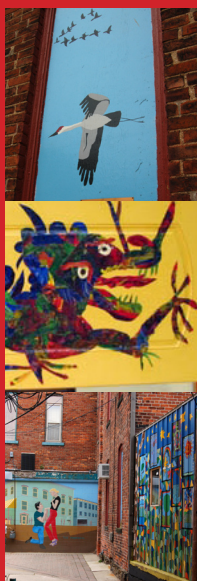


C

CHELSEA

CHELSEA WORKING PLAN



*Initial steps for
implementing the
Washtenaw County
Cultural Master
Plan in the
CHELSEA Area*

ArtsAlliance®

Arts, culture, and creativity are among the core elements that make Washtenaw County a special place. Look at any of the “best of” awards that the communities in this county regularly win and there’ll doubtlessly be listed a reference to the area’s high quality of life, with its arts and cultural assets typically highlighted.

Arts and culture have a long history in Washtenaw County. This longevity and the lively appearance of the arts and cultural community, however, mask the true fragility of this sector. Peer behind the polished facades of many arts and cultural organizations or talk to the artists practicing their craft here and you’ll find a vulnerable industry struggling to survive.

The Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan is a response to that challenge.

Cultural Plan Background Information



The Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan is the result of an 18-month, community-based planning effort that emphasized the participation of cultural, educational, civic, business, and government representatives from each of the county’s key population centers: Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Manchester, Milan, Saline, and Ypsilanti.

The plan reflects the direct input of nearly 5,000 Washtenaw County residents as captured in an online survey, an artists’ census, a study of the area’s creative economy, and in 29 interviews and community forums.

From the master plan, each population center has worked to customize the plan to its own local needs and interests.

The Chelsea Area Working Plan is a local response to this county-wide challenge.

The overall planning process has been coordinated by the Arts Alliance, an organization serving the arts and cultural sector of Washtenaw County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. LOCAL PROCESS	2
2. CHELSEA PRIORITY ACTIONS	
Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy	3-4
Creative Economic Development/ Capacity Building, Funding and Investment	5-6
Implementation Matrix	7-8
3. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN WASHTENAW COUNTY	9
4. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN CHELSEA	
Online Survey	10
Artists' Census	10
Forum Meeting Groups	11-12
5. CHELSEA COMMUNITY INPUT	13
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	14

LOCAL PROCESS



**Musicians outside of
Chelsea Gallery**



Chelsea Depot

The Arts Alliance partnered with its Chelsea Community Leaders, Robert Pierce, Chelsea Area Chamber of Commerce and Aubrey Thornton Martinson, Chelsea Center for the Arts to arrange three public meetings in Chelsea to discuss the future of arts and culture in the community. More than 35 Chelsea residents identified what key strategic areas from the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan their community needed to address. They then developed and prioritized specific action steps, identified key implementation partners, discussed next steps, created a time line, and detailed measures of success for their community over the course of the next five years.

The six strategic areas identified in the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan include:

- Lifelong Arts and Education
- Creative Economic Development
- Capacity Building, Funding, and Investment
- Communications, Audience Development, and Advocacy
- Cultural Facilities
- Diversity and Access

Chelsea area residents decided to focus on the following strategic areas in Chelsea:

- Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy,
- Creative Economic Development, and
- Capacity Building, Funding and Investment.

The group identified specific recommendations to address each of these strategic areas.

Community leaders understand that the future growth and success of the county is inextricably tied to the health and well-being of arts and culture that contribute to the area's quality of place. In a true collaborative effort, these leaders along with hundreds of grassroots individuals, have played and will continue to play a critical role in identifying the challenges outlined in the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan and Chelsea Area Working Plan and will continue to help develop the recommended actions.

CHELSEA PRIORITY ACTIONS

Recommendations for Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy

Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy Vision Statement

To communicate the value of arts and culture to area residents, public officials, and visitors in a way that engages them and increases their awareness and understanding.

To foster a sense of creative community amongst cultural organizations and individual artists where communication can exist through media outlets, gathering spaces, and affinity groups.

