





"The community spirit, growth and diversity of Airdrie just opens the doors of opportunities."

- Brett Darichuk, Alta Injection Molding



Creating this strategy

This strategy takes a "place-based" approach by focusing on the economic and social benefits to creating a place people—visionaries, entrepreneurs, community leaders—choose to live. This strategy was founded upon community input and commits to building on Airdrie's many strengths, addressing our key challenges and tapping the potential of the opportunities in front of us.

This, in turn, will fuel a robust business community, leading to a diverse and stable economic environment.

Our Process

To build a strategy that focuses on Airdrie's potential, the following key steps were taken by City of Airdrie staff leading to City Council approval in May 2018:

- Background research and best practice review,
- Extensive business, community, staff and stakeholder engagement,
- Expert analysis and direction from economic development, planning and investment attraction consultants,
- Development of a draft framework,
- Stakeholder re-engagement, and
- Final strategy framework approval by Airdrie City Council.

Led by the City, Supported by Community

Throughout each stage, City of Airdrie staff engaged and listened to businesses, residents and partners. Moving forward, the City will continue to lead and manage this project with guidance from the Mayor and Council, City Administration and various City departments. However,

it is intended to be a communitywide strategy; one that is understood by the community and inspires businesses, residents and partners to take action. The only way we—the City, businesses and residents alike can be successful in achieving this shared vision is by working together.

Ensuring Strategic Alignment

This economic strategy is just one component in building a great city and follows other important work. To ensure a coordinated approach, the strategy aligns with the principles set forth in these previously-adopted City of Airdrie plans:

- AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan
- Airdrie City Plan: Municipal Development Plan
- Connecting Airdrie:
 Transportation Master Plan
- Airdrie Utilities Master Plan
- City of Airdrie Great Places Plan: Parks Master Plan
- Airdrie Transit Master Plan
- 12 Thousand Acres Plan
- City Council Strategic Priorities



You Spoke, We Listened

Listening to the people who know Airdrie best was the foundation for developing this strategy. Through extensive engagement and consultation with businesses and residents, we heard what makes our community great, where our challenges lie, and where there is potential to tap into.

Over the course of 12 months, we gathered ideas and input from the community. We had more than 1,500 points of contact through:

- online surveys,
- interactive online map,
- one-on-one interviews,

- Economic Development & Investment Summit,
- Economic Strategy Community Team, and
- meetings with stakeholders.

Highlights of what we heard:

	WHY AIRDRIE IS GREAT	WHERE WE CAN IMPROVE
Residents Said:	Small town feel	Connectivity in roads, pathways and transit
	Geographic location	 Number of community facilities
	Friendly neighbourhoods	Number of year-round events and activities
	Parks, pathways and open spaces	Downtown vibrancy
	Growing variety of amenities and businesses	5
Businesses Said:	Personal/family connections	Cost and availability of land and real estate
	Geographic location	 City regulations and permit processes
	Market access and customer base	High-speed internet access
	Positive business environment	 Support services for businesses



Tapping Our Strengths

At the core of our work is building on our community's many strengths and identifying where significant opportunities lie. The community identified three key qualities that are central to this strategy. We will embrace, retain and leverage these assets.

Small Town Feel

Airdrie is celebrated for our small town feel, while still having access to everything you need in your daily life. We're a city of neighbours where collaboration excels and a warm welcome is just down the street; where it's safe to walk the pathways and it's quick to get around the entire city. It's time to celebrate, embrace and ensure we retain our small town feel—it's what has and will continue to attract quality businesses and engaged residents to our borders.

Geographic Location

Airdrie's location is paramount to our success. The benefits of our proximity to Calgary, YYC and the Rocky Mountains are apparent. It's also our east-west and north-south connections to the rest of Alberta, U.S. and the world that make Airdrie a stand-out in Western Canada. Ease of access to suppliers, customers and goods movement are key to business success, and we've got it.

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Airdrie's best kept secret may very well be the talent and ambition of our entrepreneurs. We have more home-based entrepreneurs than any other community of our size in Alberta (60 percent of all Airdrie businesses operate from home). One of our core strengths is Airdrie's welcoming, growing and supportive business environment, proven repeatedly through business satisfaction surveys.

