Spooky Nook Corridor: Planning for a Sustainable Future





Philadelphia

Serving Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Southern New Jersey, and Delaware An Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel October 20 – 21, 2015

On behalf of





Table of Contents

About ULI and Technical Assistance Panels	2
Background	2
What MTP Asked of the TAP	3
Key Issues and Assessments	4
Recommendations	7
Summary	9
ULI Panelists	10
Stakeholder Participants	12



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About ULI and Technical Assistance Panels

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit education and research institute and is supported by 36,000 members around the globe representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

For more than 50 years ULI has provided guidance to nonprofits and municipalities seeking solutions to land use

challenges. At the regional level, ULI Philadelphia offers Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) that bring together planners, developers, lenders, engineers, architects, and related professionals to evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation in an atmosphere free of politics and preconceptions. ULI member and non-member professionals provide their **objective expertise** in a voluntary capacity and sign an agreement to avoid current or potential conflicts of interest.

Background



Farming is part of Lancaster County's heritage and continues to be a large segment of its economy

With more than 5,000 farms, and almost half its land area zoned agricultural, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania deserves its reputation as a picturesque landscape of lush green fields, dairy cows and windmills. It is a landscape and a lifestyle that residents and elected officials have been careful to protect.

It is also a landscape that is attractive to tourists, and tourism now represents a significant portion of Lancaster County's economy. In October 2015 Discover Lancaster (formerly the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau) reported that the overall **economic impact of**

tourism in 2013 represented 12 percent of the County gross domestic product. Visitors are drawn to Lancaster County's history and farming tradition, the romance of the Plain Sect people, and recently, the abundance of outlet stores. But when the Spooky Nook Sports Complex opened in February 2014, its immediate success, and the scale of its events, took many by surprise.

The Spooky Nook Sports Complex (the Nook) is a 700,000-square-foot indoor sports facility—the largest indoor sports facility in North America. The building, located in East Hempfield Township, had been an Armstrong World Industries warehouse and had been vacant for 12 years. So when a local businessman proposed reuse of the building for the complex, the concept was generally well-received.

"...the overall economic impact of tourism in 2013 represented 12 percent of the County gross domestic product."

The facility includes ten full-size courts for basketball and volleyball, a multi-sport event space, indoor turf fields,



At 700,000 square feet the Nook is the largest indoor sports complex in the country.

a 10,000 square foot sports performance center, climbing walls, a martial arts studio and fencing space, a fitness center and ancillary features such as a pro shop and food court. The Nook's adjacent dome is the official training facility of the **USA Women's Field Hockey** team. Recently a 135-room hotel and restaurant opened within the Nook.

The Nook hosts tournaments, adult and youth league sports, sport camps and clinics. When the Nook hosts a

tournament, more than 100 teams can participate. Between team members and coaches, family members and fans, attendance for such events is in the thousands. If multiple concurrent events are being hosted, the Nook's weekend attendance can be as high as 20,000 people per day. This volume of weekend visitors has put stress on the local roads, the Salunga exit of Interstate 283, and I-283 itself, which runs parallel to the complex. It has also created problems with parking. The Nook has 2,000 parking spaces on-site but frequently needs parking for up to 2,500 vehicles; when required, management coordinates off-site parking locations. The Nook currently has ten to fifteen weekends when it operates at capacity; management's goal is to schedule 30 or more weekends at capacity.

Not surprisingly the Nook's success has had a **ripple effect on the local economy** and has spurred additional growth and development. Recently a new Hampton Inn hotel opened nearby; a Comfort Suites hotel is under construction; and a new MacDonald's restaurant has opened. With such promising economic benefit, Lancaster County and East Hempfield officials are eager to see Spooky Nook Sports succeed. As one of the stakeholders commented: "This project has pulled us into the 21st century – and that's a great thing."

