



Redevelopment Ready Communities® 2010 Best Practices



Redevelopment Ready Communities® is a philosophy and approach to redevelopment that better prepares older cities to entice and attract investment into the community. RRC is a program that evaluates and certifies cities that implement transparent, predictable and effective development practices. The program approach is guided by a set of best practices and unique assessment criteria that help cities implement proactive strategies to redevelopment and find new uses for outdated and underutilized buildings and properties.

Preparing for Recovery

Cities face unprecedented shifts in the national and local economy, as they become the center for attracting new business, new knowledge workers and their families. This market shift promises to boost local and regional economies, but requires changes to the traditional approaches to development. To catalyze this transition, Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) promotes effective redevelopment strategies that stimulate the property market and reposition cities and inner-ring suburbs to move redevelopment projects forward in the New Economy.

Stimulating the Property Market

Developers want to save time and money—it's their primary concern when they decide to develop in an urban area. Local governments can positively impact an investor's bottom line with effective and transparent development practices, administrative procedures and zoning regulations. And with aggressive reinvestment goals, a realistic action plan and shovel-ready sites, cities can help jumpstart the market by moving projects faster and more frequently. RRC helps cities enhance these strategies, leading cities to invigorate the property market. Redevelopment Ready Community certification tells developers that a city has effective and transparent administrative procedures and sites ready for redevelopment. These upfront actions can significantly reduce the timeline and cost of redevelopment projects.

Building for the Knowledge-Driven Economy

In five years, RRC has tested and refined its best practices and certification rating system in 12 cities. This process has helped cities forge cooperative partnerships with developers, prepare sites for redevelopment and build a vision for the community's growth.

Cities have transitioned from a reactive to proactive approach in marketing properties and gaining leader buy-in on a focused growth strategy. Site plan review and design guideline procedures are clearer, and zoning regulations are more flexible, which has expanded the possible uses and opportunities for investment. These simple, strategic changes prepare the city for major redevelopment projects that can redefine livability in a community, drawing new talent workers and jobs that lead to transformational change in the region.

Table of Contents

Page	Content
4	The RRC Best Practices and Rating System
5	Redevelopment Readiness Levels
6	Best Practice One: Community Plans & Public Outreach
9	Best Practice Two: Redevelopment Ready Sites
12	Best Practice Three: Development Review Process
14	Best Practice Four: Zoning Policy and Regulations
17	Best Practice Five: Economic Reinvestment Strategies
18	Best Practice Six: Training for Public Officials and Staff

The RRC Best Practices and Rating System

This handbook outlines the evaluation criteria that prepare cities to achieve RRC certification. A rating system complements the RRC best practice evaluation and assessment. The Best Practices helps determine a city's level of redevelopment readiness by identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The readiness level is a barometer about the city's redevelopment attitude only and is secondary to the city's primary redevelopment strategies. What works in one community may not be the right solution for another. Ultimately, the rating level highlights effective strategies, procedures, processes and regulations that lead to successful redevelopment

Why Certify?

When a city becomes a certified Redevelopment Ready Community, it signals that it has effective development practices. An RRC community has clear development procedures, a community-supported redevelopment vision, an open and predictable review process and many more compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects.

Redevelopment Ready Means

- ✓ Proactive vs. reactive about redevelopment
- ✓ Establishes clear guidelines and development expectations
- ✓ Identifies and meets the Redevelopment Ready Sites qualifications

The RRC Vision

Redevelopment Ready Communities® envisions communities that creatively reuse space, embrace economic innovation and best practices, and proactively plan their future, making them more attractive to redevelopment investments that create thriving urban areas.

Redevelopment Readiness Levels

RRC applies the leading planning practices and redevelopment approaches to assess how well a city's redevelopment processes function and how these functions translate into available sites ready for redevelopment activity. Every city should be proactive in priming priority sites for redevelopment, as well as providing a clear development process throughout the community. RRC rates what activities the city accomplished and what areas need attention to attain the city's desired redevelopment goals.

