



Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan

Public Involvement Summary – Summer 2021

September 2021



THE BUREAU OF
**PLANNING &
SUSTAINABILITY**

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Public Involvement Summary – Summer 2021

Project Purpose and Outreach

Portland’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) are collaborating to assess land use and transportation issues in Brentwood-Darlington and portions of the Ardenwald-Johnson Creek, Lents, Mt Scott-Arleta, and Woodstock neighborhoods. The “Lower Southeast Rising” planning effort will be utilizing community and stakeholder input to develop recommendations to address local housing, displacement, commerce, and mobility. The final plan will be brought to the Portland City Council for approval in 2023.



PAC members and city staff sharing pizza and socializing at a safe distance in the Brentwood Park

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was created in June and July of 2021 as a fundamental part of the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan. The PIP was designed with the input of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), which held their kick-off meeting on May 26, 2021. The PAC consists of 18 community members from business district associations, neighborhood associations, community-based

organizations, schools, historically underserved communities, modal and other advocacy groups, residents, and business owners.

The PAC helped to identify benefits and burdens, community stakeholders, public engagement strategies, and equity goals. Key equity goals identified by the PAC were to expand active and green transportation access, increase commercial opportunities and neighborhood-serving businesses, reduced household costs, improve public amenities in deficient areas accompanied with anti-displacement strategies, collaboration welcomed for policy, technical expertise, and funding, and, finally, that the process and the approach are as important as the result.

Summer 2021 Community Outreach Activities

A project announcement postcard was sent to 15,600 area residents on August 18th and helped to increase the number of residents to **1,100+ subscribers that will receive future project update newsletters/emails**, as well as the number of kick-off survey responses. In addition to the project postcard sent to area residents, the community was engaged in several other ways during the summer of 2021.

- Project staff attended and presented at two organization meetings, 82nd Avenue of Roses Business Association and the Southeast Active in Motion (SEAM), in June and July.
- **Nine community stakeholder interviews** were conducted during July and August, averaging 90 minutes each. These interviews were primarily in the Brentwood-Darlington area and included local businesses Three Sisters Nixtamal and 52nd Avenue Hardware, affordable housing non-profit ROSE Community Development (CDC), community farm Black Futures Farm (located on the Green Thumb community orchard), garden education site The Learning Gardens Laboratory (also located on the Green Thumb community orchard), the Apostolic Faith Church, and equity priority community members.
- Door-to-door canvassing at several manufactured home park sites and affordable housing apartments in the project area also provided **twenty-two informal interviews with residents** that averaged 15-45 minutes each and focused on localized resident concerns.
- Project staff **tabled at the Lents International Farmers Market on August 15th** to engage with market attendees and vendors for project input.
- Twenty community members participated in a **Lower Southeast neighborhood bike ride on August 23rd** where PAC members, residents, and visitors all biked through the project area exploring and discussing a variety of transportation conditions and needs within these neighborhoods.

- The Lower Southeast Rising Area **Plan kick-off survey, available in English and Spanish, received 1,546 participant responses.** Most survey responses were received immediately following the August 18th project postcard delivery. The results of the survey are discussed below.

