



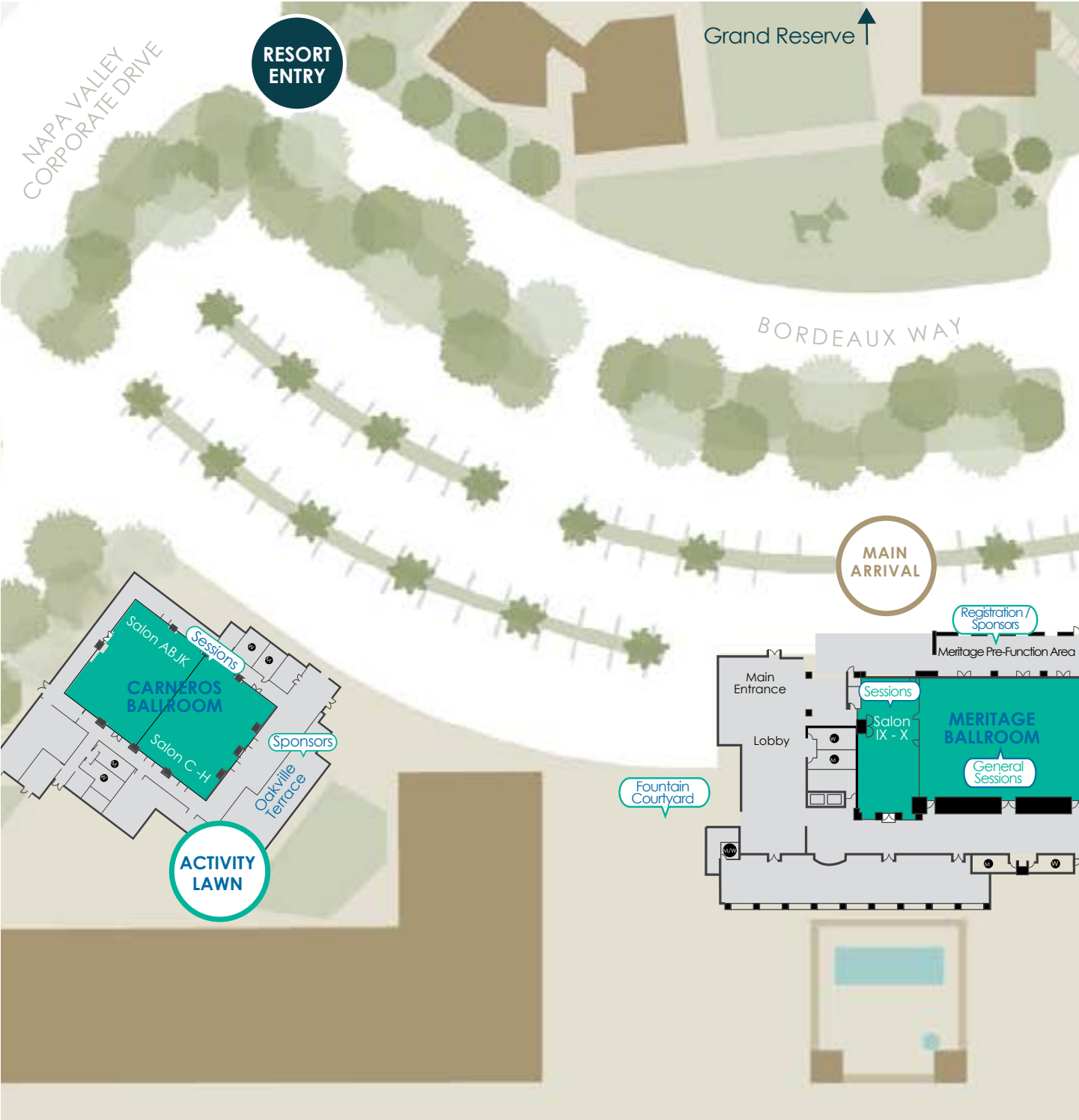
LEAGUE OF
CALIFORNIA
CITIES

CITY MANAGERS CONFERENCE

February 11-13, 2026
The Meritage

Navigating change, powering progress.

