



**NORTHERN
COLORADO
PROSPERS**

Driving The Future

Northern Colorado Prospers is a five-year strategic initiative of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce designed to address four specific challenges facing business in Northern Colorado.



A LETTER FROM THE INITIATIVE CHAIR

I am pleased to announce the launch of a campaign to accelerate the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce's capacity to respond to our region's key challenges.

The Fort Collins area is fortunate to have a strong economic base, with advanced technology, higher education, health care, manufacturing, and state and federal government forming the diverse and resilient heart of our economy. At the same time, Fort Collins and the greater region of Northern Colorado face significant challenges that, left unaddressed, will adversely impact our future success and prosperity.

Northern Colorado Prospers: Driving The Future is a five-year strategic initiative that tackles our region's key challenges: transportation, labor force, business environment and retaining key employers. In the following pages, we highlight key elements of the 2017-2021 initiative.

In a recent meeting of the Chamber Board, we discussed the question "why" with regards to

Northern Colorado Prospers and the Chamber itself. That is, why is now the time for the Chamber to address these key community challenges and why is the Chamber uniquely positioned to make a significant difference? First, **the Chamber has been a successful voice of business for our community for decades**, working to ensure economic vitality for the Fort Collins area and an enhanced quality of life. This is accomplished through strong business advocacy, collaborative leadership and a variety of programs designed to address the important issues facing area businesses. Second, **Northern Colorado Prospers will address the key roadblocks that threaten the ability of our community to remain the great place it is today** to work, live and thrive. These issues, left unaddressed, will jeopardize future prosperity for Fort Collins and Northern Colorado.

Our success is dependent upon the businesses and stakeholders that have an interest in Northern Colorado's prosperity to step forward, engage in this initiative and exercise financial leadership by investing in it.

We hope you will join us in driving this campaign and initiative to success!

Kevin Unger
PRESIDENT/CEO
*Poudre Valley Hospital
Medical Center of the Rockies
UC Health*

NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS LEADERSHIP

The Fort Collins Area Chamber Board of Directors oversees the implementation of the Northern Colorado Prospers strategic initiative and its four main goals: **Fix North I-25**, **Align, Attract and Retain Talent**, **Be the Bold Voice of Business** and **Expand and Retain Existing Business**.

2016 Chamber Board Executive Committee

Kevin Unger
CHAIR
UC Health

Connie Dohn
TREASURER
Dohn Construction Inc.

David May
PRESIDENT & CEO
*Fort Collins Area
Chamber of Commerce*

Lucia Liley
CHAIR ELECT
Liley Law Offices

Pete Gazlay
EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE
Total Facility Care

Yvonne Myers
IMMEDIATE PAST
CHAIR
*Columbine Health
Systems*

Wynne Odell
EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE
Odell Brewing Company



2016 Chamber Board Members

Gene Bocis
Anheuser-Busch

Dean Hoag
*North Fort Collins Business
Association*

Dawn Putney
Toolbox Creative

Matt Dinsmore
Wilbur's Total Beverage

Deb Kelly
Guaranty Bank & Trust

Jim Sampson
HUB International

Brad Foster
Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Steve Lucas
Fusion Tech Media

Nicole Staudinger
FirstBank of Northern Colorado

Sharie Grant
OfficeScapes

Cathy Mathis
TB Group

Steve Stiesmeyer
Woodward

Nick Haws
Northern Engineering

Steve Nichols
High Country Beverage

Gordan Thibedeau
United Way of Larimer County

Todd Headley
CSU Ventures

Chris Otto
EKS&H

Kathleen Henry
CSURF

Amy Pezzani
Food Bank for Larimer County

A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS

Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce has played a vital role in our community's innovation and success since 1904. We work tirelessly to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of Fort Collins and all of Northern Colorado through sustained efforts in business advocacy, collaborative leadership, professional development and networking. Below are a few of our recent strategic wins.

NORTH I-25

\$270.5M

funding the Chamber helped secure to widen I-25 through the Fix North I-25 Business Alliance.

- This funding includes \$22.1 million for the Crossroads Interchange bridges (to be completed end of 2017), \$11.4 million to construct a south-bound climbing lane at Berthoud Hill (to be completed end of 2016) and \$237 million for additional lanes each way between Fort Collins and Johnstown (to be completed end of 2020).
- The Chamber, through the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance, **has driven regional and statewide transportation funding strategy** by raising the money to hire a media relations firm and a lobbyist.

