

Strategic Plan



City of
Neligh, Nebraska

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Acknowledgments

This Strategic Plan could not have been made possible without the diligent efforts of every City employee, elected and appointed official, and the Neligh Economic Development Office. This Strategic Plan incorporates NEDO's 2014 Strategic Plan into its goals and objectives to maintain a strong tie between the City and NEDO as well as to provide both groups with similar goals and objectives to work towards together.

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Introduction

Neligh's Strategic Plan is a road map that helps guide the City through the next few years. The City's Strategic Plan details where the City is going and how it plans to get there. Neligh will lead the way in building a solid community through financial health, community involvement, beautification and aesthetic improvements, additional amenities to serve all residents of all ages, improved public infrastructure, and upgraded public safety services to ensure Neligh is a community ready for growth.

The City of Neligh has spent the past year completing a planning process that includes multiple unique opportunities for public input, goal determination, and in essence several different planning documents. All documents that were completed were designed to work together to better prepare City leaders for action strategies and decision-making while moving forward with the community. The Comprehensive Plan serves as the community's long-range plan providing goals and objectives for the next 10-15 years in Neligh. This Strategic Plan document encompasses many of those same goals and objectives; however, this plan creates short-term goals for City leaders to work towards over the next five years. These goals are comprehensive in nature covering many different areas of the community, including streets and sidewalks, housing, and recreational amenities. The overall opportunities for success make these goals important, yet they will all require hard work, planning and budgeting; many of the goals also require the support of the local community, as not all of these objectives can or should be completed by the City.

The City of Neligh is committed to ensure Neligh has a healthy future and to provide services residents have come to expect. The City will strive to effectively and efficiently develop and strengthen assets that contribute to a City that is a great place to live, work, and play.

Goal setting is an important step for any person, family, business, and even community. City leaders need to have clear long and short term goals, with strategies to reach those goals. However, these goals need to be comprehensive in nature, looking at every aspect of the community, and they must all align with a single vision for the future of the community. Personal and business goal setting is no different, it just may be more challenging at a City level because of all the varying aspects and components City leaders must constantly assess and direct in order to grow and change in an organized, efficient, and effective manner. The City of Neligh completed their Comprehensive Plan Update in 2014. This Plan allowed residents and community leaders to come together to create long term growth and development goals for the City. The following is a list of the City's long term goals determined by residents and stakeholders:

Improve Public Infrastructure
Improve the Existing Housing Market
Promote Commercial Development
Expand Recreational Attractions & Amenities
Develop Marketing Campaign
Enhance Highway Corridors & Community Beautification

These goals are a combination of information gathered from the public input sessions held during the planning process, research, and data analysis. The importance of these goals is that they are realistic in nature, but allow the community to continually have goals to strive towards over the next ten years. Long term goals are important to keep in mind; however, feasible, short-term goals are crucial for stakeholders to accomplish. The City of Neligh utilized public input sessions, surveys, and data analysis from the planning process for the Comprehensive Plan as well as a meeting with City staff to determine feasible five-year goals for the City to accomplish.

The Neligh Economic Development Office (NEDO) created their own Strategic Plan in 2014, delineating NEDO's goals and objectives to accomplish over the next five years. The entire NEDO Strategic Plan can be found on the City's website or by visiting the office of the NEDO Director located at 105 East Second Street in Neligh. There are three main goals listed in NEDO's Strategic Plan including Energize, Enhance, and Grow. Each goal has a couple of objectives listed and it is the responsibility of the NEDO Director and members of the Board to accomplish these objectives in order to reach their goals of energizing, enhancing, and growing Neligh. These goals and objectives are included into the City's overall Strategic Plan with the understanding that the City of Neligh, NEDO, and the residents must all work together to reach their goals.

All of the above-mentioned goals are included in this Strategic Plan with a variety of projects being split into two different timelines. The first set of goals are projects City staff would like to see accomplished within the next year or two and the other set of goals are projects City staff would like to see accomplished within the next three to five years. These projects are separated into three different categories including infrastructure/public services, housing, and economic development.

