

Thursday, Aug. 15, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update



Northland

Peter Standish of Northland Development shared with me that because of the overabundance of office space and the corresponding weak leasing forecast in Greater Boston, they are going to apply to the City Council to amend their Special Permit.

As a reminder, in December 2019, the Newton City Council approved a Special Permit for Northland Development to build a mixed-use development including housing, shops, restaurants and office space on their 23-acre site. The week before the pandemic engulfed us, Newton voters supported the project in a citywide referendum.

If you have driven Needham Street in the past 18 months, you have likely seen a lot of construction work going on at the intersection with Oak Street. Northland has removed all of the previous buildings on the site with the important exception of the historic Sacco Pette mill building, installed all of their underground utilities, restored the bank area of the South Meadow Brook and fortified the underground culvert throughout the site, and began construction (last week) on the community splash park and playground.

In lieu their previous plan to renovate and lease the historic mill for office space, Northland would like instead to renovate the mill property for 100 apartments, thereby eliminating the office component entirely. As part of their plan they would also seek to eliminate five planned small residential buildings. The total residential component of the project would go from 800 to 822 units. The share of restaurant and retail space remain unchanged at 100,000 square feet. Owing to the elimination of the office space, Northland would seek to reduce parking from 1,350 spaces to 1,050 and increase green space on the site by an acre. They are also going to request the elimination of their responsibility to provide a shuttle to the Newton Highland Greenline T stop.

They provided us with this “Modification Fact Sheet” (see below) to show the difference between what was approved under their existing Special Permit and what they would seek to modify.

These proposed changes require Northland to file a Special Permit amendment with the City Council and be referred to the Council’s Land Use Committee for their review. That review will include several public hearings so questions and concerns can be raised. Northland has not yet officially filed their proposed

amendment; we anticipate it will be filed later this fall. More information on the project as approved in December 2019 can be found [here](#).

NORTHLAND

NND PLAN MODIFICATION FACT SHEET 8/13/24

CURRENT PROJECT

- 800 residential units
- 100,000 square feet of retail
- 193,000 square feet of office
- 1,350 parking spaces
- Village Green
- Bike path to Greenway
- Splash Park, Community Park
- Mitigation payments: \$8,350,000

PROJECT MODIFICATIONS

- Replaces office space in the historic Saco-Pettee Mill with 100 residential units
- Will now create a total of 822 residential units including 4 additional affordable units
- Reduces overall parking to 1,050 spaces, including addition of a 125-space surface parking area
- Eliminates 5 small residential buildings
- Reduces footprints of two other buildings
- Results in an overall net decrease of 160,000 square feet of building area

PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

- Reduces traffic volume by over 1,300 trips per weekday
- Reduces weekday peak hour trips by between 23% and 30%
- Reduces overall project parking by 22%
- Reduces overall density by 11% from approved plan
- Reduces impervious area by over 1 acre

WORK COMPLETED

- Building demolition and foundation removal
- 86,000 tons of soil/concrete recycled, processed and graded
- South Meadow Brook culvert protection cap constructed
- South Meadow Brook bank restoration completed
- Over 26 miles of utility infrastructure installed
- Drainage infrastructure installed, including 175,000 gallons of infiltration systems
- 120,000-gallon rainwater storage system installed

TOTAL INVESTMENT TO DATE

- Ongoing development and construction expenditure since receipt of special permit approval in March 2020: \$73 Million
- Splash Park and Community Park construction underway and ongoing: \$2.5 Million

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Thunder Storm

We had a brief and dramatic thunderstorm pass through the City a little while ago. It resulted in some tree damage, mostly in the Newtonville and West Newton areas but there are also some other spots.

At the moment, altogether there have been about 25 to 30 locations with trees impacted. Most are limbs on the side of roads. There are a few spots where Eversource is needed as wires are involved. We also have a few spots with blocked roads; these will be a primary focus. The largest tree down is a private tree blocking Derby Street as seen in the photo above (which has also caused wire damage and a power outage in the area). Our team expects to clear this tree soon. At the moment, Eversource is reporting 384 customers without power in Newton, with most due to the Derby Street location. Find the Eversource outage map by clicking [here](#).