Sharing our Stories

We heard many exciting stories of the great potential within our city. In this report, we've shared three:

An Aspiring Entrepreneur | Pg. 13

An Innovative Business Leader | Pg. 15

A Family Business Positioned for Growth | Pg. 17





Taking a Strategic Approach

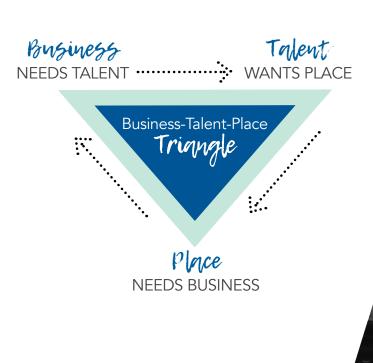
Embedded in this community-based, business-driven economic strategy is that Airdrie is primed to take advantage of our opportunities, enhance key areas of city and business development and realize the full ambition and entrepreneurship that lies within our city limits.

The economic strategy that follows identifies a vision, a goal and three main objectives, along with key actions, that will guide cooperative and coordinated initiatives amongst multiple City departments and community partners.

Setting the Vision

In looking to the future, it's clear Airdrie's potential lies in embracing and expanding upon what has already attracted thousands to our community—our small town feel, entrepreneurial ambition and superior location.

As we plan for a population nearing 100,000 (projected for 2028), we want to be known as **the** place to be in Western Canada. Why? Because in creating a community that's sought after by visitors, entrepreneurs, businesses and workers, we ensure our future as an economically stable and sustainable city.





Defining the Soul

The goal of this, and any, economic strategy is to create a sustainable and prosperous community. Our goal is about fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial climate that creates jobs, supports the community and helps balance our tax base, so that residents can continue to enjoy a high quality of life in Airdrie.

Three Objectives

This strategy outlines three key objectives to help us achieve our goal. They are organized into these three focus areas.













Priorities and Key Actions

Within each of the objectives are three priorities and a handful of key actions (outlined on pages 12-17). While additional actions will be identified and acted upon, we've specified those that are integral to the long-term success of this strategy.

STRATEGY BY THE NUMBERS

1,500

Points of contact with the community

562

Resident survey responses

369

Businesses engaged

> 1 Goal

Objectives

Priorities to guide action

Years for implementation

"A sustainable community is one that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient. It meets challenges through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented approaches that meet one of those goals at the expense of the others. And it takes a long-term perspective – one that's focused on both the present and future, well beyond the next budget or election cycle."

- Institute for sustainable Communities

10-year Vision

Airdrie's small town feel, entrepreneurial ambition, and superior location make it the place to be for businesses and talent in Western Canada.

Airdrie's **ECONOMIC STRATEGY** 2018-2028

Vision





The Place to Be

Foundation



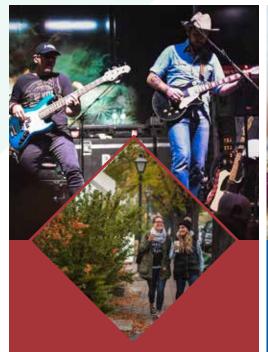
A Connected Community

Son



- 1. Non-residential land
- 2. Revitalized downtown
 - 3. Technology access
- 4. Transportation networks

3 Objectives



The Place to Be

Draw visitors, entrepreneurs and the best talent to Airdrie

PRIORITIES

- Create and champion a placemaking strategy that embraces Airdrie's small town feel
- Grow Airdrie's visitor economy
- Inspire and support an entrepreneurship ecosystem of excellence



Right for Business

Retain and grow Airdrie businesses and attract new investment

PRIORITIES

- Make it easy to start and grow a business in Airdrie
- Pursue new investment, sectors and opportunities
- Examine Airdrie's workforce needs and post-secondary opportunities



A Connected Community

Capitalize on Airdrie's location and future technologies

PRIORITIES

- Improve transportation networks to ensure ease of mobility of goods and people
- Develop a digital strategy to enable and grow technology use
- Position Airdrie as a regional hub and economic driver

By 2028, Airdrie has the foundational pieces in place to shift the good tax base by focusing on attracting new industries and growing existing businesses to support residents' needs.