The community's final Readiness Level is determined by taking the average of the readiness levels awarded to each of the 6 Best Practices. Cities that achieve Level I attained RRC certification. Cities that receive a Level II or III rating will need to implement priority recommendations provided in the RRC evaluation in order to attain Readiness Level I.

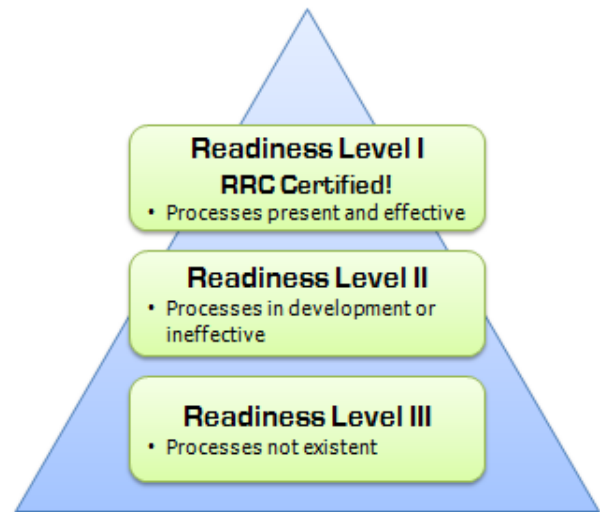
Readiness Level Definitions

Level I: Cities must demonstrate that their processes and practices are present and effective.

Cities that achieve a Level I readiness level receive RRC certification.

Level II: Cities have policies, processes or practices that are in development or their existing practices are ineffective.

Level III: Necessary policies, processes or practices are non-existent or need extra support.



Rating the City

The RRC consultant team is intensely involved in the research and interviews and authors the analysis. The team works together to determine the readiness level for each best practice. The final level is determined by taking the average readiness level awarded to each best practice. Then, the consultant team recommends certification to the RRC Board of Directors, who subsequently makes the final decision.

The RRC Best Practices Evaluation Criteria

01 – Community Plans & Public Outreach

This best practice evaluates community planning for redevelopment and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the master plan.

The comprehensive master plan is a community’s guiding framework for growth. A relevant and updated comprehensive master plan is essential to articulating the types of development the community desires and the specific areas where the community will concentrate its resources.

To achieve a shared community vision, city leaders must create opportunities for meaningful dialogue between stakeholders early in the planning process. In the past, public hearings were enough to capture feedback from the community. Today, cities must be more proactive and create clear, open and accessible public participation processes that take advantage of modern technology.

1.1 - The Plans

• denotes Required Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The city council has adopted a master plan in the past five years or has a master plan update in development. 	<p>Adopted master plan or master plan update in process with a completion timeline.</p> <p>The master plan demonstrates contemporary planning and procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City’s master plan includes a redevelopment plan or amendment that states the City’s redevelopment strategies and where it will concentrate its resources. 	<p>Plan contains problem statement, goals, site identification and implementation strategies for redevelopment sites, neighborhoods, districts and sub-area plans.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City has a downtown development plan in development or adopted. 	<p>Adopted by city council or in process with a completion timeline.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City has capital improvement plan with a five-year minimum projection. 	<p>The plan is adopted and updated as required by state law. Plan should be coordinated with the City’s economic development strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The redevelopment plan specifies the strategy and tools to accomplish the stated goals and actions. 	<p>The plan includes implementation actions and a 2-5 year timeline that identifies leadership and outreach, economic development, and planning and zoning benchmarks.</p> <p>The City demonstrates it follows the actions in the implementation plan and annually reports on its progress.</p>

1.2 – Public Participation

This best practice assesses how well the city identifies its stakeholders and engages them during and after the master planning process.