To create an environment where all potential and current audience members feel welcome, comfortable, and invited to produce, support, and participate in arts and cultural experiences.

-Vision statement taken from Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan

- **Create an inventory of artists, arts and cultural organizations and venues in Chelsea.**

What? A centralized list of arts and cultural organizations and venues in Chelsea will be available. Community members will be able to search for information about what artists, organizations, and venues are in their area. Artists will be able to identify what venues are available for them to display, perform, or show their artwork. The list will be available online and will be frequently accessed and updated.

Why? There is no central information source that includes data about the arts and cultural organizations and venues that are available in Chelsea. Artists often do not know where to look for information about available venues and don't have a place where they can connect and find each other. Likewise, community members and arts and cultural organizations may not be aware of the opportunities available to them in the city.

- **Support branding of Chelsea and actively lobby for the inclusion of the arts and cultural sector in a city-wide branding effort.**

What? Chelsea will be known for its rich arts and cultural offerings. The Chelsea Center for the Arts' 175th Anniversary mural project will provide insight into the area's brand. Artful signage will be displayed around the city. A unified brand will yield increased awareness about the arts and cultural community.

Why? Despite the wide array of arts and cultural activities, programming, and events available in Chelsea, the area has not been branded as an arts and cultural destination. There is a need for increased visibility of Chelsea's arts and cultural product.

- **Drive improvement in connecting, complimenting, and coordinating Chelsea area arts and cultural events.**

What? Artists, arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses and residents in Chelsea will have increased communications about what programs, events, exhibitions and activities are happening. Increased communications will be present between the creative, civic, educational and business community. There will be a well-trafficked spot online where information specific to Chelsea can be accessed. Seamless communications between the creative sector

and the Chelsea community will lead to increased collaborations and partnerships. Coordinated and complimentary events will lead to less scheduling conflicts.

Why? There are a lot of arts and cultural events happening in Chelsea, but there does not exist a centralized method of communication. Often times people may not be fully aware of what is available to them because a centralized communications system is not in place. Community leaders are not as up-to-date on information and issues relating to the creative sector as they could and should be.

- **Leverage community assets to attract local and non-resident audiences to Chelsea and to increase interest in arts and cultural activities, events and programs of all ages.**

What? Chelsea will be an arts and cultural destination for both local and out-of-town audiences. Chelsea will be known for having a rich and vibrant arts and cultural community and for the wide range of activities that are available.

Why? Chelsea has a very rich and diverse array of arts and cultural offerings and there is a need to identify who is out there and what they are doing. The city regularly attracts audiences from the Chelsea area for its theater, restaurants, summer festivities and local businesses. There is a need to capture and communicate the charm and essence of Chelsea to attract residents and visitors from surrounding areas.



Downtown Chelsea

**Creative Economic
Development Vision
Statement**

To foster cultural arts, artists, and creative businesses (for profit and not-for-profit) so they become self-sustaining and contribute to the economic stability of the county.

*- Vision statement taken from
Washtenaw County Cultural Master
Plan*

**Capacity Building,
Funding and Investment
Vision Statement**

To envision a publicly and privately financed fund that exists in perpetuity to support a stable, vibrant arts and cultural environment that will contribute to the economic and personal well-being of Washtenaw County residents, workers, and visitors.

*- Vision statement taken from
Washtenaw County Cultural
Master Plan*

Recommendations for Creative Economic Development and Capacity Building, Funding and Investment

Note: Recommendations in this section have been combined as they reflect an overlap between these two strategic areas.

- **Expand and formalize the existing group of community leaders to implement and oversee the plan's recommendations.**

What? A committee will meet regularly and spearhead the implementation of the Chelsea cultural plan until a staff person is hired. The committee will be comprised of community members that were actively engaged in the Chelsea cultural planning process. They will identify and begin implementing action steps as well as develop key partnership and collaborative opportunities.

Why? A group or council in Chelsea that can make sure that the recommendations of the Chelsea cultural plan are implemented does not exist. There is no centralized organization that represents the creative sector in Chelsea.