The Foundational Pieces

Embedded within the strategy's goal are foundational pieces. Similar to building a house, where you start with the basement's solid structure, these pieces are essential for setting the foundation for Airdrie's success.

They will take time, investment, City leadership and community support, but without these pieces, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of our economic strategy.

1	NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND Shovel-ready land is readily available for business growth.	3	TECHNOLOGY ACCESS The fastest-possible internet is available to every Airdrie business and resident.
2	REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN Community-supported and inspired, City-lead redevelopment of the downtown is underway.	4	TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS People and goods are moving with ease.



Balancing Residential and Non-Residential Growth

At the heart of this strategy is nurturing a healthy and sustainable economic base for the long-term benefit of both businesses and residents.

City Council and Administration have a long-standing goal of attaining a higher non-residential tax base. The target is a municipal assessment base ratio that is 75 percent residential to 25 percent non-residential. The outcome of this is a healthy 75/25 municipal assessment ratio (measured by the total assessed value of Airdrie properties, from which tax revenue is ultimately generated).

While Airdrie has successfully attracted new commercial and industrial activity over the past decade, so have we attracted thousands of residents and homes, resulting in little movement on the current assessment split of 86/14.

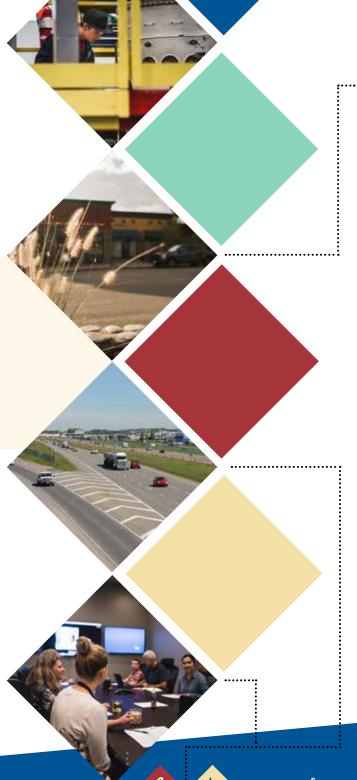
We must focus on attracting new business and industry to Airdrie to create new tax revenue, job growth and community building. To do this, we need to ensure we have the room for businesses to grow.

Approval of the 12 Thousand Acres Plan in 2018 is an excellent first step in moving ahead as it allocates future lands to be 60 percent residential, 30 percent industrial/employment and 10 percent commercial. Now it's time to be deliberate about working with developers to make shovel-ready non-residential land available for new investment and be focused on attracting new business to this land.



"A [diverse] portfolio of taxes would allow cities to achieve revenue growth and revenue stability while ensuring fairness in the impact on taxpayers."

- Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance





Transforming Donntown to a Place to Be

Revitalizing Airdrie's downtown is essential for becoming a thriving small business center and place people want to gather, visit and be. When a city has a strong central core where residents and visitors meet and socialize, these individuals support the businesses in the area, who, in turn, create jobs and invest back into the local economy.

Residents and businesses have told us they want downtown improvements, and research supports this. Downtown investment provides a higher level of return per dollar invested than other parts of a city. A U.S. study found that downtowns can provide between 13-64 percent of citywide tax revenue along with up to one-third of city employment. An earlier Canadian study of 17 downtowns also supports this assertion. For Airdrie to achieve similar results, we must invest in placemaking and redevelopment opportunities within our core.

As we continue to differentiate ourselves from the northern suburbs of Calgary, our unique advantage will be our downtown, so long as it becomes the place that people and businesses want it to be.

"Downtowns...should be at the very top of your priority list. The heart and soul of any community, besides its people, is its downtown. It's your nucleus. It's your Third Place: The First Place is your home, the Second Place where you work, and the Third Place where you go to hang out."

- Roger Brooks, Destination Development Association

Strengthening Connections in Transportation and Tech

Transportation, technology and innovation are the backbones for connecting our community and we need to ensure effective networks are in place to sustain and support economic growth.