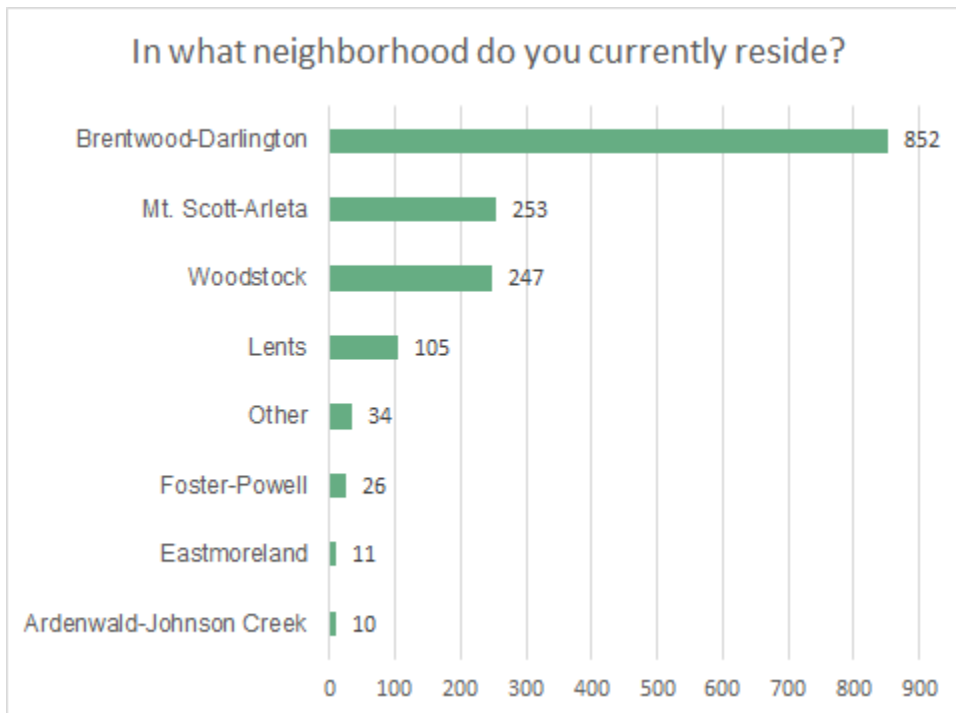


The neighborhood bike ride with community members stopping to discuss the intersection of SE 72nd and Flavel

Kickoff Survey Results

The kick-off survey response rates were especially high following the postcard mailer, which provided broad feedback and themes from community members across the project area. The survey had both English and Spanish options but did not receive as many Spanish language responses as hoped. Only two of the 1,546 survey respondents utilized the Spanish version of the survey. To address this shortcoming, the city is working to establish a partnership with a local organization that can assist with focused Spanish language engagement.

Of the 1,546 survey participants, most reside in the Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood, followed by Mt. Scott-Arleta, Woodstock and Lents.



Screenshot from the Kickoff Survey results: In what neighborhood do you currently reside?

There were several prominent themes that emerged when kickoff survey respondents were asked, “In a few words, what do you like best about living in your neighborhood?” The top five categories that respondents liked most about the area were **1) Walkability, 2) Community, people, neighbors, 3) Parks, trees, and greenspace, 4) Nearby commercial amenities, and 5) Quiet feel.**

“Young families, older families, new and older homes, friendly neighbors, gardens and businesses and services easy to walk to. People take care of the(ir) properties and the(ir) neighbors.”

— Kickoff Survey (2021) quote

The kickoff survey respondents were also asked, “In a few words, what do you feel is the biggest issue or challenge you experience living in your neighborhood?” The top five themes that emerged from this question were 1) Street safety and road conditions (includes speeding, potholes, and unimproved roads), 2) Lack of sidewalks and general walkability, 3) Crime and safety, 4) Houselessness, and 5) Trash, noise and abandoned automobiles.

“Lack of continuous sidewalks especially along busy streets like Flavel. Hazardous to people with special needs. Lack of opportunities available for access to basic goods and services.”

— Kickoff Survey (2021) quote



This road in the project area is paved, but there is no sidewalk or pedestrian protections

Importance of Neighborhood Issues and Improvements

Survey participants were asked how important they considered the following items for improving their neighborhood and quality of life:

- Retaining or adding more affordable housing and choices
- Addressing houselessness
- Developing anti-displacement strategies for residents and businesses for residents and businesses
- Adding more businesses and stores in the neighborhood
- Making it safer to walk, bike and/or take transit
- Adding more frequent or accessible transit service
- Improving access to parks, open spaces, or recreational areas
- Having more trees and shade and improving air quality/climate change resilience
- Improving community safety