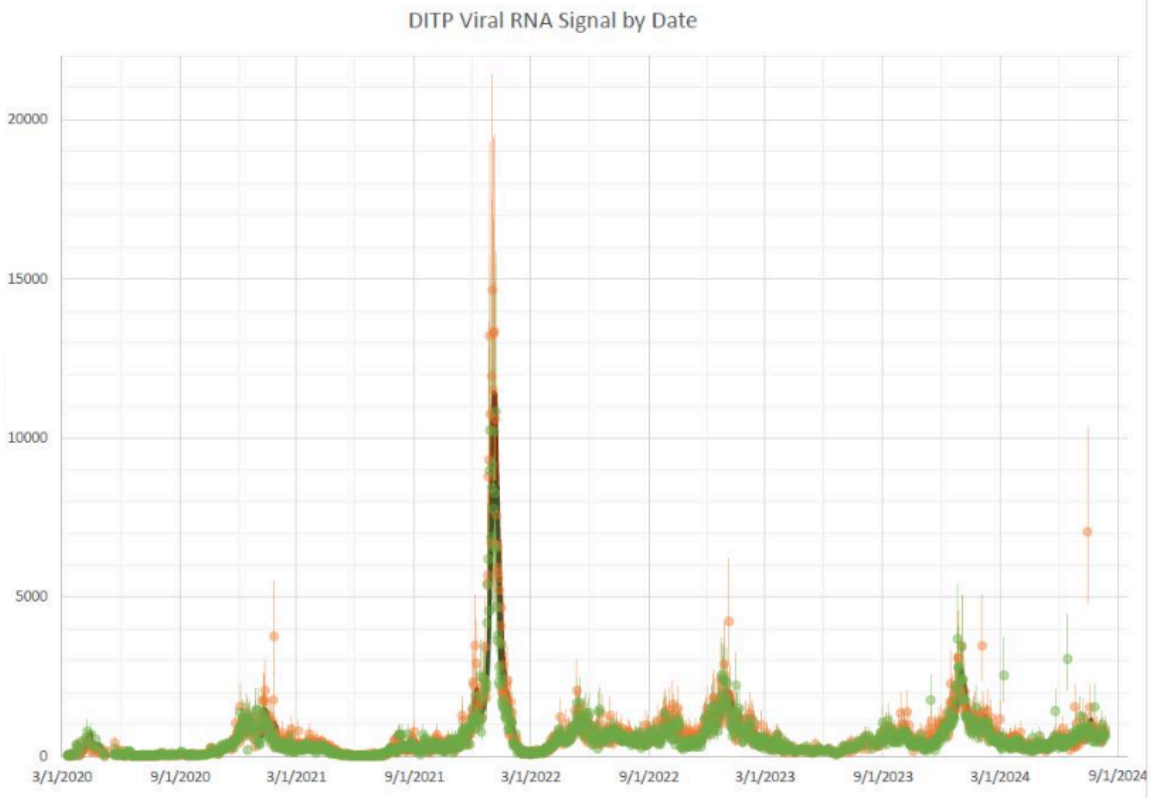


COVID, Flu, RSV and the Fall

Newton’s Health and Human Services staff is suggesting all of us make a plan for the fall for COVID, the flu and other respiratory illnesses.

The chart below shows the level of COVID in wastewater over the last four years as collected by the MWRA. (Click [here](#) for a link to the MWRA website.) If history repeats itself, we can expect a rise in COVID in the coming months as we all head back indoors.

MWRA Wastewater COVID-19 Tracking Through Aug. 12, 2024



Staying up-to-date on vaccines remains the best way to prevent illness and severe disease.

Get a [COVID vaccine](#). Get a [flu vaccine](#). Get an [RSV vaccine](#).