The best master plans have the support of many stakeholders from businesses, residents, community groups and elected and appointed city officials. A City’s ability to solicit and maintain a consistently high level of community input depends on available funds, staff capacity and relationships built between the City and its community. The rules for public engagement have moved beyond soliciting public input only during the master plan update. Now, public engagement methods are more frequent and interactive.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
<p>● The City has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders in land use decisions.</p>	<p>The public participation strategy describes public participation methods and the appropriate venue to use each method. It also identifies the pertinent stakeholders. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City’s largest employers ● Commercial business owners ● Real estate professionals ● Religious groups ● Senior groups ● Neighborhood groups ● Students and young professionals
<p>The City demonstrates strong public engagement during the master planning process.</p>	<p>Demonstrate how the community attracted participants and who attended.</p> <p>Demonstrate how the city established new relationships with people not traditionally at the community visioning table, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local brokers ● Chambers of Commerce ● Social organizations ● Other entities familiar with the community that assist the City in documenting land values, rental rates, vacancies, market demand, etc.

	<p>The City demonstrates that public participation efforts went beyond the basic methods and has an ongoing outreach plan.</p>	<p>Basic Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Notice Act ○ Newspaper posting ○ Notice listed on city website ○ Flier posting on city hall doors ○ Announcement at city council meeting ○ Post card mailings ○ Attachments to water bills ○ Local cable notification <p>Proactive Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual mailings ○ Charrettes ○ One-on-one interviews ○ Walkabouts ○ Community workshops ○ Focus groups ○ Social networking (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>The City shares outcomes of its public participation process.</p>	<p>The City demonstrates outcomes were openly and consistently shared with the community.</p>

1.3 - Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

Evaluation Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Master plan and amendments</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Capital Improvement Plan</p>

02 – Redevelopment Ready Sites

This best practice assesses how a City identifies, publishes and proactively markets information about its redevelopment climate, available redevelopment sites and community assets.

City leaders need to reach consensus on established redevelopment criteria and identified financial incentives for a minimum of three specific sites. Then, the City needs to publicly identify a vision for these sites to promote to the redevelopment opportunity. The visioning step will entice developers otherwise hesitant to spend significant time and financial resources pursuing projects in older communities.

Priority site redevelopment designation requires elected officials, members of municipal boards and commissions, neighborhood stakeholders and community leaders not traditionally involved in the planning and entitlement process to:

- (1) Actively participate in visioning exercises to establish the type of development desired for each site; and
- (2) Commit to publicly support compliant proposals at subsequent entitlement hearings offered by developers. Especially when paired with a viable marketing strategy regarding redevelopment readiness, site specific visioning assures developers that the City is serious about encouraging redevelopment at a particular site.

The Conventional Way	RRC Approach
The City waits for a developer to propose project.	The City solicits community input to identify sites where it wants redevelopment to occur.
Community input occurs after the City receives a proposal from a developer.	The City and RRC market the opportunity to developers.

The vision for each site can be general or detailed. For example, for some sites the vision may be for a certain *type* of redevelopment such as commercial, to the exclusion of other uses. At other sites the vision might welcome *any* new development eliminating existing blight or remediating environmental contamination. The vision can impose specific conditions, such as setting aside a certain amount of open space or requiring the use of specific architectural materials. Likewise, financial incentive tools can also be pegged to specific requirements.

To encourage redevelopment, it is essential that cities know the sites and areas prioritized for redevelopment and make this information readily available for potential investors.