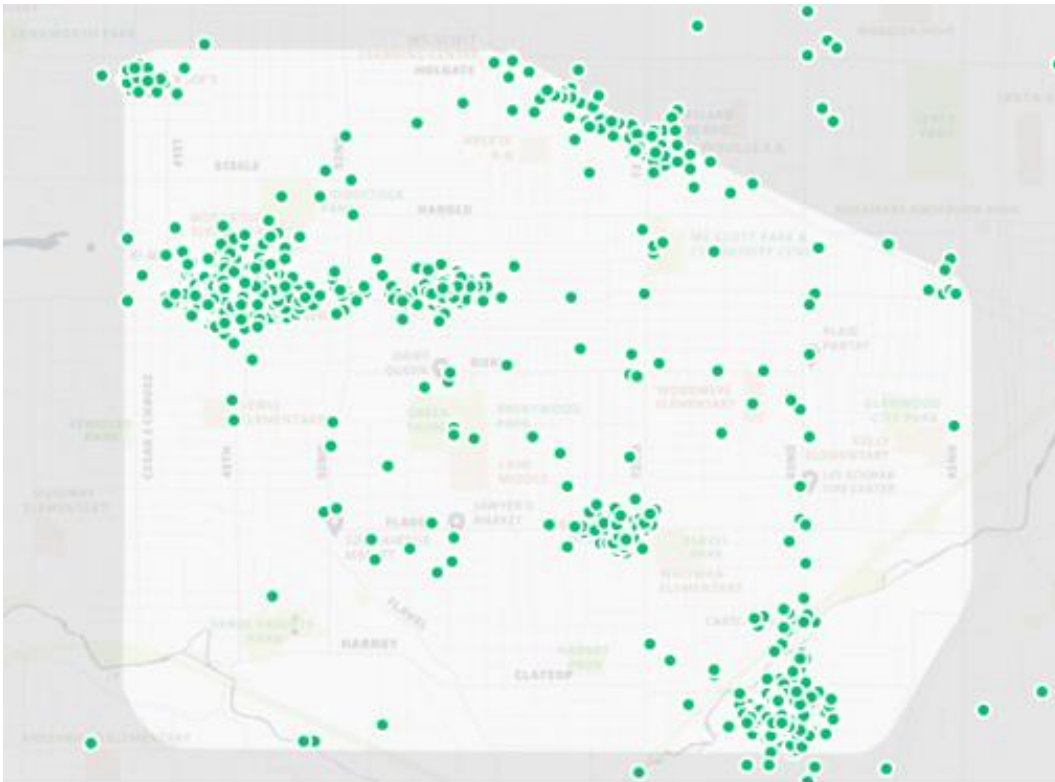


Participants were given the options of “Not Very Important”, “Somewhat Important”, and “Very Important” for each item. Four items were considered very important to 75% of respondents or more: **1) addressing houselessness, 2) making it safer to walk, bike and/or take transit, 3) having more trees and shade and improving air quality/climate change resilience, and 4) improving community safety.**

Mapping Results

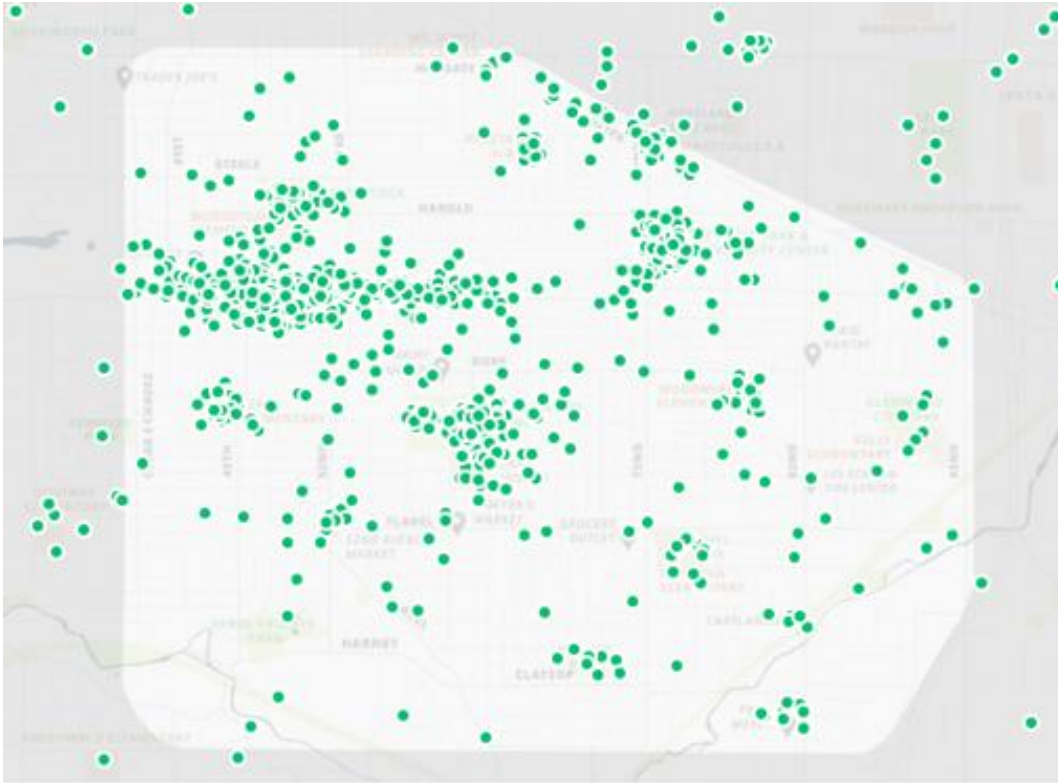
Survey respondents were also asked to pick places around the project area where they travel to for commerce, recreation, and community. Below is a summary and visualization of these results.