What Modern Transit Partnership Asked of the TAP

Modern Transit Partnership (MTP) is a not-for-profit organization that supports and promotes affordable and sustainable integrated, multi-modal public transportation solutions to encourage regional economic development and improve quality of life in south central Pennsylvania. MTP asked the TAP to address three key questions:

- What is the vision for well-planned growth of the I-283 corridor in and around the Spooky Nook Sports Complex?
- Are there current transit nodes that can be further developed to enhance the smart growth of this corridor—

- and future transit nodes that should be envisioned?
- How can public transportation play a role in creating a well-planned and well- connected future development plan?

The TAP convened the first morning of the two-day working session and toured the study area. Panelists interviewed stakeholders throughout the afternoon. On the second day the Panel met to discuss findings and formulate recommendations. Stakeholders were invited to return at the end of the day to hear the Panel's presentation, which has formed the basis for this report.

The Study Area

The Panel found it helpful to look at the Spooky Nook Complex, the local road system and land uses in the area by defining a study area. The study area is bordered by Spooky Nook/Landisville Road to the north, Rook Road to the east, State Road to the south and East Main Street/Harrisburg Pike to the west.



The Spooky Nook Corridor, as defined by the TAP, is the area most impacted by the Nook.

Key Issues and Assessments

Since it opened in June 2013, the Spooky Nook Sports Complex has been a great success, drawing thousands of athletes, family and fans. But the facility's rapid success and the attendance numbers it has attracted for large tournaments have raised issues that may not have come to the fore for many years. The Nook has been a catalyst for discussion and change, and provides the opportunity for the community to decide how best to leverage the facility's success and plan for the changes that will follow—either selectively or haphazardly. The Panel identified six broad issues and assessed their impact on the Spooky Nook Corridor.

Economic and Fiscal Impact

Although by all accounts the Nook has been deemed a success, that success has not been quantified in terms of fiscal or economic impact. In order to make appropriate decisions moving forward—with regard to zoning, investments in roads and infrastructure—information is needed as to the Nook's impact, and potential impact, on:

 Jobs: How many jobs (full-time/part-time/temporary/ permanent) has the Nook directly created? How many jobs has the complex created indirectly, such as new

- positions at hotels and restaurants that have opened to serve Nook visitors.
- **Tax generation**: How much has the facility contributed to local taxes such as the sales tax and hotel tax?
- Construction impacts: What has been the economic impact of the new construction that has followed in the Nook's wake?
- Secondary impacts: What has been the ripple effect to the local economy for additional goods and services?

Land Use

Recent development in the Spooky Nook Corridor has happened quickly and randomly. The Nook itself, as adaptive reuse of a commercially zoned building, needed few zoning modifications, did little external planning and received minimal municipal review. A parking analysis conducted during the land development process recommended parking for 600 cars. During peak demand, parking for 2,500 cars is required. This under-assessment looms large in the Nook's current parking dilemma. Nook management stated that it must coordinate tournaments based on their size and available parking. When satellite parking is needed, it causes increased

traffic volume on local roads leaving them unable to function at an acceptable level of service.

The Hampton Inn, McDonald's restaurant and an 80-room Comfort Suites (scheduled to open May 2016) on Champ Boulevard have built on the Nook's success but each was developed without the benefit of an overall land use plan. East Hempfield Township has not established land use policies that correspond to the area's actual growth. Additionally, it is uncertain if the Corridor's existing infrastructure—for sewer, water, power and communications—is sufficient to support current conditions, much less future growth. Local officials have made it clear that no new development will be approved without strong planning.

The Panel also heard that there is a resolution – renewed annually by the East Hempfield Township Board of Supervisors – to prohibit any zoning use changes north of I-283. The existing zoning, which is almost entirely agricultural and includes many preserved farms, is limiting potential growth. Thus, random development that has occurred in scattered parcels, and the lack of comprehensive land use planning has led to traffic woes, an inconsistent landscape and potential missed opportunities.



The dome at the Nook is used primarily by the USA Women's Field Hockey team and features an irrigation system to keep the surface of the playing fields uniformly wet.

Spooky Nook's Long-Term Plan

Spooky Nook Sports' owner has done an excellent job of executing his initial vision for the complex and has been receptive to suggestions and helpful in mitigating issues such as congested traffic and parking. For example, the owner has developed parking lots in the place of additional outdoor fields. To aid in the management of traffic, onsite and offsite, Nook staff members have trained as Fire Police.