Infrastructure

The City of Neligh will improve its public infrastructure through several phases of upgrades and improvements made in the next five years. Public services and infrastructure are vital to the community; Neligh wants to ensure its infrastructure and services provide for their current residents while having the ability to allow for growth, when needed. The City of Neligh will ensure public investment is utilized effectively by promoting balanced public investment and reinvestment opportunities in needed areas including public services and infrastructure that warrant a high quality of life for all residents. There are specific projects that the City would like to accomplish over the next five years in several phases from paving to water and recreational amenities to technological infrastructure needs.

Provide quality public services and infrastructure for current residents with the ability to expand, when needed, to meet higher demand due to growth in the community.

Below is a list of goals concerning infrastructure improvements the City will accomplish within the next five years:

- Budget Annual Maintenance Fees;
- Water Distribution Improvements;
- Paving/Street Improvements;
- Continual Enhancement of Technology Infrastructure;
- Establish Neligh as a Healthcare Hub;
- Provide for Public Safety Equipment & Needs; and
- Recreational Improvements.

The City understands the improvement of public infrastructure is an on-going process; however, this plan limits its examination to the next five years.

Budget annual maintenance funds for streets, water, & sanitary sewer;

All of the projects outlined in this section of the Strategic Plan are to be accounted for in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Because all of these public service and infrastructure needs are costly to the community, it is important that the City annually budget for general maintenance and improvement needs in order to avoid unnecessary surcharges for dilapidated infrastructure.

Water distribution improvements;

The City of Neligh currently maintains Nebraska Public Water Supply No. NE3100305. The current system supplies water to its residents and businesses with four active groundwater wells, a 250,000 gallon storage facility, 740 metered services and approximately 14.47 miles of distribution main. The four active wells were constructed in 1957, 1973, 1984, and 2004. The average daily water use in 2013 was approximately 170,000 gallons per day.

Recent work on the system has included the replacement of 16 blocks of new distribution mains in the eastern part of the City. Funding for this project came from FEMA and the total cost was approximately \$550,000 in 2014. Survey respondents from the Community Needs Assessment Survey were pleased with the recent water project and with the overall quality of the City's water. City staff indicated the need to replace a few areas in the community with new water mains and the need to update the variable speed controls on the west and north wells. These projects will likely take place in the next three to five years, as they are important projects but not in dire need of immediate replacement.





Paving/street improvements;

The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) annually reports surface aggregates for all of the roads in Neligh. Updated in 2014 road types include concrete, asphalt, bituminous, and gravel surfaces. The Lane-Mile Report for Neligh detailed the following figures, 13.84 miles of concrete, 1.59 miles of asphalt, 1.17 miles of bituminous surfacing, and 2.74 miles of gravel in Neligh. There are roads that are in need of improvement, Neligh has a large percentage of concrete roads existing in the community. Although concrete is not the only street surfacing option, it has the longest life-span and needs less maintenance in comparison to other road surfacing types; therefore, concrete roads are a good investment for the future of the community. As a long term goal, the City would like to eliminate the presence of any gravel streets in Neligh; however, short term goals will focus on the City's delineated 1 & 6 Year Road Plan as outlined below.

Neligh also completed its 1 & 6 Year Road Plan in January of 2014. This plan is in place to help guide achievable transportation development for the first year and development goals for the remaining five years. The two projects listed in the one-year road plan include grading, erosion control, and four-inch asphalt surfacing to 'D' Street from Belmar Creek Bridge south to the return at Highway 275 and grading, erosion control, and concrete pavement and a new 385-foot jump span bridge. The projects listed on the six-year road plan include concrete pavement for all 12 projects with a total estimated cost for all projects to be \$1,131,000. The total estimated cost for the one-year projects is approximately \$1,328,500. It is important that the City continue to think progressively when preparing the annual 1 & 6 Year Road Plan in order to budget appropriately and prepare for potential business and residential growth.



Continual enhancement of technology infrastructure;

A major fiber upgrade has taken place within Neligh in the last two years. Neligh now has three Fiber Optics providers including Great Plains and Nebraska Link as well as Plainview TelCo, located two miles north of Neligh. Infrastructure for technology advancements is important in today's economy; therefore, Neligh is truly preparing themselves for a better position in the business growth department because they are able to offer technology resources that other similarly-sized communities do not have available. Continually improving on this infrastructure and marketing it to potential businesses is important to the economic success of Neligh; therefore, the City will continue to work with the three existing Fiber Optics providers to continue the improvement and expansion of this infrastructure.