FIRST-EVER TALENT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Partnered with United Way of Larimer County, Loveland Chamber, City of Loveland, City of Fort Collins, Larimer County and Northern Colorado Economic Alliance to create a community talent development plan.

Hired a consulting firm to facilitate development of a plan to help employers meet workforce needs.



BUSINESS CLIMATE

Retained a balanced City Council that is supportive of business.

Advocated for business at City Hall and in Denver.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Earned designation as

Colorado's only 5-Star accredited chamber of commerce

in 2015, putting the Fort Collins Area Chamber in the

TOP 1%

of all chambers throughout the United States.

Remained financially strong with clean annual audits, a growing membership and debt-free operations, including paying off the mortgage on the Chamber's building.

FUTURE BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Developing tomorrow's leaders through local and regional leadership development programs—Envision Young Professionals, Leadership Fort Collins and Leadership Northern Colorado.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

\$358M

secured with Chamber assistance for capital and public safety projects.

Supported development and passage of a ballot measure for local capital projects. The community projects included pedestrian and sidewalk improvements, bicycle lanes, a kayak park, bus fleet improvements, an affordable housing fund, Lincoln Avenue improvements and many other projects. \$85M secured over 10 years.

Led the winning Good Streets Fort Collins campaign to secure funding for street maintenance. \$85M secured over 10 years.

Led the successful Keep Larimer Safe ballot campaign to augment operational funding for the county jail. \$188M secured over 25 years.

OUR REGION'S CHALLENGES

The Fort Collins region is fortunate to have a strong economic base, with advanced technology, higher education, agriculture, health care, manufacturing, energy development, and state and federal government forming the diverse and resilient heart of our economy. At the same time, Northern Colorado faces significant challenges to its future success and prosperity, including:



TRANSPORTATION:

Crippling, dangerous congestion along the essential I-25 corridor. Unless addressed, three-hour trips to DIA and Denver will become routine.



LABOR FORCE:

Under-employment and talent shortages are a growing problem. Fort Collins ranks ninth in the nation in under-employment, and with older workers aging out of the workforce, key sectors are now experiencing talent shortages with more on the way.



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT:

While our current situation is relatively business-friendly, history has shown that the environment can change very quickly.



RETAINING KEY EMPLOYERS:

No consistent, systematic program exists to identify problems and expansion opportunities of existing key employers. The community must be proactive in its relationship with key employers to help them solve problems and expand. An insufficient level of support for key employers increases the level of risk to the local economy.

In order to drive future success and prosperity for our region, the Chamber engaged POWER 10, a resource development advisory firm, to conduct a feasibility study for the Chamber. The study found **strong support with area business and community leaders for the Chamber to aggressively pursue funding to widen I-25, launch initiatives to recruit and develop workforce talent, retain and expand local businesses and foster a positive business climate.** Investors will have the opportunity to support all, some or one of the goals.

NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

In response to our region's key challenges, Northern Colorado Prospers is segmented into four actionable goal areas.

GOAL 1: FIX I-25

Why:

Safe and efficient travel is essential to our families and businesses. The northern stretch of I-25 is congested and rapidly becoming worse as the population increases. And the population is increasing—the population of Larimer and Weld counties is projected to double by 2040. Within 15 years, it is projected to take three hours to drive the 60 miles to Denver and DIA.

Action:

The Chamber will continue to lead a comprehensive, multi-year lobbying and communications campaign to secure the \$1.7 billion necessary to widen North I-25 between Fort Collins and Longmont (Highways 14 and 66).

KEY STRATEGIES

Strengthen the State Lobbying Effort:

- **Communicate regularly** with the Governor's office, the state legislature and the Department of Transportation in order to keep North I-25 as the top funding priority of the Colorado Department of Transportation.
- **Persuade** the legislature to create permanent transportation funding in the General Fund.
- **Convince** the Legislature to refer a measure to voters to approve a bonding program for construction projects like North I-25.
- **Identify, consider and pursue** all viable funding options for transportation, such as federal freight corridor grants, dedicated transportation sales tax, and a regional transportation authority.

Build Public Support:

- **Implement** a comprehensive communications campaign to increase and sustain public support.
- **Develop** a powerful list of grassroots supporters that can be mobilized in support of key legislation.