COMMERCE: In answering the question “When traveling within the Lower Southeast Rising study area, where do you commonly travel to for commerce, such as groceries, shopping, dining, entertainment, etc.?” responses were primarily clustered around neighborhood shopping areas such as Woodstock, Foster Road (Holgate to 73rd Avenue), 82nd Avenue (especially south of Clatsop), and 72nd Avenue and Flavel Street.



Results of survey question about where respondents go for commerce

RECREATION: When asked “where do you most commonly travel to for recreation, such as parks, natural areas, sports fields, etc.?” responses were more evenly scattered throughout the project area. Many respondents identified parks as the place used for recreation, such as Brentwood Park, Woodstock Park, Errol Heights City Park, Glenwood City Park, Harney Park, Lewis Elementary School, and Flavel Park. Additional responses identified the Springwater Corridor Trail and parks or schools near, but not within, the project study area.



Results of survey question about where respondents go for community

Community Interviews

In addition to the kick-off survey, project staff also held scheduled interviews with identified community stakeholders as well as informal interviews through door-to-door knocking. The interviews were conducted by Oregon Summer Fellow, Scott Goodman, a white-male graduate student in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program at Portland State University. Scott is also a resident of the Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood and bilingual in Spanish and English, which aided the interviews with Spanish speaking residents. The interviews with stakeholders and residents, including equity priority communities, provided additional context about community concerns, needs and established relationships between the community and city. The following provides an overview of these interviews, organized by common themes.

“I feel more safe to talk candidly like this. Thank you.”

— Community member



Malcom and Mirabai at Black Futures Farm on the Green Thumb site.

Overview of Assets and Concerns

Neighborhood Assets	Neighborhood Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident creativity • Generally calm and quiet • Youth engagement • Potential of community places like Green Thumb • Community led organizations and non-profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing houselessness crisis • Garbage accumulation in streets • Overregulation from the city • Speeding cars • Insufficient tree canopy • Crossing streets like SE Woodstock Blvd and SE 72nd Ave • Displacement

Neighborhood Asset Themes Identified in Community Interviews

Resident Creativity

Many interviewees noted that area residents have a flair for creativity and provided a variety of ideas for the reason. Some said it's because there is ample opportunity for creative land use within the many underutilized spaces, others the wide variety of home garden-types, the "side-effects from Precision Cast Parts air pollution making us a little wacky," or the relatively lower cost of living for artists and makers. One interviewee posited that **"So much disinvestment here has allowed people to experiment and try things and have ingenuity."** Many noted how fellow neighbors build community gardens, reclaim spaces overrun by invasive plants, and advocate through art, which allows residents to connect with one another on an informal level. This leads to many residents feeling more connected to their neighbors and the places they live.



Toy dinosaurs exhibiting support for "Black Lives Matter" in the public right-of-way.