Airdrie's physical location is a key asset; we cannot become complacent about ensuring people and goods are able to move with ease. City investment in transportation networks—roads, pathways and transit—must continue to be a priority.

As innovation and technology enhance traditional business practices and present undeniable opportunities, Airdrie must be ready to embrace technology. The first step is ensuring every resident and business has access to the fastest-available internet. Currently, it is estimated that less than 20 percent of Airdrie is wired with fibre. To be future-ready, we need the entire city connected.

Virtual and physical connectedness for both residents and businesses are a critical foundation in Airdrie becoming the place to be.



The Objective:

Draw visitors, entrepreneurs and the best talent to Airdrie.



As we look to the next 10 years, we are in the perfect position to direct our attention to attracting specific audiences to Airdrie: entrepreneurs, visitors and our future workforce. These individuals are looking for high-quality places that offer experiences, sociability, aesthetics and openness. Research shows that to attract innovators, knowledge businesses and the talent to support them, we must be viewed as "the" place to be.

We have not yet tapped the full potential of our province's visitor economy—tourism accounts for 127,000 Alberta jobs and \$8.5 billion in expenditures. Airdrie has the ingredients for success: we are well situated on the doorstep of Calgary and the Rocky Mountains, offer a growing array of amenities and services, and have success in hosting large-scale festivals and events.

To realize our potential, we must create strategies around place-based initiatives. This includes investing in our downtown, enhancing events and facilities, nurturing grassroots organizations, and inspiring Airdrie youth to become our next generation of entrepreneurs.



- Create and champion a placemaking strategy that embraces Airdrie's small town feel
- Grow Airdrie's visitor economy
- Inspire and support an entrepreneurship ecosystem of excellence

Key Actions

- Enhance community spaces, amenities and events
- Enliven and densify the downtown
- Explore sports & recreation tourism
- Facilitate a network of partners that nurtures entrepreneurs from youth to start-up

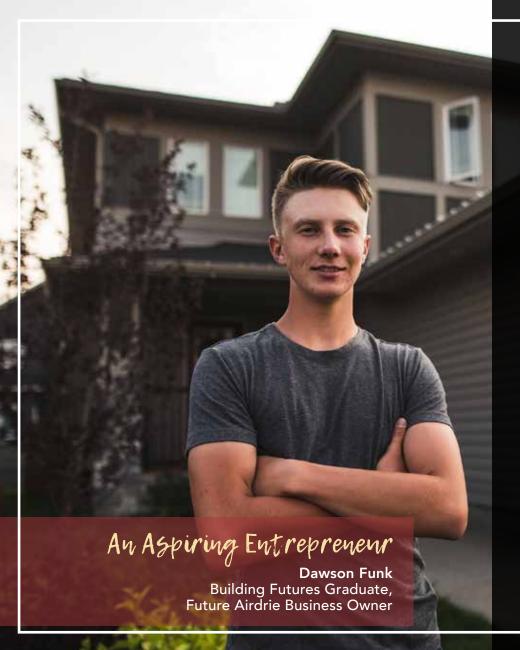
Projects Underway

- Downtown Plan creation
- Tourism and visitor experience strategy development
- Retail analysis of market trends and opportunities
- SMARTstart entrepreneurial training program delivery
- New public library and west-side community facility planning

Potential Projects

- Increase neighbourhood commercial areas
- Complete an Airdrie Village Redevelopment Plan
- Develop a new regional park
- Create community associations





RAISED IN AIRDRIE, DAWSON FUNK'S INTEREST IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAME FROM HIS DAD, who runs multiple businesses himself. Dawson's entrepreneurial spark was further fanned when he participated in the Rocky View Schools Building Futures program in grade 10. Here, he was encouraged to start his own company for a class project, leading to his first successful entrepreneurial venture, Dawson's Dirt.

"Being in Building Futures gave me the tools and skill sets of seeing what a business could be." While he and his dad would talk about business, the program gave him the opportunity to put theory into practice. While Dawson's Dirt closed once the school project finished, this, along with the program, furthered his ambition to one day run his own business in Airdrie.

Now, at age 19, Dawson is building his life in Airdrie, and will one day start a business here. For Dawson, Airdrie is the place to be. "Airdrie is constantly growing, and I will continue to build my life here to support it."