- **Hire a person whose role and responsibility will be to drive the implementation of the Chelsea cultural plan.**

What? A dedicated staff person will develop community-wide relationships and be responsible for the implementation of the Chelsea cultural plan. This position will start off as a part-time position, with the hopes that it will become full-time when funding sources are identified. An advisory committee will help direct this position.

Why? There is not a coordinated, paid-staff person that can be responsible for administrating and ensuring that the recommendations of the Chelsea cultural plan are implemented. It is necessary to have a position created to manage this program with the help of an advisory committee/group. Without having a designated person assigned to work on the plan's recommendations, the work may not be completed in a timely fashion.

- **Identify current and potential funding sources and provide assistance to organizations seeking those funds.**

What? There is a need to explore new ways to seek funding for Chelsea organizations. New methods will help diversify and strengthen the area's strong arts and cultural presence.

Why? Due to the current economic conditions, funding is one of the biggest challenges for arts and cultural organizations. In many

cases, the traditional funding models for the non-profit sector have not been effective. There is a need to share local organizations' successes, challenges, and techniques to generate funding.

- **Inform community members of opportunities to serve as volunteers for arts and cultural organizations.**

What? Community members become more engaged and active in Chelsea by volunteering their time to support local organizations and groups. Volunteers bring new ideas and fresh insights to organizations and encourage increased participation and appreciation of the arts and cultural sector. Volunteers of all ages and experience levels are readily available to assist organizations as needed, and are matched according to their skills and interests.

Why? Chelsea has a strong core base of volunteers that are very involved in community events, committees and organizations. However, this group often consists of the same individuals. There is a need to engage additional community members as volunteers.

- **Support development of a Principal Shopping District in downtown Chelsea.**

What? A strong Principal Shopping District will yield monies to help fund marketing and communications efforts in Chelsea. The development of a shopping district would increase communications and relationships with key community stakeholders and would also provide a more unified opportunity to collaborate on marketing, communications, and advertising.

Why? A Principal Shopping District does not currently exist in Chelsea. There is a need for businesses and organizations in the downtown area to work together to strengthen the brand and image of Chelsea as a destination for residents and visitors.

**Youth Dance Theatre
of Michigan, Chelsea**



Recommendation	Implementation Partners	Start Date	First Steps	Resources
Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy				
Create an inventory of artists, arts and cultural organizations and venues in Chelsea	City, arts and cultural organizations, chamber	Near term: 6 - 12 months	Create a complete list of who / what is in Chelsea and identify what he/she/it is doing	Chelsea Center for the Arts, Chamber, Arts Alliance, Artists' Census data
Support branding of Chelsea and actively lobby for the inclusion of the arts and cultural sector in a city-wide branding effort.	Arts and cultural organizations; DDA; artists; chamber of commerce; library; schools	Near/Medium term: (6 months - 3 years)	Chelsea 175th Mural project may provide insight to brand; explore other methods to incorporate art/signage into the city	Chelsea Center for the Arts
Drive improvement in connecting, complimenting and coordinating Chelsea area arts and cultural events	Things To Do in Chelsea website, Chamber, Library, Arts Alliance, Media, Convention & Visitors Bureau (Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor Area)	Near - Long Term: (6 months - 5 years)	Connect arts and cultural organizations and leaders together. Identify a method that these groups and individuals can coordinate events that compliment each other and avoid conflicting schedules.	Chelsea Arts & Culture Working Group (CAWG)
Leverage community assets to attract local and non-resident audiences to Chelsea and to increase interest in arts and cultural activities, events and programs of all ages.	Arts and cultural organizations, DDA, artists, chamber of commerce, library, schools, Gateway Project Work Group	Near term: 6 - 12 months	Identify community assets and determine best tactics to reach targeted audience and interest groups.	Chelsea Center for the Arts, Chamber, schools