Generally Calm and Quiet

There is a disproportionately large amount of unimproved gravel roads in the Lower Southeast Rising project area (about three times more than the city of Portland overall). Some interviewees said the lack of paved streets is an accessibility and connectivity concern, while others feel it is a part of what makes certain neighborhood pockets quieter, less traveled by cars, and more unique. There are several parts of the project area that have a particularly "rural" feel since they lack commercial zones and arterial roads. The exact reason for the general calm and quiet feeling is difficult to pinpoint, but many interviewees reacted positively to this aspect of their neighborhood character.

Youth engagement

Several stakeholder interviewees mentioned the Lents Youth Initiative (LYI) as a positive neighborhood asset. The LYI supports teens in the project area with jobs and internships for leadership, environmental justice, and career development. LYI partnerships, like that with the Learning Gardens Laboratory at the Green Thumb community orchard, were reported as especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic as they provide safe, outdoor, and in-person supports for local youth. The LYI is operated through ROSE CDC, who also provide the area with vital affordable housing and other community support services. One service, the Baby Booster Initiative, supports local low-income families with child services during the first 1,000 days of a child's birth. These responses indicate that further outreach to youth in the project area would serve the Lower Southeast Rising area plan well.

Green Thumb has unlimited potential, but is currently underutilized

The Green Thumb community orchard site occupies about four city blocks between SE 60th and 62nd Avenues and between SE Knapp and Duke Streets. This site was recently re-zoned from commercial mixed use to open space, which helps to protect the site's ecological and community benefits. Green Thumb community orchard collaborators include Portland State University (PSU) and the Learning Gardens Laboratory (LGL), the Black Futures Farm, Oregon State University (OSU) Master Gardeners, Portland Public Schools (PPS), and Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R). Various stakeholder interviewees noted this space as a unique asset for Southeast Portland, but also that while the site serves many important purposes it has the potential to do much more. **"The patchwork nature of programming and shoestring budgets makes it difficult for continuity of stewardship... no one wants to put the energy and resources into it that it needs. It's a fragmented space that makes inter-institutional relationships difficult."** The site just recently switched from a co-management arrangement between PPS and PP&R to a formal division of site, which will hopefully lead to clarity of purpose and strategic action, but those effects are yet to be seen. Regarding its current state, one interviewee questioned "it's unclear what the Green Thumb site is, it looks closed to the public...Is there a master plan for the Green Thumb site?"

Community led organizations and non-profits

The Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood and surrounding area has experienced disproportionate disinvestment at many levels, from the federal government's home loan yellowlining practices to lower levels of service from the City of Portland. Despite this, or consequently, residents have done incredible work to ameliorate these harms. Many **neighborhood actors were repeatedly praised in interviews, including ROSE CDC, Green Lents, the Learning Gardens Laboratory, Hacienda CDC, IRCO, Black Food Sovereignty Coalition and the Black Futures Farm, the Asian Family Health Center, the Community Doula Alliance, several faith-based organizations, and countless regular residents.** Interviewees noted numerous people and organizations in the area that go above and beyond to make their community a safer, healthier, and more equitable place.



Two neighbors (and cat) discussing local assets and concerns.

Neighborhood Concern Themes Identified in Community Interviews

The Growing Houselessness Crisis

Every community stakeholder interviewee identified the houselessness crisis as a major issue for the area. Specific concerns included personal safety, sidewalk and path accessibility, and an overarching sense of emergency for the health and wellbeing of the city and its many different residents. Regarding the increase in street camping recently, one interviewee commented “the prevalence of hypodermic needles has gone up in my area.” **Many interviewees reported feeling scared to use local streets and paths for personal safety.** They also mentioned not knowing who to call to report issues in a way that would generate a humane response.

Garbage accumulation in streets:

One of the most common complaints from interviewees was the increasing presence of street garbage. The Springwater Trail Corridor and SE 62nd Ave between SE Flavel Dr and SE Clatsop St were among many sections of the project area regularly mentioned during interviews. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) ended funding for Community Collection Events in July 2020, although this program is scheduled to return for 2021-2022. Community groups and neighborhood associations can still independently host collection events and Oregon Metro is ramping up operations, but the current condition of much of the right-of-way and streets in the project area remains off-putting.

