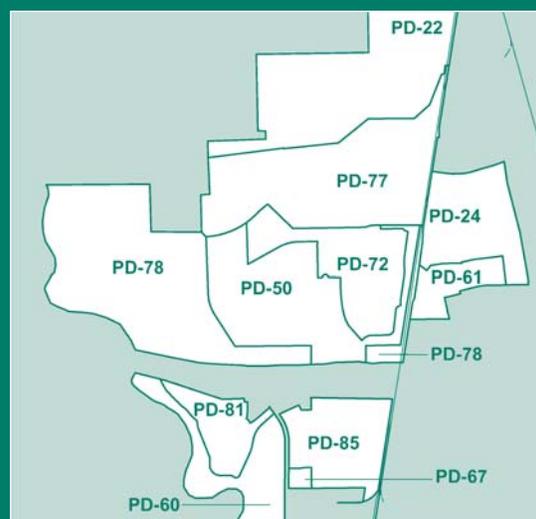
Year	Description	Approved/ Denied	Consistent w/plan	Acres	
14	10/98	Ordinance 2234: Prohibit new and used motor vehicle sales, outdoor commercial amusement uses, mineral extraction and similar uses; Require a specific use permit for churches, denominational schools, daycare facilities (except as an accessory use), all motor vehicle-related uses and all outdoor storage activities; and specify building and paving setbacks, and restriction for landscaping and signs.	Approved	Yes	46.7
15	12/99	Ordinance 2512: Rezoned an approximately 4.5 acre tract within PD-22 so that the subject property would have the same PD-22 zoning and development standards as the remaining PD-22 area.	Approved	Yes	4.5
16	09/00	Ordinance 2563: Amended PD-72 uses and development standards including development-phasing requirements for public streets.	Approved	Yes	148
17	11/00	Ordinance 2570: Amended PD-50 uses and development standards including development phasing requirements for public streets and allowing parking lots as an interim use for a period not to exceed five years.	Approved	Yes	203
18	01/01	Ordinance 2578: PD 81; Rezoned a portion of PD-60 to PD-81 allowing mixed use development including offices, retail, commercial and multi-family development. Development standards include architectural design standards, aesthetic treatments within public rights-of-way, and open space requirements.	Approved	Yes	66.0
19	08/02	Ordinance 2687 (PD-85): Rezoned PD-45, PD-59, and PD-62 to a new planned development including establishing development standards and permitted uses; a reduction in the floor area ratio from 4:1 to 0.55:1 and removal of residential uses.	Approved	Partially [∞]	125.7

The shaded rezoning cases only modified the development standards.

The above list does not include Specific Use Permit applications.

- [∞] With the exception of the deletion of the residential uses, the rezoning request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Residential uses for this property were not desirable due to proximity to LBJ Freeway, existing industrial area to the east and south, and the existing railroad tracks which border the property on the east.

Nineteen rezoning cases were reviewed and approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council. No petitions were denied. Almost all cases were consistent with Plan and staff recommendations. There were limited community comments at the public hearings for the rezoning cases – one reason for this may be because substantial area on the West Side is unimproved.



2.) Adopt a Transportation System Management Ordinance

Transportation System Management, while an essential component of the City's efforts to improve mobility, cannot be effectively legislated via an ordinance as proposed in the plan. Instead, continuous efforts are required to plan, provide resources, and promote ridesharing, transit use, flexible work hours, and bottleneck improvements. The City's active support of Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), acting as the ridesharing and transit agency in the region, has resulted in much better promotion of ridesharing, park-and-ride, and transit use than the City could have achieved by ordinance. For example, the City's work with DART has resulted in the implementation of HOV lanes on both IH635 and IH35E. Light rail transit will begin operation between Farmers Branch and downtown Dallas by 2010.

The City has implemented an aggressive "compressed work week" program with its work force under which participating employees work trips are reduced by 10%.

The City has also been successful in planning and obtaining funds for bottleneck improvements throughout the City.

The City has taken the initiative to actively implement "sustainable development" concepts in areas ripe for development and redevelopment. Sustainable development concepts combine planning, design, operation, and regulatory processes to achieve development that makes walking, bicycling, transit, and ridesharing the preferred modes of transportation.

3.) Adopt an Underground Utility Ordinance

The zoning for new development requires that utilities be placed underground. The cost to place existing overhead utilities in developed areas has been determined to be cost prohibitive. New utilities in developed areas must be placed either on existing utility poles or underground. The Right-of-Way

Ordinance reinforces the authority regarding the placement of utilities.

4.) Provide Housing Inspection Ordinance

The City has implemented an aggressive and proactive property maintenance and code enforcement program. A new property maintenance code has been adopted. The frequency of code enforcement inspections has been increased as much as 300% in neighborhoods that are showing signs of deterioration. The efficiency and effectiveness of the code enforcement program continues to be reviewed for areas of improvement.