The owner's plans for the Nook's long-term growth, including recently purchased land across from the existing campus, include the possibility of additional facilities and amenities. It is critical that management share its vision for expansion so that the Township can properly plan and prepare for subsequent development impacts. Articulating the Nook's plans will facilitate regional planning, lead to greater synergy among entities and certainly benefit the Corridor and the surrounding area.



Traffic flow into and around the sprawling Nook campus can be confusing.

Transportation and Traffic

The Nook's success has revealed the **need for a holistic transportation alternatives analysis that includes the I-283 corridor and local roadway network**. Increased traffic and insufficient parking were two issues that came up repeatedly in discussions with stakeholders. For the time being, the Nook's owner has resolved the parking component. A small onsite parking fee was instituted and has encouraged many attendees to carpool. And for large events the Nook coordinates satellite parking in three locations: Roots Market, the Manheim Auto Auction, and the Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center which is next to the Nook property and available only during winter months. With additional parking options, traffic backups on I-283 have lessened. But these

are only band-aid solutions and **the Salunga interchange** will need a long-term solution as traffic volume, frequency of Nook events and additional development in the area increases.

The Panel also voiced safety concerns related to pedestrian access. The Comfort Suites on Champ Boulevard will be a short walk from the Nook – but there are no sidewalks or crosswalks. And although the Nook has improved temporary directional signage, traffic flow in and around the Nook property is confusing.

Additionally, the Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center has been impacted by the traffic volume on peak weekends. Lancaster County's SWAT team and Hazmat Unit operate from the Center and it is imperative that they be able to quickly exit from the Center – not an easy maneuver when the Nook has a busy weekend.

Communication

The rapid pace of the Nook's development and subsequent success has revealed challenges and gaps in communication between private and public entities and between key stakeholders; the net effect has been no shared or cohesive vision. Better communication and coordination of efforts would promote the Corridor's growth in a sustainable way.



Members of the Technical Assistance Panel interviewed 16 stakeholders including local business leaders, elected representatives and other public officials.

Funding

A comprehensive funding plan will be needed to study issues such as traffic, transportation alternatives and the impact of further development on the infrastructure and the economy. With the mutual goals of supporting successful local businesses and enhancing the local economies, **stakeholders should begin to develop a strategy for funding the necessary studies and plans.**

What Else The Panel Heard

- The Nook's owner proposed, and offered to pay for, a slip ramp from the westbound I-283 Salunga exit as a way to mitigate traffic backups on the highway. For a number of reasons, the proposal was rejected by PennDOT.
- The Nook's owner is considering converting one of the existing parking lots to a 1,000-car structured parking garage, a net gain of 750 parking spaces, at a multi-million dollar cost.
- Bulky equipment such as hockey sticks and tennis racquets prohibits most Nook attendees from using public transportation.
- Only five percent of teams arrive at the Nook on **team buses**; the club sport systems expect families to transport their children to events.
- Providing attendees with shuttle service to the Nook from nearby hotels has minimal impact on parking.
- Several stakeholders have envisioned the Corridor much like an Olympic village with multiple facilities for sports. Plans for a nearby aquatic center had widespread support, as well as the necessary approvals for rezoning, but failed to attract the necessary financing.

Recommendations

Economic and Fiscal Impact

- Engage East Hempfield Township, the County Planning Commission and the Economic Development Company of Lancaster County (EDC) as well as private landowners in the Corridor to:
 - Conduct a robust analysis of the Nook's economic impact on the area as well as that of other developing businesses.
 - o Garner support for appropriate proposed changes to zoning or infrastructure.
 - o Include existing conditions and development assets, and potential for future growth.
 - Consider using an area college or university to conduct an economic impact analysis.



- As part of East Hempfield Township's ongoing comprehensive planning process, the Panel recommends exploring innovative and/or alternative land uses that would support the development of the Corridor. The process should include an evaluation of existing utilities and infrastructure and their ability to serve existing conditions and future demand.
- Engage the EDC and private landowners to integrate market demand into appropriate land use planning.
- If deemed appropriate after study and evaluation, consider proactive rezoning that would support a comprehensive plan for growth and align with identified market demand.