Lead Key Alliances:

- **Continue to lead** the Fix North I-25 Business Alliance, which has launched a permanent lobbying effort to secure the money necessary to widen I-25.



GOAL 2: ALIGN, ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT

Why:

Our region needs a dynamic labor market that provides employers with the talent they need both today and in the future. More than ever before, successful communities will be those whose employers can find talent and whose residents can find jobs that let them work to their full potential. Unless a determined effort is made, Northern Colorado faces significant talent shortages.

Action:

Through Northern Colorado Prospers, the Chamber will implement strategies to ensure a competitive advantage for area employers through quality workers and for area workers through quality jobs.

KEY STRATEGIES

Actively support employers in finding, attracting and retaining the talent they need:

- **Connect** regional employers with residents and residents with better economic opportunities through programs to raise awareness of the Larimer County Workforce Center's services, as well as expanding internship and apprenticeship programs.
- **Launch** a recruitment services program to support employers who need to hire from outside the region.
- **Build** greater awareness of the region's job opportunities and strong employment base.
- **Partner** with employers to coordinate solutions that address common barriers to talent retention.
- **Coordinate** with the Workforce Center, the Northern Colorado Human Resources Association, Mountain State Employers Council and other partners to hold talent management workshops for employers and HR professionals.
- **Launch** a talent attraction campaign to recruit young families via a talent portal that provides information about working, living and relocating to the region.

Align education and workforce resources more closely with the business community:

- **Expand** support to companies from the same industry sector partnerships, monitor the needs of other industries and facilitate the launch of new partnerships as needed.
- **Streamline** business engagement and input mechanisms.
- **Partner** with sector partnerships to conduct annual employer surveys that document critical occupation needs.
- **Coordinate** with sector partnerships to use industry skills panels to evaluate Career & Technical Education, community college and university curricula and provide direct input in an effort to create a more centralized business advisory function.
- **Expand** programs such as Career Road trips, job shadowing and career fairs that provide work-based learning and career exploration opportunities for students.
- **Support** education and training institutions in strengthening the homegrown talent pipeline.
- **Advocate** with employers to remove legislative obstacles to expanding training programs that support high-demand occupations.
- **Create** a program inventory of workforce training programs at Front Range Community College and the area school districts, and collect information on the program enrollment and constraints.

Collectively address structural issues that serve as barriers to a secure talent pipeline:

- **Work** to remove key structural barriers to talent recruitment and retention.
- **Continue** to advocate for the widening of North I-25 to foster easier and safer home-to-work travel.
- **Advocate** on behalf of Front Range Community College to secure funding for the Allied Health School.
- **Continue** to advocate for adequate state funding for Colorado State University.
- **Tackle** the housing affordability issue by working in concert with other partners to identify programs and policies and advocate for the adoption of the most viable.

“The U.S. economy will face a shortage of five million workers by 2020”

—Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce

“The Fort Collins-Loveland MSA faces a projected worker shortfall of at least 5,000 people—and maybe as high as 9,000—between 2016 and 2020.”

—TIP Strategies



Photo credit: City of Fort Collins

GOAL 3: BOLD VOICE OF BUSINESS

Why:

Unpredictable, costly government kills jobs and investment. Government and the community need to be reminded that a good standard of living begins with a well-paying job.

Action:

The Chamber will serve as the voice of business to **aggressively advocate the perspective of business** and ensure public officials and residents understand the strong connection between business vitality, jobs and having the means to afford public services that greatly enhance the quality of community life, such as good schools, parks and bike paths.

KEY STRATEGIES

Support the election of business-supportive people to local office:

- During City Council election cycles, communicate the economic and business positions of the candidates to Chamber members and the public.

Enhance support of residents for business by implementing a dynamic, comprehensive communication campaign:

- **Develop** research-based messaging that resonates with local residents.
- **Maintain** direct, ongoing communication with the public that emphasizes the importance of business to a strong quality of life.
- **Upgrade** communications assets like FortCollinsWorks.com and CitizensforaSustainableEconomy.com, along with social media channels.
- **Continuously strengthen** the Chamber's public contact database.
- **Expand** communication via diverse avenues: person-to-person, earned media, traditional media, mail, digital media and social marketing.

Strengthen the Chamber's ability to conduct policy and fiscal analysis to proactively impact city government policies:

- **Conduct** a situation assessment study to identify issues that will affect Fort Collins area businesses over the next few years.
- **Prepare and implement** strategies to effectively address each key issue.