Recommendation	Implementation Partners	Start Date	First Steps	Resources
Creative Economic Development / Capacity Building				
Expand and formalize the existing group of community leaders to implement and oversee the plan's recommendations.	Chamber, Library, Chelsea Center for the Arts, Arts Alliance, community	Near term: 6 - 12 months	Define the role of the committee: who will act as sole implementer of the cultural plan until a paid person is hired to assist with this effort.	Saline Commission, Dexter Council
Hire a person whose role and responsibility will be to drive the implementation of the Chelsea cultural plan. [This role will be defined in future working group sessions.]	Chelsea Arts Working Group	Near term: 6 - 12 months	Steering Committee of Chelsea should identify funding source and responsibilities	Arts Alliance
Identify current and potential funding sources and provide assistance to organizations seeking those funds.	Arts Alliance	Near/Medium term (6 months - 3 years)	Survey arts and cultural organizations to develop a detailed picture of current funding. Brainstorm ways that resources can be shared and partnerships can be developed. Create an inventory of local organizations, their successes, challenges, and techniques in terms of generating funding.	IRS list of non-profits in Chelsea, Chamber, Chelsea Center for the Arts, Community Foundations, NEW Center, MNA, local legislators
Inform community members of opportunities to serve as volunteers for arts and cultural organizations.	Chelsea Center for the Arts, Library, Chamber	Near/Medium term: (6 months - 3 years)	Explore effective volunteer models; Create a database of potential volunteers by skills and interests. Create a database of volunteer needs for area arts and cultural organizations.	Library, NEW, Chelsea Senior Center; Schools, local legislators, Americorps
Support development of a Principal Shopping District in downtown Chelsea (Monies could be used for marketing/communications)	City, DDA, PSD, Chamber	Medium term: (1 - 3 years)	Research current PSD models; develop relationships with key stakeholders	City, DDA, Chamber, local businesses

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Arts and culture are important to the quality of life and well being of Washtenaw County. This fact was well documented in the data collected to create the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan.¹ The following provides highlights of what we know about arts and culture in Washtenaw County and comes from the information gathered in the cultural plan's online survey, focus groups, artists' census, and creative economy analysis.

People in Washtenaw County Value Arts and Culture

- 63% said arts and cultural programs were very important to their choice to live in Washtenaw County.
- 75% said that business support for arts and culture made a difference when they chose what businesses to patronize.

Many Businesses Recognize the Value of Arts and Culture to the Bottom Line

- 63% said that access to arts and culture was important in their decision to locate or keep their businesses in Washtenaw County.
- 57% thought access to arts and cultural programs was important in helping to recruit and retain qualified workers.

The Creative Sector Plays a Distinct Role in the County's Economy

- 4.6% of the county's total workforce works in the creative economy.
- 10% of the county's total payroll is generated by the creative economy.
- 823 students from the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University earned degrees related to the creative economy in 2007.

The Quality of Our Cultural Offerings is Generally High, but not Everyone has Access to Them

- 88% were satisfied with the quality of arts, heritage, and interpretive science programs in their community.
- 66% felt that good science and arts education is not equally available to students throughout the county.

Artists (visual, performing, and literary) are a Significant Force in Washtenaw County

- 2,530 individuals responded to the Artists' Census and were classified as *Washtenaw County Artists*. Of these, 1,173 individuals satisfied criteria and were identified as *Working Artists*.