FLOOR PLAN



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

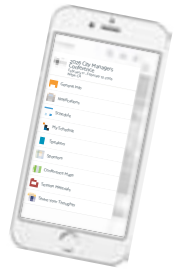


NETWORK
Meritage Guest

PASSWORD
(no password required)

DOWNLOAD THE APP!

The Cal Cities mobile app provides a personalized conference experience with access to the full program, key updates, a customized schedule, and more. Download through your device's app store by searching "League of California Cities" or "Cal Cities." Once downloaded, select "Find Guides" and search for 2026 City Managers Conference. Don't forget to allow push notifications to receive up-to-date conference information and opt in for additional networking opportunities.



PRESENTATIONS AND MATERIALS

Looking for presentation slides and session materials? All materials submitted are posted as they are received and can be found online at www.calcities.org/CMCmaterials or within the app.

WEAR YOUR BADGE!

Please remember to wear your attendee badge at all times as this is your admission ticket to all sessions, meals, and receptions. If you lose or damage yours, please visit the registration desk for a new one.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Scan the QR code to send us your feedback on the seminar by February 27.



SAVE THE DATES:

2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPO
SEPTEMBER 23-25 | ANAHEIM CONVENTION CENTER

2027 CITY MANAGERS CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 10-12 | MANCHESTER GRAND HYATT, SAN DIEGO

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

10:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Registration Open Meritage Pre-function
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Visit with Elite Sponsors Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace
1:00 - 1:45 p.m.	Opening General Session Meritage Ballroom Opening Remarks: Kelly McAdoo, President, City Managers Department and City Administrator, Santa Barbara Cal Cities Update: Carolyn Coleman, Executive Director and CEO, League of California Cities City Managers Department Awards and Recognition
1:45 - 2:15 p.m.	Elite Sponsor Break Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace
2:15 - 3:30 p.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	Shadow Councils: When Advisory Bodies Go Rogue Salon ABJK, Carneros Ballroom In many cities, committees, commissions, and task forces are established as advisory bodies on key issues, but sometimes well-intentioned input becomes policy-making with these groups organizing community campaigns, shaping public opinion, or even directing staff without council direction. These "shadow councils" blur accountability lines of council-manager governance, and can create tension between city hall and the community. Learn how to recognize the signs of advisory body overreach and how to maintain governance discipline. Through real-life case studies, panel discussion, and interactive exercises, attendees will explore strategies to realign advisory groups with their proper advisory roles, preserve institutional integrity, and restore the council as the policy-making authority. Moderator: Dr. Peter Pirnejad, Executive Director, The Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership Speakers: Reva Feldman, Retired City Manager, Malibu and President, R&R Associates Ed Shikada, City Manager, Palo Alto Christina Turner, City Manager, Morgan Hill
2:15 - 3:30 p.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	Crisis Communications: Lessons in Preparation and Responses Salon C-H, Carneros Ballroom Effective crisis communication starts well before the emergency and continues long after. This session combines practical preparation strategies with real-world insights from the Palisades and Eaton fires to help city managers strengthen their crisis communications plans. Speakers will share how pre-approved messaging, social media, and trial runs with staff can help your city respond swiftly, maintain public trust, and reduce chaos during critical moments. Leave with a deeper understanding of how to develop a crisis communication plan, manage public expectations, and keep residents informed and safe in the midst of an emergency — as well as concrete steps you can take today to strengthen your preparedness before the next crisis strikes. Moderator: Karen Pinkos, Department Director, City Managers Department and City Manager, El Cerrito Speakers: Alexis Brown-Gillam, Director, Tripepi Smith & Associates Miguel Márquez, City Manager, Pasadena Ara Mhrianian, City Manager, Rancho Palos Verdes

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

2:15 - 3:30 p.m.
Concurrent Session

Navigating Ethical Waters: Balancing Personal and Professional Presence In An Era of Growing Digital and National Political Tension

Salon IX-X, Meritage Ballroom

Join us for a discussion on Tenet 7 of the ICMA Code of Ethics and how city managers can balance personal beliefs with professional responsibility amid political tension. As national and local politics increasingly clash, administrators may face new conflicts, fueled by media, that challenge their ethics, values, and public presence. Speakers will discuss both successful and detrimental examples of how social media is changing public service and how Tenet 7 guidance has helped them create balance in separating their personal opinions from their professional duties and obligations. Participants will leave with practical strategies for maintaining credibility, navigating political pressures, and leading effectively in an era of heightened polarization and online scrutiny.