GOAL 4: EXPAND AND RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESS

Why:

The most effective way for a community to experience job growth is from the retention and expansion of existing businesses. A well-structured and coordinated Business Retention and Expansion program can accelerate this process.

Action:

The Chamber and key partners will **deliberately and consistently meet with Fort Collins-Loveland area employers** to express community support for them and to determine what can be done to help them. As a result, thousands of jobs will be created over the next five years.

KEY STRATEGIES

Formalize a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program:

- Business retention and expansion is a key economic development strategy deployed in the most successful communities.
- It is a coordinated program by community economic development advocates to identify, contact and assist primary employers.
- Currently, no such program exists to maintain regular, meaningful contact with key employers to understand and address their issues and needs.
- It is imperative that the Chamber and allied organizations work in an orchestrated way to meet annually with those businesses driving our economy.

Meet with 100 area businesses each year to identify challenges and opportunities

- **Prioritize** visits for those companies identified as likely growth prospects in order to facilitate their expansion.
- **Form** a volunteer Rapid Response Team to intervene in urgent situations involving a company's expansion or potential departure from the region.
- **Convene** existing industry sector groups to identify and address common challenges and opportunities.
- **Partner** with neighboring Chambers and Larimer County economic development programs.

OPPORTUNITY FUND, OVERSIGHT AND INVESTOR COMMUNICATION

In addition to the four specific goals described above, the Northern Colorado Prospers strategic initiative has two other key elements:

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Investor communications and initiative oversight:

Investor confidence in the Northern Colorado Prospers strategic initiative will be maintained through the highest level of transparency, communications and accountability. It will also require that the “first team” of business leaders in Fort Collins/Northern Colorado take an active role in keeping the initiative on task, on time and on budget. Specific oversight of the initiative will be vested in an advisory committee, which will evolve more fully after funds have been committed. The committee will be comprised of individuals whose financial investment clearly identifies their commitment to the program’s success, as well as representatives of the Fort Collins Chamber Board charged with implementation.

2. Maintain and deploy an Opportunity Fund:

It is likely that, during the life of Northern Colorado Prospers, unforeseen opportunities and challenges will arise. The Chamber must be in a position to respond to these without jeopardizing planned components of the initiative and without having to go back to the community repeatedly with urgent funding requests. An Opportunity Fund is an appropriate and widely used method of planning for the unforeseeable. Money raised in excess of the stated goal of \$3.35 million will go into the Opportunity Fund to be used as determined by the advisory committee of the initiative and approved by the Chamber Board.

NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS STRATEGIC INITIATIVE BUDGET

The Chamber estimates that it will take \$3.35 million to fully implement the four strategic initiative goal areas over the five-year period.

	Goal	Annual	5-Year Total
	FIX I-25	\$240,000	\$1,200,000
	ALIGN, ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT	\$200,000	\$1,000,000
	BOLD VOICE OF BUSINESS	\$190,000	\$950,000
	EXPAND AND RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESS	\$40,000	\$200,000*
	TOTALS	\$670,000	\$3,350,000

*Reflects the Chamber’s portion of this program.

PROJECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS



“Funding and implementing the Northern Colorado Prospers strategic initiative will address our area’s key challenges, in addition to improving the quality of life and economic diversity of the Fort Collins area.”

—David May, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce

The Northern Colorado Prospers strategic initiative will greatly contribute to the following specific outcomes:

- I-25 widened and dramatically improved transportation mobility options throughout Northern Colorado
- Significant improvements in the area’s workforce quality, quantity and alignment that will greatly benefit both employers and employees
- Improvements in the business climate that signal to area businesses that they are a valued part of the community
- Retention and expansion of existing businesses in Northern Colorado