The [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) continues to recommend that everyone 6 months and older receive the most updated version of the COVID vaccine. Individuals 65 and older should get an additional dose of the vaccine at least four months after the previous dose.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that an updated 2024-2025 version of the COVID vaccine based on the current circulating variants is expected in the fall. Today's Boston Globe reports the updated vaccine should be arriving sometime in September.

The current dominant COVID variants are collectively known as "[FLiRT variants](#)." They are named for a set of mutations they all share. These variants produce similar symptoms to the earlier COVID variants. The symptoms include fatigue, fever, head and body ache, chills, sore throat, congestion, and loss of taste and/or smell. They also have similar incubation and infectious periods with many people experiencing mild symptoms due to previous immunization and infections.

The [Massachusetts Department of Public Health website](#) outlines what to do if you have symptoms or are exposed to someone who has COVID:

- If you were exposed to someone with a respiratory virus, you do not need to stay home as long as you do not develop symptoms.

- If you develop symptoms, stay home and test.
- Resume normal activities when your symptoms are improving, and you have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. For at least the first five days after you resume normal activities, you should:
 - Avoid crowded indoor spaces and wear a mask when you are indoors around other people.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid spending time with people who are at increased risk for severe disease.
- If you test positive for COVID, talk to your health care provider about Paxlovid, an antiviral medication that is recommended for high-risk individuals to reduce the risk of severe disease and hospitalization.

The advice above regarding COVID also helps prevent other respiratory illnesses:

- Stay up to date on immunizations
- Stay home when sick
- Wash your hands
- Use masks when needed

Mosquito Season

Mosquitoes are out, biting, and, unfortunately, spreading diseases.

In Massachusetts, we used to think of the really active mosquito season as ending in August (as they really like rain with high temperatures). However, as mosquitos need temperatures of only 50°F or higher, they can stay active through October or even November.

Currently in Massachusetts, two human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) have been identified. One individual was exposed in Hampden County and the other in Middlesex County where Newton is located. West Nile virus is primarily spread by mosquitos. The risk level for WNV in Newton is classified right now as *moderate*.



Also of interest, one animal case of Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) (another virus spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito) has been identified in a horse exposed in Plymouth. The risk level for EEE in Newton is currently classified as *remote*.

Take these simple steps to protect yourself from mosquito bites and the illnesses they can cause:

- Use an [EPA-registered insect repellent when outdoors](#)
- Wear long-sleeved clothing
- Schedule outdoor activities to avoid the hours from dusk to dawn, peak mosquito times
- Repair damaged window and door screens
- Remove standing water around your residence since mosquitoes can breed in even small amounts of water.

Get more information about mosquito-borne diseases from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [here](#).

For a risk map of both EEE and WNV, click [here](#).



(Photo: The newly surfaced courts at Braceland Playground.)

Lots of work is underway on tennis courts around the City. (We have 63 courts!)

Our program for tennis lessons has been very popular and the revenue generated is combined with City funds and the amazing generosity of Friends of Newton Tennis (FoNT) and put back into the courts. We resurfaced the tennis courts at Braceland Playground this week – and they should be dry and usable by tomorrow. Starting next week, the two tennis courts and the basketball court at the Highlands will be resurfaced.

(Photo: The newly resurfaced tennis courts at Newton South High School.)

We also just resurfaced eight more courts at Newton South High School to go with the four completed last year. (We're also moving forward with the light system repair at these courts.)



Check out the courts and some great tennis at the upcoming Garden City singles and doubles tournaments this weekend. (Register for all tennis [here](#).)

A huge thank you to our partners at Friends of Newton Tennis (FoNT) with a special shout out to Tom Friedman, the Parks, Recreation and Culture maintenance team led by Derek Mannion who managed these projects, and the City Council which has supported our work.

A Renovated, Larger Horace Mann Elementary School

We will break ground on an extensive addition and renovations at the Horace Mann Elementary School in Nonantum next spring after a unanimous vote of the City Council on Monday night to approve the balance of the \$34 million for the project.

Six new classrooms, a music room, a stage and cafetorium, project areas, student and staff support spaces, and restrooms will be in the new ~26,000 square foot addition.