Moderator: Jason Nutt, Assistant City Manager, Santa Rosa

Speakers: Aram Chaparyan, City Manager, Torrance

Dan Singer, City Manager, Santa Paula

Nicole Zieba, City Manager, Reedley

3:45 - 5:00 p.m.

Keynote: Protecting the Vulnerable: A Conversation on Policing for City Managers

Meritage Ballroom

Join us for an interactive hybrid session with Chris Hsiung (in-person) and Simon Sinek (virtually), founders of "The Curve" which envisions a world where all people feel justice is administered with dignity and fairness. Their experience changing leadership culture in the policing space offers city managers resources to adapt policing to create a culture of safety and respect.

Opening Remarks: Thaddeus McCormack, Immediate Past President, City Managers Department and City Manager

Moderators: Kelly McAdoo, President, City Managers Department and City Administrator, Santa Barbara

Chris Hsiung, CEO, The Curve

Keynote Speaker: Simon Sinek, Bestselling Author and Founder, The Curve

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Networking Reception

Carneros Ballroom and Activities Lawn Planned with 

Catch up with colleagues while enjoying appetizers and beverages during the evening networking reception. It's the perfect opportunity to form support networks inside your profession.

2025 - 2026 City Managers Department Officers

President, Kelly McAdoo, City Administrator, Santa Barbara

President-Elect, Chris Freeland, City Manager, Indian Wells

Vice President, Maraskeshia Smith, City Manager, Sacramento

Department Director, Karen Pinkos, City Manager, El Cerrito

Immediate Past President, Thaddeus McCormack, City Manager, Lakewood

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Registration Open Meritage Pre-function
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Visit with Elite Sponsors Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace
8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Networking Breakfast Carneros Ballroom and Fountain Courtyard
9:00 - 10:15 a.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	City Hall 2050: Will Artificial Intelligence Be The Next City Manager? Salon ABJK, Carneros Ballroom Artificial Intelligence doesn't sleep, doesn't get tired, and doesn't need a break; and its capabilities are evolving fast! Once limited to automating tasks and analyzing basic data, AI is now able to generate policy recommendations and simulate decision making. What could this mean for the future of public leadership and the role of a city manager? This futurist panel will explore how AI may transform local government and address the ethical and legal implications of AI-driven decision making. Panelists will discuss bias, accountability, transparency, and public trust while examining how workforce and leadership roles might change by 2050. Join us for a look at how city managers can balance public service and the quest to be AI efficient, including how to balance human judgement and empathy with technological innovation, ensuring the heart of public service endures. Moderator: Henry Garcia, Public Affairs, Transtech Speakers: Matt Ballantyne, City Manager, Fontana Sonia Carvalho, City Attorney, Cities of Pomona and Santa Ana, Best Best & Krieger LLP Scott Ochoa, City Manager, Ontario
9:00 - 10:15 a.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	When the Disrupter Gets Elected Salon C-H, Carneros Ballroom Every election cycle brings the possibility of a new voice at the dais, and sometimes that voice is loud, abrasive, or just singularly focused on "fixing" city hall. These reform-driven council members often enter office with an agenda or ideology to reinvent local government. Join our session for a discussion on how city managers can navigate these disruptions and maintain the stability of the council-manager relationship. Attendees will leave prepared to constructively engage with newly elected outliers and educate them on municipal operations while acknowledging their strong beliefs and desire to "shake things up." Panelists will discuss practical approaches for establishing boundaries, building trust, managing risk, and guiding the council and staff through the turbulence. Moderator: Elisa Cox, City Manager, Rancho Cucamonga Speakers: Jen Cavanaugh, Former Mayor, Piedmont Anil Comelo, City Manager, St. Helena Dominic Lazzaretto, City Manager, Arcadia Laurel Prevetti, Retired City Manager
9:00 - 10:15 a.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	Assistant/Deputy City Manager Panel Salon IX-X, Meritage Ballroom Join your peers for an interactive session designed to foster connection, collaboration, and shared learning among assistant and deputy city managers. This session offers a supportive space to discuss common challenges, exchange practical insights, and build lasting professional networks. Whether you're new to the role or a seasoned leader, you'll gain valuable perspectives and relationships to strengthen your career and enhance your organization's leadership team. Moderator: Jessica Deakyne, Chief Operating Officer, MRG Speakers: Kristen Crane, Assistant City Manager, Murrieta Monica Davis, Deputy City Administrator, Oakland Thomas W. Gaffery IV, Assistant City Manager, Tulare