"Comprehensive land use... is the bridge that can get the County to a sustainable future."

Spooky Nook's Long-Term Plan

 Communicate the Nook's long-term plan to policymakers and interested and involved stakeholders, as appropriate,



The upper level of the Nook's interior space affords spectators a prime view of the action below.

- to help inform the Corridor's long-term comprehensive planning.
- Evaluate Spooky Nook's own long-term development plans to include facilities and parking areas as well as traffic and pedestrian circulation.

Transportation

- Fund and conduct a holistic transportation alternatives analysis that includes:
 - o 20-year timeframe for the Corridor's growth
 - Multiple modes of transportation, i.e. rail, car, bus, pedestrian, bicycle and other non-motorized transportation modes such as horse and carriage
 - Future land use scenarios including Spooky Nook Sports expansion, and perhaps the construction of an onsite parking garage which would allow land currently used for parking lots to be reclaimed as outdoor fields
 - o Impact on local roads including access management.
- Develop a comprehensive wayfinding/trailblazing signage plan, for both permanent and temporary signage, on and around the Nook campus; consider electronic signage on I-283 to inform attendees of parking availability. Also consider signage alerting Nook attendees of the hairpin turn from the westbound I-283 Salunga exit onto Champ Boulevard.

- Develop a comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan that integrates existing transportation assets that service the Corridor, such as the Mt. Joy Amtrak station and the Red Rose Transit Authority.
- Explore implementing a private shuttle system between the Nook and hotels, satellite parking and perhaps the hotels and parking garages in downtown Lancaster.
 There are numerous successful models (for example, Hershey Entertainment's event planning) that the Nook could reference for a public/private transportation management plan.
- Examine a short-term strategy of secondary ingress/ egress for the Lancaster Public Safety Center; as a safety issue, stakeholders noted that first responders are not always able to exit the Public Safety Center quickly due to congested traffic.

Communication

 The Panel strongly recommends that MTP engage the Lancaster County Transportation Coordinating Committee (LCTCC), County Commissioners and PennDOT in pursuing workable solutions.

- Identify a leader and supportive entities to take ownership of the major issues affecting the Corridor; include public and private stakeholders.
- Explore the creation of a Corridor Committee, with MTP and the Economic Development Company as potential chairs.
- Establish a clear communications protocol.

Funding

- A public/private partnership should be established to seek additional sources of funding as necessary to implement findings and the Panel's recommendations, such as an economic impact study, alternatives analysis and physical transportation improvements.
- Engage in the LCTCC and PennDOT's Surface Transportation Program process with the goal of placing a Corridor improvement plan into PennDOT's 12-year Program, and ultimately the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) as a regional priority.
- Apply for public funding such as PennDOT and PA DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund grants to implement the recommended improvements.



The new Warehouse hotel is located inside the main building and includes the Forklift & Palate restaurant



Additional permanent signage is needed.

Summary



Fencing is one of many sports to hold tournaments at the Nook.

Lancaster County residents are rightfully proud of their agricultural heritage and correct to cherish the landscape. But the Spooky Nook Sports Complex is a sign and a symbol of changes happening within the County that have a huge impact on both the landscape and the economy. Two national retailers—Urban Outfitters and Nordstrom—have opened enormous distribution facilities in the county. Outlet shopping areas have sprawled along and off of Route 30. Riders on "Amish scooters" use the shoulders of busy roads as vehicular traffic speeds by them. The challenge for the County and municipal officials is to provide residents with services, encourage businesses to create jobs and support appropriate growth while protecting the agricultural and cultural legacy.