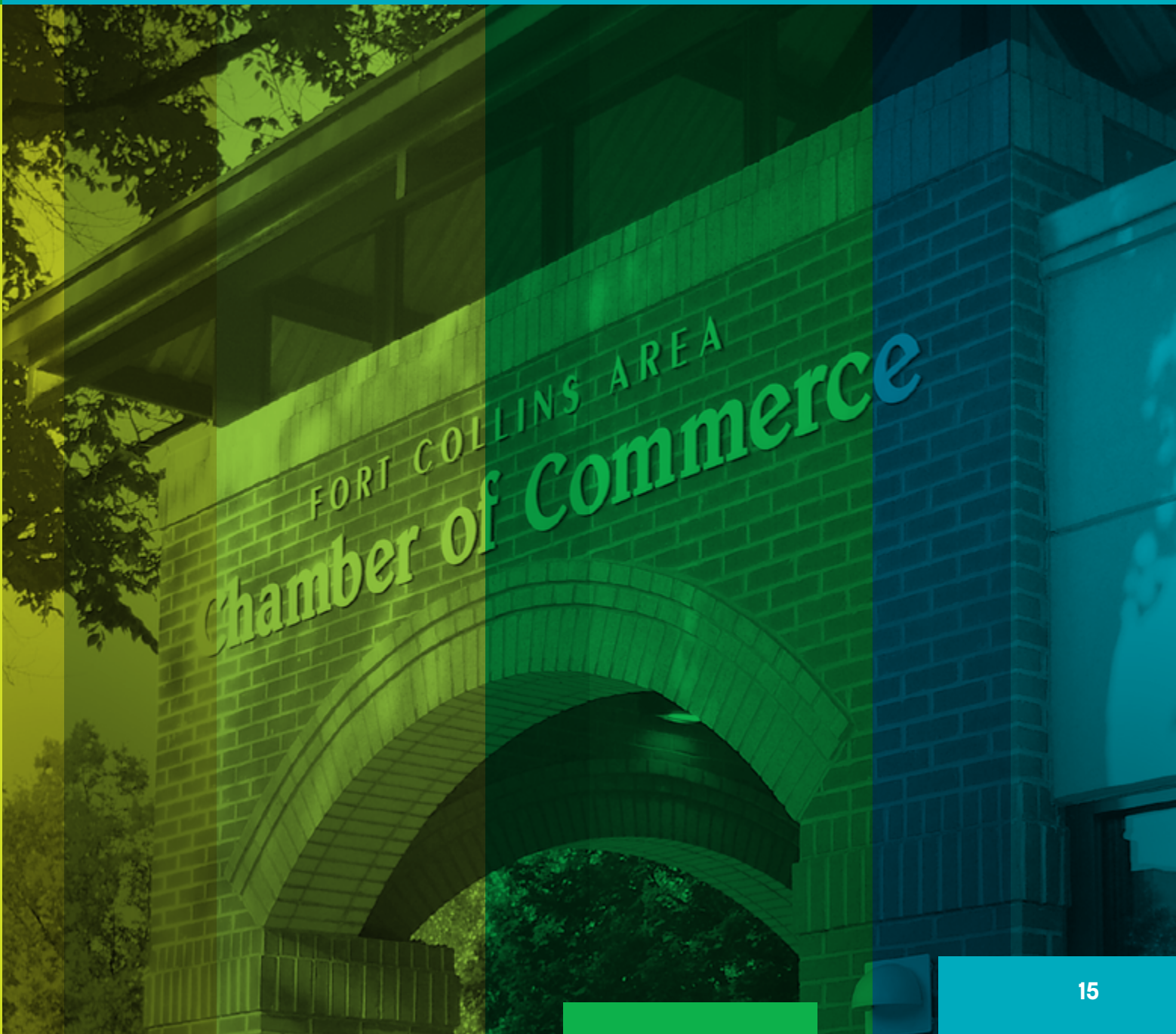
The ripple effect of these outcomes will include:

- New capital investment
- New high-grade jobs – direct jobs that will trigger additional indirect (supplier-type) and induced (service sector) jobs
- Substantial new payroll associated with direct, indirect and induced jobs
- New disposable personal income to be spent in the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado area, benefitting all local businesses
- New loan and deposit potential for area financial institutions
- New sales and property tax revenue paid to governments throughout the area
- Improved quality of life for Fort Collins and Northern Colorado residents

MOVING THE REGION FORWARD

For years, the business community has asked for action to get North I-25 widened, to ensure a strong voice at the table with government, to secure support for local employers, and to help their businesses find and develop needed talent. Within the limits of the resources available to it, the Chamber has delivered admirable results.

Past successes combined with the area's growing challenges now require the Chamber to take its efforts to the next level. Funding the goals of the Northern Colorado Prospers initiative will make that happen. Investors can support one, some or all of the goals. Join us!





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