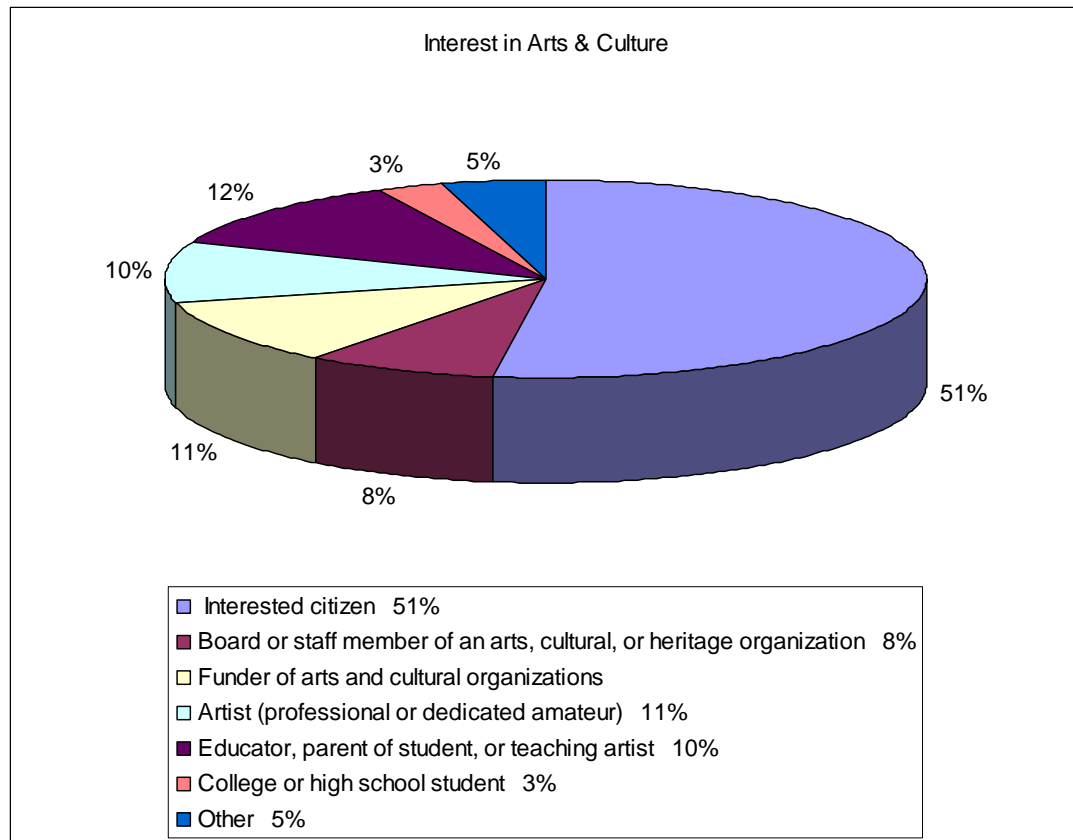
¹ This data is reported in the following documents, which can be accessed at http://a2artsalliance.org/initiatives_culturalplan.asp:

- *Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Online Survey Report*
- *Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Community Forums Full Archival Report*
- *2008 Artists' Census Report*
- *The Creative Economy Analysis conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK, 2008*

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN CHELSEA

ONLINE SURVEY

The Arts Alliance conducted an online survey between October 2007 and January 2008 to gather information about residents' attitudes toward arts and culture in Washtenaw County. Seventy Chelsea residents responded to the 52-question survey, representing 3.3% of all 1,535 survey respondents. Chelsea residents identified themselves as follows:



ARTISTS' CENSUS

The Washtenaw County Artists' Census was administered by the Arts Alliance as part of the cultural plan. This census ran from April 1 through May 17, 2008. One hundred thirteen artists from Chelsea responded to the artists' census, representing more than a 2.5% response rate relative to Chelsea's population. Fifty-three Chelsea artists were identified as *Working Artists*.²

²*Working Artists* were classified based on meeting all of the following criteria: 1) self-define as an artist; 2) works as a visual, performing, or literary artist; 3) spends 40 or more hours a month on his/her creative field; and 4) shares his/her artwork beyond family and friends. Criteria was adapted from *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work*, a publication produced by Dr. Ann Markusen of the University of Minnesota.

FORUM GROUP MEETINGS

As part of its research for the Washtenaw County Cultural Plan, the Arts Alliance held three small discussion groups, or “community forums,” in Chelsea to gather in-depth resident input. These forums were held between October 2007 and January 2008. Some of the key issues that came up in these forums included:

Chelsea Cultural Assets – What’s special about Chelsea?