The renovations will improve the size of classrooms throughout the school. The sizes will then align with Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) guidelines. The renovations will also improve the layout of education and support spaces to better meet the needs of students. The renovation will also convert the existing cafeteria into a media center (a.k.a., a library) and create connectors from the existing building to the new addition.

In addition to the renovations and addition, a new playground, field improvements, landscaping, and accessibility upgrades are also part of the project.

Huge thanks to the Horace Mann parents & caregivers, educators and neighbors who have been extremely supportive and helpful in their advocacy. We're excited to have the students in the updated Horace Mann School in the fall of 2026 after spending one school year in the current Lincoln Eliot Elementary School during construction (just after the Lincoln Eliot community moves into their new building in the fall of 2025).

We're Working on Our Roads

You've probably noticed a lot of crews across Newton working on roads.

By the end of this construction season, we will have invested close to \$14 million on paving and repairing roads (and sidewalks) since last July 2023. This includes a mix of busy, high-volume streets as well as quiet, low volume neighborhood roads.

(Photo: A crew installing curbing along Meadowbrook Road earlier this month.)

Our Public Works staff selected the roads using the City's Pavement Condition Index (PCI) analysis. The data underlying the condition index is derived from a radar mounted on a vehicle that drives every single road in Newton. (DPW's contractor will be rescanning all City roadways this fall to update the PCI.) The condition of all roadways in Newton are scored on a 0 to 100 scoring system (0 being a roadway in complete failure, 100 being a brand new one). Find the PCI of a road by clicking [here](#).



You'll be seeing crews out through October, or as long as the weather permits, completing another 22 roads this fall. (We have finished 41 so far this construction season.) The upcoming list includes milling and paving Auburndale Avenue, as well as Valentine Street once Meadowbrook and Arnold are complete.

Click [here](#) for the complete list of streets that have been completed and those that are scheduled to

be paved this season.

Major Athletic Field Project Kicks Off at Burr in Auburndale

Behind the Burr Elementary School in Auburndale, we're transforming a small, non-regulation sized field sitting on a half-acre of a sloped, rather bumpy surface into two larger, grass, regulation playing fields on the five acres that are available. Newton's youth and adult sports groups will have much needed additional field space.



We're also adding a 1/3-mile-long accessible perimeter exercise path around the new fields, benches, native plantings and more trees to expand the tree canopy and provide more shade. Rain gardens will be constructed to improve stormwater runoff control and provide habitat for wildlife.

Construction begins next week with completion this fall. The grass, however, will need until next summer (2025) to get established before players can enjoy the new fields.

The Burr School field project is one of the three grass athletic field projects funded by the Community Preservation Committee at a total cost of \$9.1 million. The two other projects, at Albemarle in Newtonville and McGrath in West Newton, will begin construction during 2025. (Click [here](#) to read more about these field projects.)

We are simultaneously moving forward with better maintenance for more of our fields. This premier field maintenance program includes more irrigation, aeration, seeding, fertilization and liming, mowing and field line marking (with our robot named "Sweet Adeline"). By increasing our field maintenance budget from \$35,000 in FY2018 to \$300,000 this fiscal year, and with the help of contributions from our sports partners, we are now able to run this premier field maintenance program on 18 fields across 69 acres.

Another aspect of expanding field access for NPS, youth and adult sport groups is the installation of lights. We installed lights at the two Newton South turf fields and at the turf field at Newton North. We upgraded the light system at Forte Park in Nonantum. The old lights at Albemarle are also being replaced.

We've also replaced the two aging turf fields and track at Newton South and are in the process this summer of replacing the turf field at Newton North. We hope to have full approval for one more turf field at Albemarle soon, so Newton North students and the north side of the city have the same access to turf as we have on the south.

We are so grateful to our many partners in youth and adult sports groups (from soccer to lacrosse and more) and the input of so many in the Newton Public Schools as we have taken a huge leap forward in the quality and quantity of grass and turf fields. The pandemic highlighted what we have known for a while – outdoor recreation is critical to our quality of life. Having great athletic fields helps athletes - and physical fitness and mental health. The adjacent walking paths, the trees, and the seating is great for all our residents (and the environment). Plus, athletics and time outside fosters happiness and knits our community together; gosh, we all need that right now.