5.) Provide Housing Incentive

Through the Farmers Branch Housing Finance Corporation qualifying first-time homebuyers in Farmers Branch may be eligible to obtain low fixed-rate mortgage financing along with down payment and closing cost assistance.

The Farmers Branch Neighborhood Renaissance Program initiative was introduced in late 1997. In the spirit of the program's public and private partnership, city leaders and neighborhood residents meet regularly to discuss program plans and progress. The forum gives residents an opportunity to offer suggestions and provide feedback to help shape their community. Branch Crossing is the first neighborhood selected for the Farmers Branch Neighborhood Renaissance Program.



The City of Farmers Branch Neighborhood Renaissance Program also incorporated a marketing effort assuring that the quality of the neighborhood and the quality of life is marketed in the similar fashion to high-profile new subdivisions in the cities.

B. Improvement Programs

A vast majority of these implementation tools have been employed. For example, the Plan recommended tax increment financing as one of the tools to accomplish economic development. In December 1998 the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District was created for 808 acres of undeveloped land. The project and financing plan for the TIF was adopted in August 1999. The primary purpose of the TIF is to fund an estimated \$60 million public infrastructure improvements such as streets, streetscape landscaping, underground water distribution, wastewater collection, and storm water drainage facilities necessary for development.

1.) Creek Improvement Program

Since 1986, improvements have been implemented to reduce flooding, control erosion, remove sediment, and create visual and recreational amenities along the public areas of Cooks Creek, Rawhide Creek, and Farmers Branch Creek. Relative to watershed studies, Cooks Creek and Rawhide Creek basins were fully developed prior to 1989. Flood studies on the three creeks required by the National Flood Insurance Program were updated between 1987 and 1989. A complementary study to the 1999 Erosion and Sedimentation Study of Farmers Branch Creek analyzed the benefits of requiring detention ponds to reduce runoff from new development. The analysis determined that detention ponds would have minimal effect in reducing runoff.

2.) Street Landscaping Program

Landscaping improvements have been implemented in residential areas by the installation of landscaping in the medians or along the rights-of-way of Marsh Lane, Webb Chapel Road, Tom Field Road, Valwood Parkway, Valley View Lane, and Josey Lane.

3.) Alley Improvement Program

The alley-paving program was initiated in 1986. The program provides for the paving

of alleys based on residents submitting a petition requesting paved alleys and easements from all the adjacent residents granting permission to pave the alleys. The funds were initially provided in the 1985 Bond Program to pave six alleys. Additional funds were budgeted in the Non-Bond Fund to pave an additional ten alleys. Presently all of the alleys that met the program's conditions have been paved.

4.) Transit Station Site Advance Acquisition

The DART Local Assistance Program has provided the funds necessary to acquire most of the land required for the proposed DART transit station. For the past few years the City is aggressively pursuing property acquisition of key properties around the transit station, particularly the former Word of Faith property and the Penguin Plaza site.

5.) Citywide Thoroughfare Improvement Program

The City has continued to enhance the medians on all thoroughfares. The program has been expanded to include enhancing the rights-of-way of Webb Chapel Road and Marsh Lane. The Capital Improvement Program budgets funds for entry signs and enhancements at the main entrances to the City.



Wittington Place: New street construction water line.



Oakbrook Park enhancement.



Tanglewood reconstruction.



Streetscape improvements to Tom Field Road.

C. Procedural

1.) Periodic Review of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic and evolving document that must be updated periodically to retain its usefulness and relevance to the community. The existing Plan has not been updated since its adoption in 1989.

The 1993 Multi-year Plan, a strategic planning exercise conducted by the City Council, provided an assessment of the key goals and objectives, the present conditions, and an action plan. Although the Multi-year Plan did not effect formal amendment of the Comprehensive Plan, it did foreshadow subsequent zoning amendments that were consistent with the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.) Data Management

All zoning maps were updated in 2000, printed, and bound together in a user-friendly format – the zoning atlas is programmed to be updated annually. Planning Division has instituted a new filing and storage system, and scanning information for easy retrieval. Planning activities are fully integrated into Sierra Permits Plus software that allows for accurate record keeping and analysis. The Planning website was overhauled in 2000 and now provides valuable development related information such as zoning ordinance and maps, aerial photography, Planning and Zoning Commission hearing dates and agendas.

D. Financial

1.) Adopt a Development Impact Fee Ordinance

After completion of the Comprehensive Plan, legislative changes to State law made it impractical to pay for infrastructure with the use of impact fees. The City has utilized many methods to finance improvements within the City. General Obligation Bond Funds have been used for many street, water system, sanitary sewer system, and drainage system improvements.

