

# Proposed Sidewalk Amendments

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October 29, 2024



PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

# Amendment Process Timeline

## Feedback from Constituents

Over the last year Planning Commission, City Council, stakeholders and the public have requested changes to the existing sidewalk rules

## Planning Commission & Planning Department Collaboration

The last several weeks have been spent working on amendments to respond to the feedback provided

## Presentation of draft revisions

- Planning Commission to open public comment period
- Establish public hearing date on November 14

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Oct. 22 – Nov. 2 (in-person and virtual)

## Planning Commission Consideration

Nov. 14

## City Council Quality of Life Committee

Dec. 2

## City Council Consideration

Dec. 11

# The Importance of Sidewalks

The City of Houston requires sidewalks to enhance the walkability of our city and improve safety and accessibility for all Houstonians.



# A Brief History

**1990s**

Public Works begins enforcing sidewalk requirements

**2020**

Planning & Development begins reviewing sidewalks

**2023**

Amendment to Incorporate Fee-in-Lieu of Sidewalk Construction

**2024**

PD considered updates to the existing sidewalk ordinance

# Sidewalks are Typically Required

In general, sidewalks are required where a permit for construction or land development is required.



# What Triggers the Construction of a Sidewalk

(no proposed changes)

- New single-family residential home construction (SFR)
- New commercial development
- Repairing or replacing 20+ feet of sidewalk
- New sidewalk permits

- Pedestrian route for off-site parking
- New, expansion or reconstruction of existing roadway
- Removal of existing sidewalk
- New parking lot

# The Current Sidewalk Rules



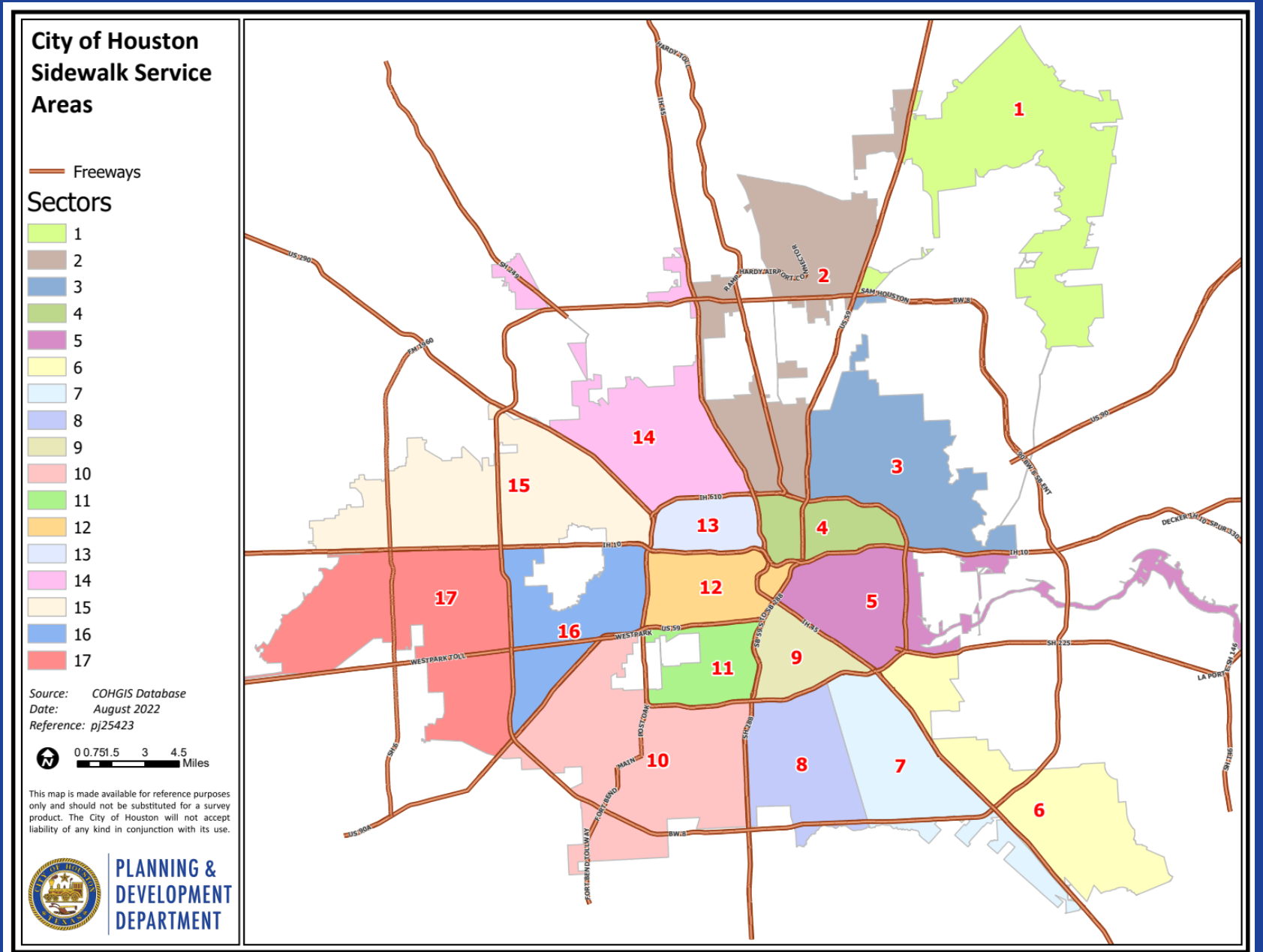
The current ordinance offers two options:

1) build a sidewalk, or

2) pay a fee

These fees go toward building out the sidewalk network locally and across the city.

# Sidewalk Fund Service Areas



# Responding to Public Input

Based on feedback from the public, we're proposing changes to the ordinance that will provide more flexibility and more exceptions.



# 2024 Proposed Sidewalk Amendments

## The goals of the sidewalk amendments are:

- Simplify the ordinance
- Streamline the application process
- Expand the sidewalk construction exemption criteria for single-family residential construction to address items such as:
  - Unconnected sidewalk segments in neighborhoods
  - Locations where construction of sidewalks is infeasible
  - Neighborhoods with pedestrian trails
  - Lots one acre or larger

# Sidewalk Construction Exceptions

## Single-Family Residential Only

### Existing Exceptions

- Area has pedestrian trails (Kingwood)
- 4th Ward (exempt)

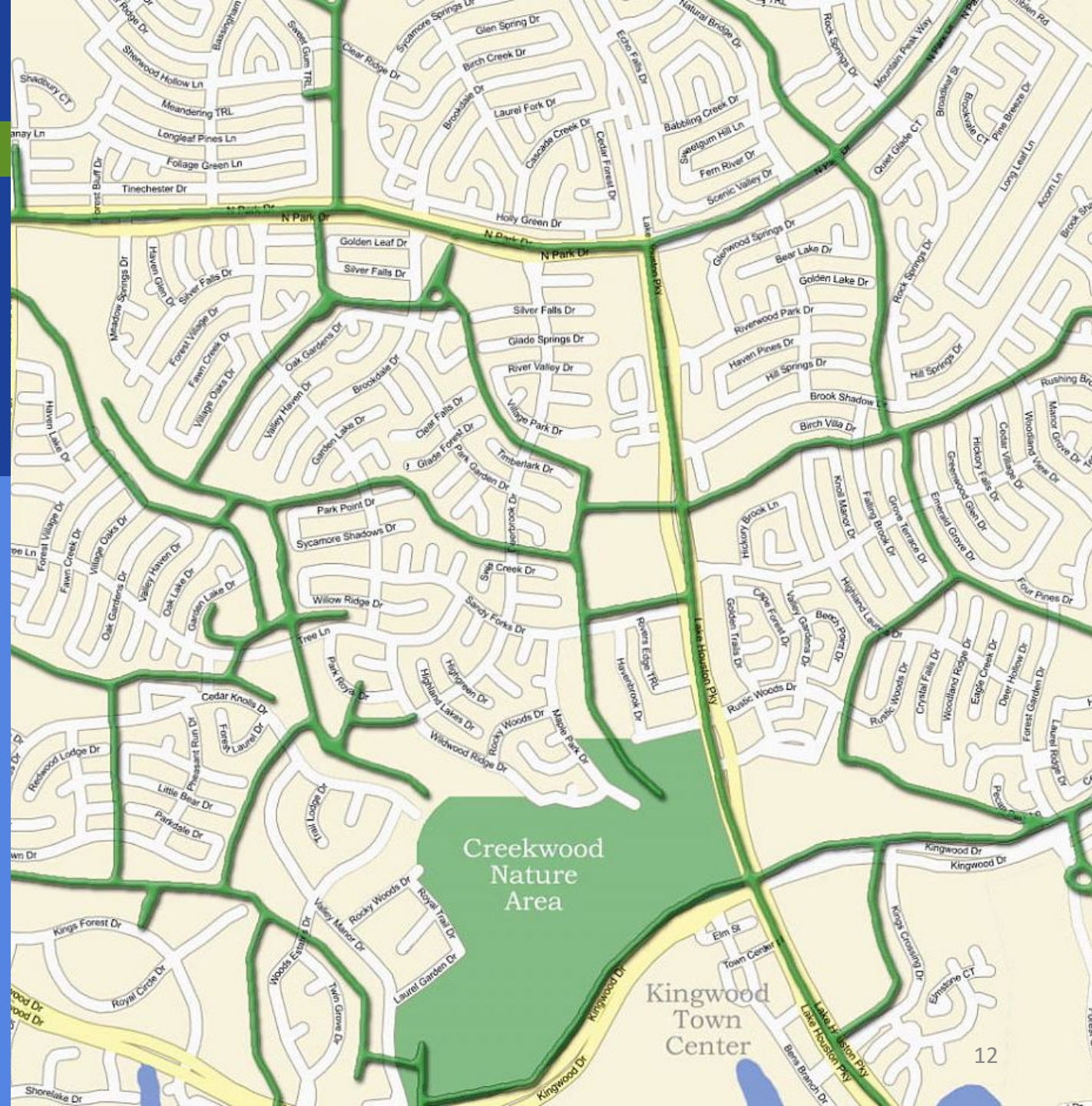
### Proposed Exceptions

- Deed restrictions prohibit sidewalks
- Lot is 1 acre or larger
- No sidewalks on one/both sides of the street (except at schools, libraries, community centers)
- Ditches make sidewalks impractical