Provide for public safety equipment & needs;

Public safety includes police, fire, and EMT services and is an invaluable asset to the community. The City has outlined equipment upgrades needed by the Fire and Police Departments over the next five years. These equipment needs range from camera and computer upgrades to new vehicles and tanker/pumpers. The City has detailed these needs in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and City staff and officials need to continually work to plan for these needs in the coming years in order to provide the City's Police and Fire Departments with safe, reliable equipment. The items detailed in the City's CIP will be upgraded and replaced over the next five years. Needs beyond the five-year threshold will be accounted for each year in the City's annual CIP update.

Further establish Neligh as a healthcare hub; and

The City of Neligh believes that a strong healthcare system is crucial to the success of Neligh and Antelope County. Becoming a healthcare hub for the surrounding area also increases the City's Economic standing. For this reason, the City has partnered with Antelope Memorial Hospital, Jensen Dentistry, and Antelope County Healthcare Foundation to develop a group called the "Recruitment Team." This team uses a student loan repayment assistance, successfully recruiting a dentist to Neligh as well as opening communication with many physicians in residency. The Economic Development Director also gives tours of Neligh to help encourage healthcare professionals to move to Neligh.

The Neligh Electric Department has been accepted as an eligible USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) lender. The Electric Department has identified a project with Antelope Memorial Hospital that meets the REDLG criteria and is in the process of applying for grant funding.

Improve recreational amenities.

A full list of desired recreational improvements can be found in the Comprehensive Plan. The following list of projects was determined to be the priority goals for the community's recreational amenities. Within the next three to five years, the grandstand will be improved. These improvements will be costly and are planned for in the City's CIP in order to effectively improve the grandstand facility.

Neligh's public swimming pool was constructed in the 1980's, because of the age of the swimming pool there are several repairs and/or updates that are needed in order to keep it functioning properly and up-to-par with State and Federal regulations. A Pool Study will be conducted in order to determine all of the issues present with the existing swimming pool. A Pool Study will also provide the City with a cost-benefit analysis to determine the best course of action moving forward including options of renovating/rehabilitating the existing swimming pool or constructing a new one.

A major concern, and goal, for the City and its residents is to update the City's ball fields. One major improvement item is to rehabilitate the infield for the northern most ball field in Riverside Park. The City will need to excavate the existing infield, then lay new gravel and lime to allow for proper drainage and an improved infield for the ball field. This project is important due to the number and frequency of ball games and tournaments held in Neligh. By improving the drainage for the ball field, it will ensure that the field is ready for use by avoiding as many rain delays or postponing of games due to field flooding. The City recently applied for a grant through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to help off-set the cost of these improvements. Currently, the City is waiting to hear the list for projects being rewarded funds. Regardless of grant funding approval, this project needs to be complete for the City.

Neligh has a variety of playground and picnic equipment to suit families and children of all ages. Existing park equipment will be periodically monitored to determine times for improvement or replacement to ensure Neligh's parks are a safe environment for children to play. City stakeholders also discussed their desire for the City or the Park Board to add additional playground equipment or create an additional "neighborhood" park on the other side of the community in order to provide a recreational amenity in close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

Housing

Housing is a crucial piece to the prosperity of Neligh. Whether it is identifying needs for new market-rate housing or ways to encourage development of affordable housing options, Neligh must work to constantly assess and improve its housing market. In order to attract more people to the community, there has to be a supply of well-maintained, available, affordable, and safe housing. Projecting for future demand is an important, but sometimes difficult task when trying to promote growth in any community. Addressing the issues of old housing stock that does not meet the needs of today's renters and buyers is also another challenge that faces City leaders. Community growth and revitalization can be made possible through the identification of housing needs in Neligh.

Improve the existing housing market because of its direct correlation to the success of the community by increasing stock, decreasing the amount of vacant dilapidated structures, and improving the existing stock to meet the needs of today's renters and buyers.