The creation of a Public Improvement District (PID) on the East Side commercial properties made it possible to fund a major sanitary sewer tunnel interceptor to provide adequate sanitary sewer capacity for the East Side to develop to its potential. The creation of a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) public improvement district on the West Side will provide the revenues to fund the major infrastructure improvements that have heretofore inhibited development. The creation of a TIF district that encompasses the proposed DART transit center, will provide revenues to purchase land and construct improvements to stimulate development in the “Old Farmers Branch” area. The DART Local Assistance Program has provided substantial funding to make major improvements to most of the major thoroughfares.

The City strives to direct revenue growth towards reinvestment in capital infrastructure and fixed assets. This use of operating revenues (both general and utility funds) offers flexibility to the City in using a pay-as-you-go cash financing strategy. The advantages of this flexibility include allowing capital projects to be added if additions to fund balance increase or deferred if economic conditions change. The cash financing strategy also allows projects to be changed and/or substituted from year to year.

2. Conclusion

The Public Works Department employs a Global Positioning System (GPS) to mark the position of various City features, relaying the information to three satellites in orbit to plot the exact location. After data has been collected, it is downloaded into a computer at City Hall where the specific location information may be printed out. Public Works is using the GPS technology to:

- Improve the accuracy of water and sewer maps;
- Inventory all City infrastructure and their features;
- Inventory all street signs; and
- Link the information for future use with work orders and repair situations.

In summary, the 1989 Plan clearly identified and presented the issues along with background information in a convincing and effective manner. The Plan also included detailed information on the desired land use and site planning.

A successful Plan is one that can be measured with tangible results. A vast majority of the strategies recommended by the 1989 Comprehensive Plan were carried out. Over 83% of the West Side was rezoned in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

The City Council's 1993 Multi-year Plan, the Existing Conditions Reports for Vision 2010 produced in 1996, and the West Side Tax Increment Financing District adopted in 1998 are continuing efforts to implement the vision put forth in 1989. The West Side Plan Update seeks to bolster, without undermining, the recently adopted vision through the TIF process. The West Side Plan Update continues the momentum of all the good work that has been accomplished to date, builds on the successes of the past and present, and charts a course for the future.

Over 83% of the West Side was rezoned in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Selected and Suggested Reading

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Mitchell William, **City of Bits: Space, Place, and Infobahn**, MIT Press, 1995.

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Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, **Main Street ... When a Highway Runs through it: A Handbook for Oregon Communities**, 1999.

Sucher David, **City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village**, City Comfort Press, 1995.

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Glossary Terms

Broken Window Theory:

This theory is based on the premise that if a broken window is not repaired, people will think that no one cares about the building. One broken window leads to another, as the situation worsens, people avoid the street where the building is located, and without people on the street, the opportunity for crime to be committed increases.

Campus Open Space:

Skillful arrangement of buildings can create desirable open spaces in office campus and industrial park districts – these outdoor spaces could be used for circulation, relaxation, and aesthetic pleasures.

Centers:

Centers are the local or regional destinations at the neighborhood or city scale. Centers are by definition mixed-use areas - they include jobs and housing as well as service and retail.

Common Open Space:

Common open space is territory that is jointly used by a group of people. It is not public because those who do not hold it can be excluded, and it is not private either, because it has to be shared with others.

Community Open Space:

An open area specifically designed and equipped for large-scale structured recreation.

Corridors:

These are the connecting elements based on either the natural systems or infrastructure and transportation lines. Corridors come in many forms from roads and highways to rail lines and trails, from utility easements to creeks and rivers

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED):

A theory of crime prevention that places a major emphasis on the design of the physical environment as the primary focus for addressing public safety issues.

Districts:

Districts are special use areas, which are dominated by a single primary activity. Districts may be mixed-use but are typically dominated by a single primary land use such as office, or residential development.

Eyes on the Street:

In her book *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs defends the need for dense mixed-use urban cores that encourage people to be out on the street at all times of day and night. The chances of crime being observed are increased through the presence of eyes (people) on the street.

Gray water:

Gray water is water that can be used more than once. Gray water can be water that is discharged from wastewater treatment plants or from kitchen sinks, dishwashers, bathtubs, showers, lavatories, and household laundry – water that does not go to wastewater treatment plants. Gray water is not water from garbage disposals, toilets, and diaper water which must be sent to a wastewater treatment facility for treatment.