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

10:15 - 10:45 a.m.	Elite Sponsor Break Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace
10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	From the Ground Up: Women City Managers on How They Got to the Top Salon ABJK, Carneros Ballroom Hear from several accomplished women city managers from diverse personal and professional backgrounds who have risen to the top in some of California's most complex and high-profile communities. They'll share candid reflections on the journey to the top seat — what helped them succeed, what they wish they'd known sooner, and what aspiring leaders of all genders should keep in mind as they climb the ladder. Moderator: June Catalano, Retired City Manager/Consultant, Renne Public Management Group Speakers: Valerie Barone, City Manager, Concord Kelly McAdoo, President, City Managers Department and City Administrator, Santa Barbara Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager, Mountain View Colleen Tribby, City Manager, Dublin
10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	Approachability as a City Manager: How to Build an Authentic Circle Salon C-H, Carneros Ballroom Establishing trust, creating connection, and providing support are essential elements of effective leadership; but maintaining these qualities while upholding professional boundaries can be a delicate balance. This session explores how leaders can cultivate meaningful relationships without compromising their authority or decision-making integrity. Attendees will learn practical strategies for building authentic connections, setting clear expectations and navigating challenging situations with confidence. Whether you're a new supervisor or a seasoned executive, this conversation will equip you with the tools to strengthen trust, inspire collaboration and uphold leadership boundaries that drive long-term success. Moderator: Chris Freeland, President-Elect, City Managers Department and City Manager, Indian Wells Speakers: Heather Abrams, Town Manager, Fairfax Jim Lewis, City Manager, Atascadero
10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. <i>Concurrent Session</i>	Role Clarity for City Managers and City Attorneys Salon IX-X, Meritage Ballroom Are you a city manager or city attorney in an organization with a council-manager form of government, particularly where both individuals are appointed by council? Then there are likely times when issues cross both desks. This session will share how to set guardrails for hot topics that may hit both desks and how to avoid pitfalls in advance. Moderator: Gerry Beaudin, City Manager, Pleasanton Speakers: Eric Danly, City Attorney, Petaluma Peggy Flynn, City Manager, Petaluma Dan Sodergren, City Attorney, Pleasanton
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Networking Lunch Carneros Ballroom and Fountain Courtyard
1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	Elite Sponsor Break Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

General Session

Meritage Ballroom

Opening Remarks: Kelly McAdoo, President, City Managers Department and City Administrator, Santa Barbara



Keynote: Resiliency RX: Stress-Proof Your Brain & Body

Stress is stealing your energy, your focus, and your best people. Every day you wait to fix it, the cost climbs higher. Whether you're leading a city or leading yourself, stress and burnout aren't mindset problems; they're chemistry problems. Jenny Evans shows you how to flip the chemistry of stress so it stops hijacking your brain and body, and starts fueling your performance instead. With Micro Strategies grounded in the latest science that are simple enough to actually use, your teams stay engaged, your leaders stop burning out, and your high-achievers finally feel clear, confident, and in control again.

Introductory Remarks: Kevin Woodhouse, President, Cal-ICMA, City Manager, Pacifica

Keynote Speaker: Jenny Evans, Stress Resiliency Expert, Author, and Enterprising Women of the Year Award Winner



3:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Elite Sponsor Break

Meritage Pre-function and Oakville Terrace

3:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Concurrent Session

We Have Our Strategic Plan....Now What?

Salon ABJK, Carneros Ballroom

You've developed a strategic plan for your organization and now the need to communicate the value of services delivered, and where you are going as an organization, has never been greater. With a variety of people involved in the strategic planning process – from your executive team to your city council - how do you ensure that it is meaningful and gets implemented? Hear from experts on how they are using their strategic plans, connecting them to their organization's work, focusing the council's attention, and tracking accountability for implementation. Hear tips on strategic plan roll outs, how to make course corrections when needed, and how to show progress to the community, council and organization.