Single-Family Residential

# Existing Exception: Pedestrian Trails

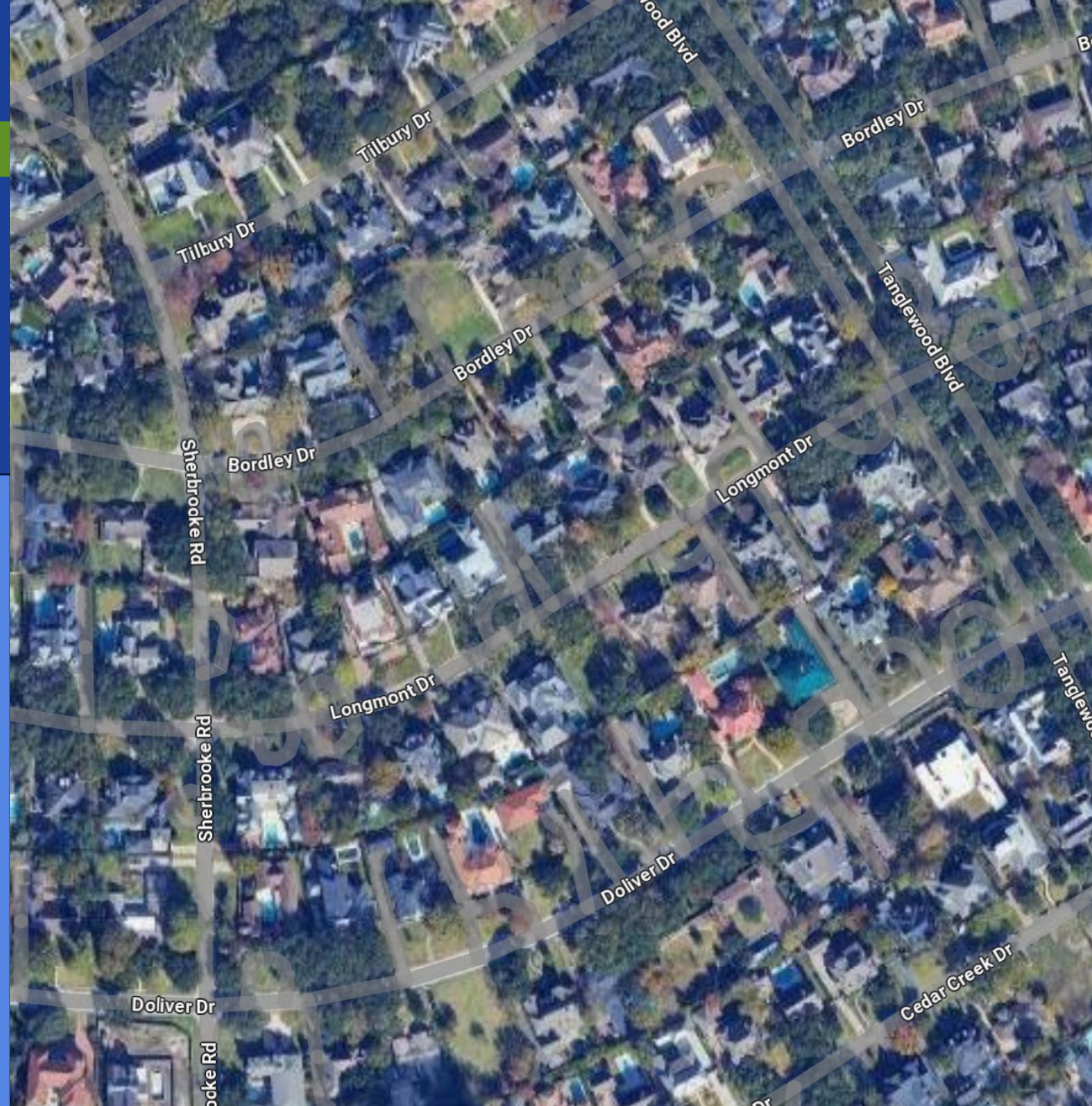
Construction takes place within a community that has approved pedestrian trails



Single-Family Residential

# Proposed Exception: **Deed Restrictions**

The neighborhood has active deed restrictions that prohibit the construction of sidewalks



Proposed Exception:  
**Large Lot Size**

The lot is 1 acre in size or larger



Single-Family Residential

## Proposed Exception: **No Existing Sidewalks**

There are currently no sidewalks on the blockface and across the street.

Properties within 1,400 feet of a school, library, or community center will require a sidewalk.

Proposed Exception:  
**Existing Open Ditch**

The construction of a sidewalk is impractical  
due to an existing open ditch

# Sidewalk Construction Exceptions

## All Projects – Commercial and Residential

### Existing Exceptions

- Site has existing sidewalk that meets minimum width
- Street is grade-separated freeway
- Street is undeveloped
- Cost is disproportional

All Properties

## Existing Exception: **Pre-existing Sidewalk**

There is already an existing sidewalk in good condition.

Both Commercial & Residential

# Existing Exception: Freeway Interference

Property is near a freeway that is above or below ground level that would interfere with the construction of a sidewalk.



All Properties

## Existing Exception: **No Roadway in Place**

There is a property located  
on an unpaved road

All Properties

## Existing Exception: **Disproportional Cost**

The cost of building a sidewalk is half the cost  
of the entire development

Both Commercial & Residential

Proposed Exception:  
**No Conditions Met**

There is a condition that doesn't meet  
any exception, which will be  
determined by Sidewalk Committee

# Sidewalk Modification

## All Projects – Commercial and Residential

### Modifications

- Existing obstacles reduce sidewalk width – show alternative path around obstruction
- Build sidewalk or pay fee in lieu

Both Commercial & Residential

## Modification: **Existing Obstruction**

There is an obstruction in the intended path of the sidewalk that will need to be built around

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Visit the Sidewalk Amendment page on Let's Talk Houston at  
**[bit.ly/SW-amend-10-24](https://bit.ly/SW-amend-10-24)**



Email us: **[planningdepartment@houstontx.gov](mailto:planningdepartment@houstontx.gov)**

Call us: **832-393-6600**

# Thank You



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