Green Building:

A “green building” is a building that takes into consideration the health and well being of its occupants while minimizing the impacts on the environment and is achieved through building placement, design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

Glossary Terms

Info-center:	The info-center is a place where the public and the City share information and services to enhance Farmers Branch's quality of life. The info-center is also a place to find out what's happening within the City, get answers, solve problems, conduct business, and obtain information and referrals.	Open Space:	Area free of building that together with a well-designed system of thoroughfares provides a public realm at all scales of urbanism, from region to the block.
Inflow and Infiltration:	Inflow and infiltration is a general term to identify how water that is not sanitary sewer effluent gets into sanitary sewers. Inflow occurs when storm water gets into the sanitary sewers through openings such as man-holes, cleanouts, and broken pipe. Infiltration occurs when storm water or ground water seeps into sanitary sewers through joints and cracks in the sanitary sewer pipes.	Pedestrian-friendly:	Street design that facilitates safe, comfortable, and attractive pedestrian travel.
Mixed-use:	Multiple functions within the same building or the same general area through superimposition or within the same area through adjacency.	Plaza:	A public space set aside for civic and commercial activities.
Multi-modal transportation:	A transportation system that accommodates various modes of transportation (e.g. rail transit, bus transit, bikeways, sidewalks).	Preserves:	Preserves are the open space element that frame the city.
Neighborhood:	Urbanized sectors that are compact, diverse, and walkable.	Private Open Space:	To combat poorly lit and ill-ventilated crowded apartments in nineteenth century governments enacted regulations requiring minimal private open space – every habitable room had to have windows opening onto that open space (court). In suburban developments, a similar private open space requirement was applied – although it was not a matter of public health. The front and side yards had to be large enough to park cars, and rear yards had to be large enough to prevent unwarranted intrusions.
Neighborhood Open Space:	A small open area interspersed within the neighborhood. It can serve as a play area in a residential neighborhood or a meeting or a lunchtime place near offices and industrial area.	Public Open Space:	Public open space is territory that is owned and managed by a public agency for everyone's benefit.
		SafeScape Principles:	Zelinka and Brennan in <i>SafeScape: Creating Safer, More Livable Communities through Planning and Design</i> , propose the following principles to enhance public safety: 1) Information and Orientation: Lack of wayfinding information can place us in a location that makes us feel uncomfortable or puts us

Glossary Terms

at risk of becoming a victim. Overall public safety is enhanced when sufficient information through signage, lighting, focal points, and landmarks is integrated within the physical environment.

2) Socialization and Interaction: Places should be designed in a manner that encourages enjoyment of the public realm and interaction with fellow neighborhood members.

3) Stewardship and Ownership: To feel safe, we need to take pride in our surroundings and ensure proper care of those surroundings.

4) Seeing and Being Seen: To feel safe, we need to know that others are aware of our presence.

5) Land Use and Design: We feel safe when the physical environment is planned and designed to recognize the importance of making a place feel safe for users.

6) Activity and Programming: When places support the coming together of people in activity, public safety is enhanced. First, we are safer due to the presence of other law-abiding citizens. Second, our presence provides businesses and residences with added safety. Third, we reinforce the use of the place for legitimate, community-building purposes.

7) Management and Maintenance: Management and maintenance ensure order, and discourage undesirable behavior and negative perceptions.

Trail:

Trails are linear open space used for walking, bicycling, or other forms of recreation or non-motorized transportation.

Village Green:

A central green or commons is a medium-sized public space available for unstructured recreation, circumscribed by building facades. The village green provides areas for community picnics, bazaars, holiday displays, and activities, as well as a place for children to play, and people to of all ages to meet and gather.

Street:

The paved area between curbs (or pavement edges) intended for vehicular travel and in some cases parking. Streets that carry large volumes of traffic long distances are thoroughfares. Streets that have the primary purpose of providing access to individual parcels of land are local streets. Streets have many purposes. There is, of course, the goal of accommodating vehicular travel. Street rights-of-way must also provide for drainage, pedestrians, landscaping, lighting, public and private utilities, and all manner of public information (traffic control devices and other signs).

Right-of-way:

The publicly owned land within which streets are built.

Streetscape:

The immediate, visible environment of the street, including the areas beyond the right-of-way that influence perceptions of motorists and pedestrians.

Tax Increment Financing:

Tax increment financing is an incentive tool that utilizes revenues from tax increments generated by new development to finance needed public improvements, which in turn stimulate future development or redevelopment.

acknowledgements

The overwhelming participation from the community leaders, residents, businesses, and institutions have made this plan possible.

City Council

Bob Phelps, Mayor
Paul Walden, Mayor Pro Tem
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Junie Smith, City Council Place 3
Ben Robinson, City Council Place 5

Planning and Zoning Commission

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Mark Saiter, Vice Chairman
Nancy Hardie, Commissioner
Ruben Rendon, Commissioner
Stan Armstrong, Commissioner
Joe Patterson, Commissioner
John Herndon, Commissioner
Tim O'Hare, Alternate Commissioner Place 1
Charles Beck, Alternate Commissioner Place 2

Other City Boards

Senior Advisory Board
Parks and Recreation Board
Library Board
Historical Preservation and Restoration Board
TIF Board
Valwood Improvement Authority

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