The following is a list of the housing improvements the City plans to make over the next five years:

- Internal List of Dilapidated Housing;
- Working with CORE Development Inc.;
- City-Funded Owner-Occupied Rehab Program;
- Demolition of Vacant, Dilapidated Structures;
- Development of "Patio Homes";
- Downtown Housing Development Feasibility; and
- Housing Beautification.



Create internal list of severely dilapidated housing structures for needed demolition;

By creating an internal list of the severely dilapidated structures in the community, the City can be more aware of the current number of structures in need of demolition. This list will allow the City to rank or prioritize structures that create the greatest safety hazards for residents in the neighborhood.

Work with CORE Development Inc. to continue Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Programs;

CORE Development, Inc. is a regional agency that focuses on housing development and market improvements. CORE has been very active in the Neligh community, as well as many of the surrounding towns, for several years. CORE has Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation grant funds available for low-to-moderate income households and the City will continue to partner with CORE to improve the local housing market, and will market and educate residents about the opportunities that CORE provides for Neligh.

Develop City-funded owner-occupied rehab program;

The City should create their own loan program for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation setting guidelines and regulations based on the needs of the City. This option is be attractive to the City and its residents because the City could help middle-income residents while also boosting the existing housing conditions in the community. If the City creates their own revolving loan fund, they have the ability to set their own guidelines, income-restrictions, interest rates, pay-back regulations, etc. The City can create their own program to fit the needs of their community. It is also important for the City to promote the existing Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation program provided by CORE (see information above) in order to take advantage of the grant funds existing in the region.

Demolish of vacant, dilapidated structures;

All vacant lots and vacant, uninhabitable homes are properties that could be utilized for infill residential development. The City should access different avenues available to them to assist with the clean-up of vacant lots and uninhabitable properties. There is not a large amount of lots available for infill development; therefore, efforts need to made to create more availability. Also, by cleaning up vacant lots and uninhabitable homes the City will rid the community of unnecessary eye sores and safety and health hazards. Based on data presented in the Housing Study, approximately 38 homes need to be demolished because of the age and condition. There are a few ways to raze vacant, dilapidated properties including Tax Increment Financing funds, City-funded through acquirement of the property, or encouragement to the property owner through nuisance abatement. The City could create a housing committee to take the lead of this process. The City should budget a set dollar amount each year to go towards the acquisition and/ or demolition of vacant, derelict homes.

Develop “patio homes”;

There is a need for additional homes in Neligh and most residents see the need for “patio home” development. A patio home would be a type of duplex or townhome structure that would be easily accessible with one level, a garage, storm shelter, and no exterior maintenance, attracting specific residents. These housing units can be rented or purchased but would be attractive to young and old residents alike. Many young singles or couples will enjoy the freedom of a minimum maintenance home and aging residents will be drawn to the idea of not having to mow the lawn or scoop the sidewalks. This type of structure will take private investment, but the City can work with a local investment group or market to private developers outside of the community to encourage this type of housing development.

Determine feasibility of Downtown housing development; and

Several residents and City leaders would like to see Neligh’s Downtown District extended to its fullest potential which would include utilization of the second level of many of the buildings in Downtown Neligh. There is a possibility to expand upon the rental market in Neligh’s Downtown buildings; however, a majority of these buildings were built 80+ years ago and would need to be assessed to determine the feasibility of second story apartment development. The City and Neligh Economic Development Office (NEDO) will work together to commission a study on each of the potential buildings to determine a cost-benefit analysis for the potential project(s) prior to any physical modifications.

Encourage housing beautification.

The citizens of Neligh have voiced their concern for some sort of housing beautification effort through several mediums including public input sessions, Neligh’s online discussion forum, and the Community Needs Assessment Survey. The City and NEDO will look to develop some form of housing beautification program whether it be a beautification incentive, coordinating a volunteer effort, or encouraging the enforcement/extension of current nuisance ordinance.



Economic Development

The City of Neligh will improve the business climate of the community by its focus and attention to sound economic development principals. The City will promote and emphasize private and public investment within the City's Downtown and along its highway corridors. The goal of the City is to ensure a vibrant combination of prospering businesses, providing goods and services to the community, adding to the City's quality of life, and fulfillment of resident needs. This Economic Development section of the City's Strategic Plan wholly correlates with NEDO's 2014 Strategic Plan.