"There is an important and significant correlation between how attached people feel to where they live and local GDP growth. What this means is that the more people love their town, the more economically vital that place will be."

- Dr. Kntherine Loflin, "The City Doctor," Loflin Consulting Solutions

Untapped Potential!

SPORTS TOURISM MAKES UP A \$6.5 BILLION SEGMENT OF CANADA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY.



The Objective:

Retain and grow Airdrie businesses and attract new investment.



As Airdrie's population has grown significantly, so has the need to attract more business to employ our residents and balance our tax base. With expanding opportunities to tap into—such as agri-business, health, technology and innovation, and aviation—it is crucial to focus our efforts and resources on attracting new industries to support diversification.

It's also paramount that we support existing businesses so they stay and grow in Airdrie, acknowledging that 80-90 percent of growth comes from within a community. This includes ensuring we have the right workforce, networks and support services businesses need to be successful.

Attracting, cultivating and retaining more businesses in Airdrie will help maintain a vibrant community and high quality of life.



- Make it easy to start and grow a business in Airdrie
- Pursue new investment, sectors and opportunities
- Examine Airdrie's workforce needs and post-secondary opportunities

Key Actions

- Prioritize shovel-ready, non-residential land
- Improve City development processes
- Enhance support services for businesses
- Explore potential of Airdrie AirPark, Airdrie Health Co-op, and agri-business
- Implement a targeted business attraction marketing plan

Projects Underway

- East Points Community Area Structure Plan
- Industrial business attraction strategy
- City technology upgrades to improve permitting processes
- Local employment research project

Potential Projects

- One-stop City permitting and business assistance program
- Business mentorship program
- Airdrie AirPark business case development
- Agri-business sector development plan





\$9.3 BILLION - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GENERAL AVIATION INDUSTRY ACROSS CANADA

Airdrie AirPark: Taking Off with Opportunity

The Airdrie AirPark is ready for takeoff as a unique opportunity to bring diversification and investment opportunities to the city. This 600-acre hidden gem is currently being used by recreational pilots, but the sky is literally the limit for this privately-owned airport with the potential to be something even greater.

Research in other Canadian cities shows general aviation airports (those without scheduled service) deliver substantial economic impacts, including job generation, tax revenue and spin-off businesses.

An Innovative Business Leader

Brett Darichuk Alta Injection Molding

ALTA INJECTION MOLDING (AIM) IS THE PLACE INNOVATORS GO TO TRANSFORM THEIR IDEAS INTO REALITY. Offering engineering polymer solutions, the Darichuk family began AIM in 2004 with two facilities in Calgary. In 2014, they brought their buildings together, developing one state-of-the-art facility in Airdrie. "We had the chance to build a facility that would impact our savings and better support our clients," says Brett Darichuk, General Manager.

Brett believes that businesses must be driven to help Airdrie move forward in building a sustainable economy. This includes making it easy to show entrepreneurs what their innovations could be, along with taking the time to give back to the community, not to mention supporting the 42 staff members who work at AIM.

"It would be foolish to try and hold back potential. It's about encouraging the next generation of innovators." This is why AIM donates space to health care, provides offices for entrepreneurs working with them and offers student facility walk-throughs and education sharing.

"We grow entrepreneurs and businesses within our own selves and all this drive is connected to our growth. We see a very bright future for Airdrie."





The Objective:

Capitalize on Airdrie's location and future technologies.



Connections matter, there's no way around it. Whether we're on the road, face-to-face or online, in our homes, on our way to work or running a business, we expect smooth and efficient connectivity.

Airdrie's geographic location has been—and will continue to be—key to our success. Our position on the CANAMEX corridor and near YYC presents great opportunity for our businesses. While our transportation networks are in good condition, we must be diligent in enhancing and investing in them to maintain our location advantage. We need to keep people and goods moving swiftly and efficiently.

Online connections that move knowledge, entertainment, information and commerce are also essential to compete in the global economy and for quality of place. Airdrie's tech infrastructure and user capacity are simply not where they should be for a city of our size and demographic.