After almost 10 years of working with the Friends of Farlow Park and residents around Newton Corner, the pond at Farlow Park is now fully restored – and back from being buried underground. Using state funds secured by Rep. Kay Khan alongside ARPA funds that I allocated we were able to fully recondition the cement basin in the pond at Newton's oldest public park.

(Photo: The pond at Farlow Park. Photo Credit Robin Boger)



A Great Summer for Swimming

We've enjoyed a great summer for swimming in Newton at Crystal Lake and the two new Gath pools.

As many of our lifeguards transition back to being full time students, we'll be winding down our summer swim program.

The schedules for the Gath Pools and Crystal Lake for the remainder of the season:

Crystal Lake Swimming Beach

- Open this Friday, Aug. 16: 9:30am – 7:00 p.m.
- Open this Saturday/Sunday, Aug. 17,18: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- **Last day of the Summer 2024 season with Lifeguards at the Crystal Lake Swimming Beach is this Sunday, Aug. 18.**

Post-Season Beach Access

- Starting on Monday, Aug. 19, there will be no lifeguard coverage at the beach, no buoy lines, and the bathhouse will be closed. The portable toilet in the parking area will remain available into September.

Gath Pools and Splash Pad

- Regular schedule continues through Sunday, Aug. 25
- Monday, Aug. 26 – Friday, Aug. 30
 - No morning programs, No Adult Lap Swim in the morning
 - Noon -1:00 p.m. - Adult Lap Swim; 1:00 p.m. to Dusk - Open Swim
- Splash Pad: Regular schedule 8:00 a.m. -12:30 p.m., free access through back gate
- **Last day of the Summer 2024 season at Gath with free entry for all is Saturday, Aug. 31 with open swim and splash pad: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00**

p.m.

“September Splash”

We'll be monitoring the weather into September for high heat weekends. If we get a heatwave, we'll plan to open the splash pad for a September Splash.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. City Hall has a new dedicated **ballot box** wrapped in red white and blue by the main door in the circle. This ballot box is accessible, secure and easy to find. As a reminder, vote by mail ballots for the September State Primary will be accepted until 8:00 p.m. on Election night, Tuesday, Sept.3 (the day after Labor Day). Click [here](#) for more election information. Also, you can vote early in person at City Hall beginning on Saturday, Aug. 24 through Friday, Aug. 30. Polls are open on Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with extended hours until 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday. (Photo: Newton Election Supervisor John Doyle at the new City Hall ballot box.)

P.P.S. Boston College and Lasell University Students arriving soon:

- B.C. Move In Day for first year students is next Thursday, Aug. 22 from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. – along with all the excitement comes some traffic disruptions for people who live and travel through the Chestnut Hill campus area. Expect more traffic than usual along Centre, Beacon and Hammond Streets, Tudor and College Roads, and Comm Ave. In addition, two-way traffic along Tudor Road will be temporarily changed to one way southbound from Hammond Street to Beacon Street, and Hammond Street will temporarily become one-way from Comm Ave to College Road. Newton Police Details will be assigned to key intersections. Upperclass and Transfer students will move-in Friday and Saturday, Aug. 23 and 24, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Read Boston College's letter to neighbors [here](#). Questions? Call B.C.'s Office of Government and Community Affairs at 617-552-4787.
- Lasell Move In Day for first year and transfer students is Saturday, Aug. 31 starting at 9:00 a.m. (Each residence hall has a specific move-in time.) Returning students will move in on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 2 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

P.P.P.S. Join the fun as we **celebrate Newton's 150th Birthday with the Bo and Bill Winiker Band** this Sunday, Aug. 18 at the Newton Centre Bowl off Tyler Terrace. The band starts at 6:00 p.m. with fun for children, dancing, and special \$2 ice cream cones (for the first 200 cones sold). Thank you to the sponsors of our Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture summer concert series - Newton Community Pride, The Village Bank, House of Tandoor, Café Sol Azteca and the UPS Store in Newton Centre. Click [here](#) for more information. See you there!