Provide solutions and opportunities to showcase, enhance, energize, and grow the business community.

Below is a list of goals to improve the Economic Development for the City of Neligh over the next five years:

- Youth Retention;
- Downtown Revitalization;
- Marketing Neligh;
- Developing Partnerships/Aligning Incentives;
- Continue Effective Business Retention & Expansion Program;
- Workforce & Continuing Education Development; and
- Business Attraction.

Work for youth retention;

Attracting and retaining youth in Neligh is crucial to the future of the community. For this reason the City, with the help of other groups/ organizations like NEDO, will work closely with Neligh-Oakdale High School staff to ensure that Neligh's youth feel at home and know they will have many opportunities here in Neligh if they choose to stay in the community or return after furthering their education. The different organizations within the City need to determine who is going to be responsible for different youth retention programs. A business tour to Juniors and Seniors would showcase the local businesses and potential career opportunities to N-OHS students. NEDO's NICHE Program is a perfect example of a program that can be used to help retain the youth in the community. Retaining the youth or encouraging the "legacy migration" back to Neligh is so crucial to the sustainability of the community; therefore, stakeholders cannot miss these opportunities to engage the youth while they are present in Neligh.

Revitalize Downtown;

A thriving and active Main Street has long been a signal of a prosperous community. Some of Neligh's Main Street properties have suffered from years of neglect. A few bad apples can spoil the lot and the overall look of Neligh's downtown could use some added energy. NEDO was founded on the coat tails of the grassroots organization Grow Neligh Group, and one of the main missions of the Grow Neligh Group was to spur reinvestment and energize Main Street Neligh. Therefore, NEDO and the City are truly encouraged to work on downtown revitalization efforts. The City will apply for Downtown Revitalization Phase I grant funds in 2015 to develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan to help the City and NEDO understand the opportunities for growth, change, and improvements. Once the plan has been created the City can work, in phases, to see the plan come to reality. If the City is awarded Downtown Revitalization Phase I funds in 2015, the City will apply for Phase II funds in 2016. Phase II funds include monies to make physical improvements to the Downtown District.

Market Neligh;

The City and NEDO must market Neligh to current and future residents through the use of several programs: the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program, Quality of Life Showcase Grant, Seasonal Photo Contest, This is MY Neligh marketing campaign, and re-branding Neligh. Creating a community brand and marketing said brand to existing and potential residents and visitors is important when trying to develop an image. It is evident that several of Neligh's stakeholders realize this importance because of the recent improvements in the development of a 'marketing campaign'. With all that Neligh has to offer its residents, from amenities to local retail businesses, the community truly is a destination place and does attract visitors. The City will develop a full marketing campaign to promote existing businesses as well as capitalize on its ability to grow.

The City and/or local Chamber and Economic Development offices should also focus on marketing to its own residents. A "shop local" campaign should involve many different marketing strategies to reach various community members. Marketing the City to existing residents is just as important as marketing to potential visitors. A shop local campaign could consist of yard signs, placement reminders at restaurants, or participation in "Thankful Thursdays" when residents are encouraged to show their support and thanks to local businesses.

Social media marketing is one way to share information with existing residents while also marketing the community to potential residents and visitors. Online marketing is a quick and almost instant way to share information. It is also accessible almost anywhere for most people. In today's society, people want instant information and one way to provide that is to have a strong web presence promoting the City and all that it has to offer including both public places and private businesses. Marketing the City should be an on-going effort made in part by the City of Neligh as well as the local Chamber and Economic Development offices with the assistance of local businesses.

Develop strong partnerships/align incentives;

The City and NEDO have been working to establish quality partnerships with State and Regional offices/organizations that can provide support to Neligh and vice versa. It is crucial to have a strong relationship between different tiers of government and leadership in order to lean on each other when needed and grow together when possible. Aligning development incentives for all sources including local, regional, and state could help attract a potential business to locate in Neligh. When marketing any real estate, the City should also show what development incentives are offered in the area. When developers are looking to locate a new commercial business venture they also consider how development incentives can entice them to select a certain location. Having all development incentives labeled easily and readily available for businesses to analyze and utilize will be helpful when encouraging development in Neligh.