Moderator: Nancy Hetrick, Vice President, Raftelis

Speakers: Sean Bigley, Environmental Utilities Director, Roseville

Michelle Flaherty, Assistant City Manager, Redwood City

Keith Metzler, City Manager, Victorville

3:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Concurrent Session

Leveraging the Surplus Land Act Process to Create More Affordable Housing

Salon C-H, Carneros Ballroom

Explore how the Surplus Land Act can be leveraged to unlock opportunities for creating more affordable housing. This session will provide insights into the process, challenges, and strategies for utilizing surplus public land to address housing needs, with a focus on practical approaches to increase affordable housing availability.

Moderator: Sean Kelleher, Assistant City Manager (Development), Moreno Valley

Speakers: Steven Dukett, Managing Director of Development Services, TKE Engineering, Inc.

Brian Mohan, City Manager, Moreno Valley

Jill Scott, Real Estate and Development Manager, Santa Rosa

3:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Concurrent Session

Small and Rural Cities Succession Planning and Developing Internal Talent

Salon IX-X, Meritage Ballroom

Small and rural cities face unique staffing challenges, including limited budgets and ongoing difficulties with recruitment and retention. These pressures can create organizational gaps and require city managers to spend significant time planning for workforce continuity. In this session, panelists and participants will share real-world experiences and practical strategies for succession planning and developing internal talent, with a focus on approaches that small and rural cities can realistically implement to strengthen their workforce from within.

Moderator: Chris Freeland, President-Elect, City Managers Department and City Manager, Indian Wells

Speakers: Jessaca Lugo, City Manager, Shasta Lake

Chet Simmons, City Manager, Los Alamitos

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

8:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Registration Open Meritage Pre-function
8:30 - 9:30 a.m.	Networking Breakfast Enjoy a networking breakfast in the Meritage Ballroom or grab breakfast outside of the Carneros Ballroom and join one of the below roundtables.
9:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Roundtable Discussions Women Leading Government Roundtable Salon ABJK, Carneros Ballroom This is an interactive session that will provide attendees a dialogue with experienced city managers in a small group setting. At each discussion table, a city manager will answer the hard questions, share their stories, and provide meaningful feedback on the real-world problems and obstacles that attendees are facing in their roles. This session is appropriate for any attendee looking to meet new colleagues or for those looking to become city managers in the future. This session is open to women and allies who wish to support women within their organization. Moderator and Speaker: Kelly McAdoo, President, City Managers Department and City Administrator, Santa Barbara Speaker: Debra Rose, City Manager, Lake Forest What's Keeping You Up at Night? The City Manager Peer Support Roundtable Salon C-H, Carneros Ballroom Join your peers and the members of the California ICMA/Cal-Cities Senior Advisor team to informally discuss the issues you find most challenging. Take advantage of this opportunity to brainstorm with experienced retired city managers and your colleagues regarding the issues that are giving you the most difficulty. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to meet individually with a Senior Advisor to discuss your specific challenges. Moderator and Speaker: Kevin Duggan, Senior Advisor, ICMA/Cal Cities
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Closing General Session Meritage Ballroom Closing Remarks: Chris Freeland, President-Elect, City Managers Department and City Manager, Indian Wells Who are we? A Profile of the Profession from the 2025 Rose Institute Survey The California City Management Foundation (CCMF) partnered with the Rose Institute of State & Local Government at Claremont McKenna College to survey city managers across California. This collaborative effort aims to compile a comprehensive report highlighting demographics and trends within the profession, providing an updated perspective from the previous survey. This information will spark conversation on many of the profession's core challenges such as succession planning, workforce retention, and recruitment hurdles. These findings help us prepare as professionals, emphasize the need to advocate for sustainable leadership pipelines, and to support policies that strengthen the field for the next generation of city managers. Moderator: Justin Hess, City Manager, Burbank Speakers: Bipasa Nadon, Assistant Director, Rose Institute of State and Local Government Karen Pinkos, Department Director, City Managers Department and City Manager, El Cerrito





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