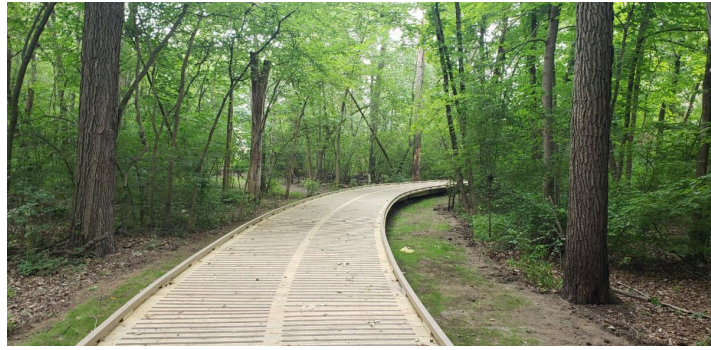
P.P.P.P.S. The Freekick Initiative, founded by two Newton South soccer players who are making the game more accessible to everyone, will host **two free soccer clinics** for players in grades 3-7 on [Sunday, Aug. 18](#) and [Sunday, Aug. 25](#). Led by high school soccer players and supervised by adults, the clinics run from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Brimmer and May School, 69 Middlesex Road, Chestnut Hill. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. Newton Health & Human Services is partnering with the MGH Blood Donor Center to host a **mobile blood drive at City Hall** on Tuesday, August 20 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the MGH Bloodmobile bus in the War Memorial Circle at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave. It takes just 15 minutes to donate, and one blood donation can help save up to three lives. Click [here](#) to register. For more information, see [frequently asked questions](#), [eligibility criteria](#), and [tips for a successful donation](#).



P.P.P.P.P.S. **Lunch Pop-ups at the Allen Center** are returning in West Newton on Wednesday, Aug. 21 and Aug. 28 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The August 21 pop-up showcases Newton's women-owned businesses, with lunch offered by two new entries on Newton's food scene—Hungry Ninja and NaisLee Catering as well as local businesses selling field-grown flowers, home accents, gifts, and women's clothing. The following week, kiddos and families are the focus, with a Kid Krawl scavenger hunt, Kidcasso craft station, My Gym fitness activities, and lunch from a new restaurant in West Newton, Ninebark. Click [here](#) for more info and to order lunch in advance.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Take a walk along the newly improved and reopened **Marty Sender Trail in Auburndale**, starting at Commonwealth Avenue and Islington Road by Lyons Field. This is a beautiful stretch of Newton, winding through woods and along the Charles River. Check out the trail at the official ribbon cutting at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 28.



P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Newton Community Pride is bringing music to our village centers on three consecutive September Sundays. The **fall concert series** begins with [Trilogy](#) on Sept. 8 at the Trio Courtyard in Newtonville from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., and continues with [Crowes Pasture](#) on Sept. 15 at the Suzuki School of Newton in Waban from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., and ends with the [Alexander Xhoja Trio](#) at the Allen Center for the Arts in West Newton from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.



Past P.S.s Happening Soon:

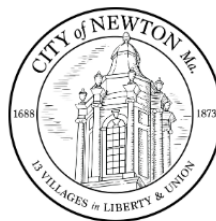


P.S. Join the Indian Community of Newton at the **India Day Celebration** this Saturday, Aug. 17 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Hyde Community Center, 90 Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands.

P.P.S. Have you taken a look at the draft designs for a **new City Seal**? Check out the designs at newtonma.gov/cityseal and provide feedback through Tuesday, Aug. 21. You can also see them at the Newton



Option A



Option B



Option C

Free Library Anteroom (space to the left when you enter from the Parking Lot Entrance at 330 Homer St.), and at City Hall (on the television screen in the front door main entrance) and in the first-floor gallery. Questions, feedback, or assistance in filling out the survey? Email us at cityseal@newtonma.gov.



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