Continue effective Business Retention & Expansion Program;

Through the Community Needs Assessment Survey, respondents voiced their opinion on the City's economic development efforts and where they wanted the City's efforts to be focused. Survey respondents' top two goals were business retention and recruiting new businesses. An effective way to retain existing businesses is to focus efforts on an on-going Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. This will help to maintain relationships with business owners, open lines of communications between the City, NEDO, and businesses, and it will help the City and NEDO determine the needs of employers. This is a job the Economic Development Director will continue to focus on and work towards meeting with all business owners on an annual basis. Each of these 'interviews' or conversations should be recorded and formatted so that NEDO can keep a database. This helps ensure that NEDO knows of business owners' needs, can help recruit employees when needed, could help with any expansion needs, look into possible grant funding or other development resources, and can assist with succession planning.

Enhance workforce development & continuing education opportunities; and

NEDO has been creating programs to enhance workforce development opportunities in Neligh, and the City and NEDO will continue these programs to improve continuing education opportunities and the employer need/employee ability relationship. The City currently offers a Continuing Education Incentive on LB 480 loans. If a business owner/manager invests in continuing education, said person will receive a 0.5% interest rate reduction on the loan once the education is complete. This incentive proves the City's strong support of small businesses as well as its belief in continuing education for community members.

By marketing Neligh and developing the Neligh Recruitment Network, the City's ability to bring together well-placed individuals/quality employees with employers in need is improved. The NICHE (Neligh Intern and Craftsman High School Employment) Program was established to mitigate problems in workforce development, youth retention, and business transition. The purpose of the NICHE Program is to entice Neligh businesses to offer true internship and junior journeymen positions to the youth of Neligh. This fosters mentorship opportunities between businesses and potential future employees/successors.

The final program outlined in NEDO's Strategic Plan as an opportunity to improve workforce development opportunities is to create a relationship with the newly created Center for Enterprise at Northeast Nebraska Community College. The Center for Enterprise can offer workforce development training through the college; therefore, NEDO will work with the Center for Enterprise to offer needed trainings that were identified by NEDO.

Attract new businesses.

NEDO has established a business attraction strategy in the hopes that in the next three to five years the City will be expanding the business stock in the community. This business attraction strategy encompasses the following efforts: focusing on attracting businesses that will be the "right fit" for Neligh to encourage existing business growth and support while attracting new businesses, continue to work on "passive attraction" by keeping current and up-to-date information on the City's website, create an environment for entrepreneurs in order to grow the number of businesses in Neligh, and develop/offer incentives for new business development.

Project Matrix						
Project	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Status	Funding Source	Potential Grant Source	
Water Distribution Improvements		X		City, SRF		
Paving/Street Improvements	X	X		City	X	
Create Sidewalk Inventory Map	X			-		
Continual Enhancement of Technology Infrastructure		X		City, Private		
Provide for Public Safety Equipment & Needs	X			City		
Establish Neligh as a Healthcare Hub						
New Boiler at Pool	X			City		
Pool Study		X		City	X	
Ball Fields - Lime on Infields	X			City	X	
Creation of Neighborhood Park		X		City	X	
Grandstand Improvements		X		City	X	
Electric Improvements	X			City		
Electric Equipment Upgrades		X		City		
Develop List of Dilapidated Structures	X			-		
Promote OOR through CORE	X	X		-		
Develop City-Funded OOR Program		X		City		
Demolition of Vacant, Dilapidated Structures	X	X		City, TIF		
Development of "Patio Homes"	X	X		City, NEDO, Private		
Determine Feasibility of Downtown Housing Development	X			NEDO, City		
Housing Beautification	X	X		City, NEDO, Private		
Downtown Revitalization Plan	X			City, NEDO	X	
Downtown Revitalization Improvements		X		City, NEDO	X	
Marketing Neligh	X	X		City, NEDO, Chamber		
Develop Partnerships/Align Incentives	X			-		
Continue BR&E Program	X	X		NEDO		
Workforce & Continuing Education Development	X	X		City, NEDO, Chamber		
Business Attraction		X		City, NEDO	X	

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