Over-regulation from the city:

Several interviewees that own or represent businesses and organizations were frustrated with the regulations and sometimes opaque process for making changes to their property. **“We’re already tight with our time as a small business, then the city makes it more difficult.”** Those interviewed reported having difficulty with city bureaucracy for painting storefront murals, solar panel installation, native plantings, slightly undersized grease traps, storage containers, over-complicated grant applications, unnecessary truck delivery road impediments, zoning compliance, police response, and much more.

Speeding cars

Many door-to-door interviewees complained of vehicular speeding throughout the neighborhoods, from gravel road speeding creating dust plumes to comments of cars going “up to about 70mph” on stretches of 25mph speed limits that are “known getaway routes.” They felt that the outbreak of COVID-19 has led to an overall increase in driving speeds with fewer drivers on the road and noted the public health concern of automobile accidents to humans and animals is alarming. Almost all those interviewed would like to reduce driving speeds, although the methods for doing so varied. Some residents do not like traffic management devices like speed humps.

Insufficient tree canopy

Having a robust tree canopy provides numerous ecological and community benefits, but as seen in the “Lower Southeast Rising Existing Conditions Atlas” this area has a deficit when compared to other areas of Portland. Many interviewees complained of the urban heat island effect and its dire consequences, such as reduced birthweight, to our most vulnerable community members. While the Apostolic Faith Church does have a particularly dense grove of mature Douglas Fir trees within its gated property, those trees have a limited lifespan and will need to be replaced. Put simply by one community member, **“we need more trees here.”**

Unsafe roads, especially for people walking and biking

Numerous interviewees mentioned safety concerns when getting around the area by foot or on a bicycle. Pedestrian friendly infrastructure is lacking throughout the project area, especially sidewalks. “I don’t want to be in a car, but sometimes I feel like it’s my only option.” There is also a desire for a better east-west bike route, and for safer bicycle facilities. Specifically, the challenges of using or trying to cross SE Woodstock Boulevard and SE 72nd Avenue were mentioned repeatedly. **“Ten years ago, it used to feel safe to cross Woodstock... Our little kitten used to be able to cross with us, not anymore.”**

Displacement

Organizations like ROSE CDC serve the area with affordable housing and other important community resources, but they cannot keep up with the rising cost of housing spreading throughout the project area. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* identifies the Lower Southeast Rising project area as at extreme risk of displacement. “People that couldn’t afford Sellwood, are buying in Brentwood Darlington.” Interviewees lauded the area for its relative affordability but were also concerned about the ability to stay here. **“We have residents that want to buy a house, but don’t even have access or the knowledge about the first step.”** The theme of displacement is especially important with regards to high-equity populations. One Latinx interviewee said, “I’m all for subsidizing people here, we’ve historically subsidized so many white only businesses and properties...We need more equity led policy...Building ownership by BIPOC should be subsidized now.” Specifically, “solutions like ADU’s for Latin families need to be incentivized.

Additional community concerns

There were many other concerns community members mentioned during the interviews. Some additional issues discussed were drug abuse and addiction (namely crystal meth and crack cocaine), the fear of the project area neighborhoods losing their relative affordability for renters, and the need for more park programming (e.g., basketball courts, covered basketball courts, athletic programs for kids, athletic programs for adults, etc.).

Summer 2021 Public Involvement Summary and Next Steps

The kick-off survey, community interviews, and door-to-door canvassing helped City staff begin to understand issues and needs, and also allowed residents to learn about the plan and begin to think about issues and possible improvements. Interviewing stakeholders and residents helped to understand the community character and concerns more deeply both at key locations and more broadly within the project area. Face to face community interaction in the summer of 2021 was greatly complicated by COVID-19, but additional safety precautions (vaccinations, mask-wearing, and physical distancing) still allowed for some informative in-person engagement. Speaking with and listening to community members provided the opportunity to build trust and community involvement between the city and residents. One community stakeholder stated, **“this felt like small business therapy, thanks for listening.”**

In the fall/winter of 2021 and 2022, project staff will be releasing an online map that allows residents to specifically pinpoint issues and needs in the project area. Additionally, there will be topic-based workshops focused on both land use and transportation issues and needs. Staff are also working on developing partnerships with local organizations that can assist with non-English speaking engagement and outreach. After getting a better understanding of community issues and needs, staff will begin work on potential solutions and recommendations.

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