"This project has pulled us into the 21st century and that's a great thing." In summary, the Panel had the following observations and recommendations:

- Comprehensive land use planning has not been a priority to date, but it is the bridge that can get the County to a sustainable future and should receive precedence.
- An economic impact study is essential in understanding how the Nook's success has affected the area.
- The Corridor will benefit by identifying and empowering a leader and supporters to champion its progress.
- Stakeholders should begin immediately to identify sources of funding for the necessary studies (of the Nook's economic impact, and the existing infrastructure, for example) and improvements.
- Current zoning is prohibiting responsible growth and should be re-examined to drive appropriate uses to specific areas.
- Currently, parking and traffic in the area around the Nook is being managed but as the number of large events increases, band-aid solutions won't be enough; a holistic transportation alternatives analysis is needed.
- Better communication between public and private entities will be key to aligning interests and moving toward a common vision; in particular, there is a need to re-engage East Hempfield Township, the County Planning Commission and PennDOT in meaningful discussions about solutions.
- With many moving parts, the Corridor's progress will be subject to the formal processes inherent in land planning, highway improvements, transportation modes and funding mechanisms; stakeholders will gain by understanding the processes.

Panelists

Marc Kurowski, PE, TAP Co-Chair Co-Owner, K&W Engineers

Mr. Kurowski is principal of K&W, a site design and land-planning firm in Harrisburg. He has specialized in land development and site design for over 20 years, providing services for clients in the educational, institutional, commercial and residential development sectors. As a principal and co-founder of K&W, Marc is responsible for operations, strategic planning, marketing and business development. He is LEED Green Associate accredited, a graduate of the Pennsylvania State University, a graduate of the Leadership Harrisburg Area program, chairman of the Board of Directors for Capital Region Water, a member of the Harristown Development Corporation Board of Directors, and a member of the Harrisburg Young Professionals Advisory Board. He has also served as a panelist for two other ULI Philadelphia TAPs ("A Gateway to Harrisburg: Transforming Market Square" and "Maximizing the Potential of Harrisburg's City Island: A Unique Urban Amenity").

Coleen Terry, TAP Co-Chair President, ECON partners

Coleen Terry is the president of ECON partners, a woman-owned small business in Pennsylvania. Ms. Terry has spent more than 19 years designing and advancing highly successful implementation strategies for complex development projects and leads ECON's work supporting new development as well as repurposing underutilized sites and brownfields. She has worked directly on projects with public and private sector clients throughout the Mid-Atlantic, and has strong experience in the Commonwealth's urban cores. Prior to founding ECON partners, Ms. Terry served as vice president of a mid-sized economic development firm, leading a service area that delivered over \$450 million of public funding to projects.

Christopher K. Bauer, PE, PTOE Director of Transportation, Herbert, Rowland & Grubic

HRG is a regional engineering and land planning firm headquartered in Harrisburg; Mr. Bauer is responsible for management of the firm's transportation services. He has extensive experience in traffic design, highway design and highway project management, including roadway geometry, surveying, computer-assisted design and drafting, plan preparation, drainage design, right-of-way investigations, utility coordination, erosion and sediment control design, pavement design, wetland mitigation, traffic control design, and construction administration and inspection.

James A. Bilella, II, P.E. Vice President, Urban Engineers

The leader of Urban Engineer's facilities design group, Mr. Bilella has over 23 years of experience in the design and construction of transportation facilities and infrastructure. He holds a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from Drexel University and is a Registered Professional Engineer in 22 states. Mr. Bilella currently serves as Councilman for Berlin Borough, NJ, and previously served for six years on the Borough's planning and zoning board. He is a member of numerous professional societies and also serves on the Board of Directors at historic Fort Mifflin.

Larry J. Cohen, CAPP

Executive Director, Lancaster Parking Authority

Mr. Cohen has more than 25 years of parking and transportation experience. His previous work encompasses a wide range of affiliated professions within the industry; from owning his own parking company in the Delaware Valley, to Vice-President of Parking Planning for a consulting firm in New York, to Director of Parking and Transportation Services at the George Washington University, Johns Hopkins and the University of Pennsylvania Health Systems. He is currently a three-term President of the Middle Atlantic Parking Association, past member of the International Parking Institute board of directors and is a member of the Pennsylvania Parking Association. He has spoken at numerous conferences around the country, and has served as a technical advisor/writer/editor for the U.S. Department of Labor and the Civil Engineer Research Foundation.