- **Home town pride** People are proud of Chelsea. There’s a sense of community and of cooperation and common interests. Many volunteer. Citizens are engaged, including long-time families and newcomers. People are welcoming. The downtown is beautiful. Historic homes and businesses are preserved, through perceived value not legislation. Community leaders are careful about change. Arts and culture are viewed as an economic centerpiece and helps to position Chelsea as a tourist destination.
- **Library a community center** The library is expanded and serves as a community center.
- **Many artists** Local artists practice visual art, music, dance, and writing. Artists are appreciative of each other.
- **Good schools** Participants described school leaders as visionary. Schools use technology well. Parents are engaged. Students attend a wide variety of higher education institutions both regionally and nationally.
- **Proximity to Ann Arbor and Detroit** Like other small communities surrounding Ann Arbor, Chelsea residents have relatively easy access to the larger cities’ cultural opportunities.
- **Green Space** Chelsea is well positioned to natural resources with an abundance of lakes and other outdoor recreational areas just west of the community.

Chelsea Challenges

- **Retain sense of community** Forum participants wanted the community and economy to grow, but to not lose the community’s intimacy and culture.
- **Economy** Pfizer’s departure meant the loss of almost 3,000 jobs. In general, “the economy stinks.” Programs depending on earned revenue are challenged by people’s unwillingness to pay. Attendance at events has declined.
- **Facilities** Performance venues are inadequate. There are a few galleries, but no community-based visual arts facility.

- **Funding** Funding, as elsewhere, is a problem. The pool of donors is small.
- **Artists want help** Artists want help learning how to manage and market their businesses.
- **More diversity** Some forum participants wished for more diversity.

Vision for Chelsea: What might this community look like in five years?

- **Vibrant downtown** By 2013, more restaurants and businesses operate downtown. Visitors find live music. Facilities are fully accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Good things do not change** The sense of community won't change in five years. You still won't be able to find a Wal-Mart.
- **More programs for youth** By 2013, the community develops a teen center similar to Ann Arbor's Neutral Zone, but tailored toward the needs of this community.

The above data about Chelsea drawn from the Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Online Survey Report, Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Community Forums Full Archival Report, 2008 Artists' Census Report, and The Creative Economy Analysis conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK, 2008.

Data from forums collected and narrative written by Cultural Plan Associate Consultant, Susan Badger Booth.

**Chelsea Clock Tower
and Jiffy Mix**



CHELSEA COMMUNITY INPUT

The following individuals participated in at least one of the three public meetings held in Chelsea to work on the Chelsea Working Plan. Meetings included a public forum and two working group meetings.

These individuals have demonstrated a strong interest for arts and culture in their community. They could serve as the nucleus to oversee the implementation of this plan.

Kim Aiken
Nadine Anderson
Christina Breed
Merrill Crockett
Steve Daut
Rick De Troyer
Ann Feeney
Kevin Frahm
Sheila Graziano
William Harris
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Sandra Xenakis

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to all the individuals who have helped the Chelsea Working Plan come to fruition.

Every effort was made to include the names of those individuals that participated in this process. Please excuse any omissions, misspellings or other oversights.

Photo Credits

Front cover:

Row (from left to right)

Child painting – Chelsea Center for the Arts

Chelsea architecture – Sandra Xenakis

Nutcracker – Youth Dance Theatre of Michigan

Column (from top to bottom)

Chelsea Mural – Sandra Xenakis

Chelsea Center for the Arts, doors – Chelsea Center for the Arts

Winans Alley – Chelsea Area Chamber of Commerce

Background Information:

Purple Rose Theatre – Danna Segrest

Jiffy Mix Towers – Chelsea Area Chamber of Commerce

Contents of Plan:

Sandra Xenakis

Chelsea Area Chamber of Commerce

Chelsea Center for the Arts

Youth Dance Theatre of Michigan

The Chelsea Working Plan, Initial Steps for implementing the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan in the Chelsea Area was written in June 2009 by Angela Martín-Barcelona, Marketing Director, Arts Alliance. Susan Badger Booth, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication & Theater Arts at Eastern Michigan University wrote the summation of the Chelsea focus group meetings. Tamara Real, President, Arts Alliance, served as Project Manager.

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The Arts Alliance serves all of Washtenaw County, working to create an environment where culture and creativity can flourish and the arts are accessible to all.

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