And we cannot overlook the importance of regional connections. We must proactively work with our neighbours and the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board. It's time to discover our potential as the largest community in the region surrounding Calgary and fifth largest city in Alberta and embrace a leadership role as an emerging economic generator.

the priorities

- Improve transportation networks to ensure ease of mobility of goods and people
- Develop a digital strategy to enable and grow technology use
- Position Airdrie as a regional hub and economic driver

Key Actions

- Ensure every business and resident has access to the fastest-possible internet
- Lead the creation of a regional economic development plan

Projects Underway

- North Calgary Transportation Corridor Study
- QEII Weigh Scale Relocation Feasibility Research
- Road improvement projects:
 \$85 million in the next 5 years
- Transit Master Plan implementation
- High-speed internet: working with private sector to explore options

Potential Projects

- Build additional highway interchanges
- Implement program to increase businesses use of technology
- Launch regional hub marketing campaign
- Smart Cities Challenge Smart Community Project



WHEN NAN THIESSEN ORIGINALLY STARTED BREWING KOMBUCHA to provide healthy drink alternatives for her young family, she never dreamt it would flourish into a fast-growing company with a private label partnership that would bring her product to a number of major grocery retailers.

Nan and her husband, Lonny, started Effervescent Tea Kombucha in 2016 in Grande Prairie, Alberta. They recently moved their agri-business to Airdrie because of the business environment and the city's reputation as a cost-effective transport hub. "It's a great opportunity to come to a city where there's space and room to grow," says Nan.

By moving to Airdrie, the company is better positioned for growth. Nan expects to increase production from 40,000 bottles/month to 200,000 because of the access to improved logistics and shipping costs. Additionally, Airdrie's location has provided them the ability to better connect with skilled employees. They have already hired a Brewmaster from the Brewmaster & Brewery Operations Management program at nearby Olds College.

In moving to Airdrie, Effervescent Tea Kombucha is leveraging their location to connect to more markets across Canada and beyond!

"In the same way that electricity and roads were key drivers of community development in the 20th century, broadband is the new infrastructure paradigm shaping the growth and sustainability of communities, households and businesses."

- University of Alberta



Realizing Our Potential

With the approval of this strategy, it's important that all of Airdrie understands where we're going next. Ultimately, it's about the City, businesses and community untapping our potential together by building solutions and leveraging opportunities that will serve the long-term needs of our city.

Implementation through Planning & Collaboration

Many projects are already underway that work toward this strategy's goals. City departments will complete detailed implementation plans for each focus area. New projects will be planned and budgeted for through the City's processes and will seek Council approval prior to beginning.

We will continue to engage community partners and enlist their help in moving this strategy forward. We will look for, and listen to, opportunities for collaboration.

A 10-Year Journey

This strategy provides a road map for our future. We know there will be unforeseen circumstances and new directions to explore along the way, and we will adjust course as needed. It will take time to arrive at our future destination, but together is how we'll get there.



Measuring Success and Staying Agile

With our clearly defined goal of shifting the tax base, the results we're looking for are straightforward:

- Attract, grow and retain businesses, and
- Maintain quality of life for residents.

We will diligently monitor our progress using these measures:

- 1. Non-residential assessment
- 2. Business retained (5+ years)
- 3. New business growth
- 4. Employment growth
 - Total employed in Airdrie
 - Residents employed in Airdrie
- 5. Downtown revitalization
 - Consumer spending
 - Employment density
 - Residential and non-residential density
- 6. Retention of residents

The strategy will be reviewed annually, including engaging with the ad-hoc Economic Strategy Community Team comprised of business and community leaders. This will allow us to stay agile and embrace opportunities presented along the way.

It will take time to set the foundation.

It will take much passion and many hands to deliver the projects needed to achieve our vision of becoming the place to be.

Airdrie is primed to tap into our potential, release our ambition and realize the benefits of a well-executed economic strategy.



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City of Airdrie

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Economic Strategy Community Team

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Todd Brand, Rocky View Schools

Cam Clark and Blake Clark, Cam Clark Ford

Darryl Conroy, Borger Group of Companies and BILD Calgary Region

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Cara Doré, Bow Valley College

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Thank you!



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