W. Bradley Forrey

Central Pennsylvania Business Development Manager, Wohlsen Construction Company

Mr. Forrey joined Wohlsen Construction Company in 2008 and has been involved in a variety of projects including work for corporate, commercial, institutional and governmental clients. His focus is primarily preconstruction, helping coordinate the project's design with construction services including estimating, scheduling, constructability analysis and value engineering. Mr. Forrey is active in the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historic Organizations, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Lancaster Rotary Club and a board member of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

Jessica E. Meyers

Owner and President, JEM Group

Located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, JEM Group delivers design/build, general construction and construction management services to commercial clients throughout the Commonwealth. Previously, she was a Vice President at Reynolds Construction Management. Ms. Meyers holds leadership positions in community and professional organizations including Harrisburg Young Professionals, Harrisburg University of Science & Technology, The Salvation Army and Metro Bank. As a result of Ms. Meyers' accomplishments, she has been recognized as one of the *Central Penn Business Journal's* "Forty Under Forty" in 2004 and was a finalist for the 2009 Small Business of the Year award presented by the Harrisburg Regional Chamber and Capital Region Economic Development Corporation.

Michael E. Radbill, PE Vice President, Hill International

Mr. Radbill has more than 45 years of experience in the construction industry. As principal and project manager, he has worked on projects for such notable clients as the Federal Transit Administration, the American Arbitration Association and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Working on multi-billion dollar construction projects, Mr. Radbill has prepared and analyzed construction claims for owners; participated in the resolution of disputes; developed, updated and analyzed critical path method schedules; facilitated partnering for projects; and testified as an expert witness at trial. Additional experience includes: design, construction contracts and specifications and presenting training courses to owners and contractors on quality assurance and quality control, construction management and claims avoidance.

Thomas D. Smithgall

Senior Vice President, Development, High Associates Ltd.

Mr. Smithgall leads the development function for High Associates and the High Real Estate Group LLC, as well as the growth and management of the development services market. He has more than 25 years of development and building experience with industrial, commercial and hospitality projects throughout the eastern United States. He has played a strategic role in the planning and development for the investment grade real estate within the High Real Estate Group portfolio whose projected market value is approximately \$633 million. Mr. Smithgall has also served as manager of business development at High Construction Inc. He is presently on the Advisory Board and the Management Committee of ULI Philadelphia where he is also Regional Satellites Chair, and sits on the Leadership Committee of the Private/Public Partnership Product Council of ULI at the global level.

Frank H. Wisniewski

Shareholder, Flaster/Greenberg PC

Mr. Wisniewski concentrates his practice in all aspects of real estate law and litigation involving real estate. He represents clients in matters relating to real estate development, real estate purchasing, selling, leasing, and construction; land use and planning, which often includes obtaining approvals from, and working with, local, county, state, and federal authorities; Planned Real Estate Development Full Disclosure Act registrations; construction, permanent financing, and financial workouts for lenders and borrowers; liquor licensing, condemnation, and real estate tax appeals; and in counseling commercial and residential condominium and other property owner associations. Mr. Wisniewski has served as special counsel on varied issues and matters for the Builders League of South Jersey, and has been active in the New Jersey Builders Association, New Jersey Federation of Planning Officials, New Jersey State Bar Association, Camden County Bar Association and the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey.

Stakeholders

Sam Beiler, Chief Executive Officer, Spooky Nook Sports

John Bingham, Supervisor, East Hempfield Township

Craig Elmer, Director, Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center

Phil Frey, Managing Partner, B&F Partners

Jeff Glisson, Director of Capital Projects, South Central Transit Authority

Randy Gockley, Management Director, Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center

Mark Henise Sr., Transportation Manager, ELA Group

Ed LeFevre, Supervisor, East Hempfield Township

Scott Martin, Vice-Chairman, Lancaster County Commissioner

The Honorable Brett R. Miller, Pennsylvania House of Representatives (R-41)

Patrick O'Brien, Director of Facilities, Spooky Nook Sports

David Royer, Transportation Planner, Lancaster County Planning Commission

Craig Shenigo, Owner, B&B Sales & Service

Jim Shultz, Development Consultant, B&F Partners

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Dennis Stuckey, Chairman, Lancaster County Commissioners







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