2.1 - Marketing

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The City identifies and prioritizes individual Redevelopment Ready sites.	<p>Identify and maintain a list of high priority sites the City seeks to redevelop.</p> <p>The City uses a checklist or questionnaire to evaluate attributes of available sites.</p>
●	For the City's Redevelopment Ready sites, the City lists the primary economic development tools it is willing to use and negotiate.	Document financial tools for each site.
●	The City provides a list of elected official and staff champions that support the identified Redevelopment Ready sites.	A written document detailing specific development criteria and financial redevelopment incentives available for each site is signed by participants pledging public support.
●	The City has a marketing plan that informs the community about its desired redevelopment growth strategy.	<p>The master plan is the illustration of the City's vision for the future and should be the foundation of the City's marketing strategy. Key messages about the City's redevelopment goals should be targeted at specific audiences and designed to inspire the desired actions.</p> <p>Describe the fiscal, social and physical benefits of development and redevelopment and what they mean to the community.</p> <p>Identify key community characteristics and attributes.</p>
●	Market priority Redevelopment Ready sites.	<p>The City markets priority sites to prospective developers with information including financial incentive tools available and a list of the participants pledged to support complaint proposals.</p> <p>Site promotional materials include: Assessment information such as property ownership, site location, environmental considerations, location of utilities, taxes</p>
	The City partners with organization's like the DDA, Chamber of Commerce, local real estate agencies and brokers that are actively marketing the community to potential investors	<p>The local real estate community helps the City to create and maintain a land use inventory.</p> <p>The City shares the same redevelopment message with these support agencies and departments.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>The City has an updated, user friendly municipal website.</p>	<p>The City’s website should be a reflection of its desire to attract new development.</p>
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2.2 - Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

Evaluation Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Property information for prioritized sites</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Marketing information for prioritized sites</p>

03 — Development Review Process

This best practice evaluates the City’s site plan review policy and procedures, internal communication and project tracking.

Streamlined, well-documented site plan approval and permitting processes ensure a smooth and predictable experience working with the City. Cities may have unnecessary steps and layers that increase the time and expenses associated with redevelopment, threatening to frustrate and discourage developers. Finding ways to streamline processes and create an inviting redevelopment climate is vital to attracting investment.

City leaders should examine the reviewing agencies and procedures for rezoning or conditional zoning, special land use, planned unit development, site plan review, variances and related activities and implement changes that increase efficiency and simplify processes.

3.1 - Site Plan Review Policy

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	Updated and adopted by city council.
●	The zoning ordinance or city code documents the responsibilities of the administration, city council, zoning board of appeals, planning commission and other reviewing bodies.	Updated and adopted by city council.
●	The planning division maintains a “Guide to Development” that explains its policies, procedures and steps to obtain approval.	The “Guide to Development” includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual meetings • Requirements checklist • Non-compliant applications • Easy to follow step-by-step flowcharts • Rezoning requests • Variance requests • Design guidelines • Clear approval timelines for reviewing body • Clear explanations for sites plans that can be reviewed and approved administratively • Defined roles and responsibilities of all reviewing bodies • Instruction to access forms online • Online payment option

3.2 - Site Plan Review Procedures

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	A qualified intake professional or project manager who receives and processes applications and site plans, maintains contact with the applicant, facilitates meetings and processes applications after approval.	A City identifies a point person and train staff (if applicable) to perform intake responsibilities.
●	The City defines and offers conceptual site plan review meetings for applicants.	The City has clearly defined expectations and requirements checklist for conceptual meetings.
●	The planning division engages in joint site plan team reviews.	<p>The planning department conducts team site plan reviews on complicated applications with the applicant.</p> <p>The site plan team review consists of the following representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning department ● Economic development ● Department of Public Works ● Fire ● Police ● City manager
●	The City has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	The review process articulates clear roles and responsibilities for the internal staff review. This may include consultants if applicable.
●	The city establishes procedures for calling special meetings for each reviewing body.	The procedures are included in the “How to Guide” and are followed consistently.
	The city encourages a developer to seek community input from residents and businesses near the proposed property at the outset of the application process for complicated projects.	The City solicits input on a proposal before site plan approval.
	The City readily acts on a request for a special land use, variance or rezoning.	The City follows its document procedures.
	Annually review the successes and challenges the City faces with its site plan review procedures.	<p>Meet with the site plan review team to capture lessons learned and amend the process accordingly.</p> <p>Obtain customer feedback on the site plan approval process and integrate changes to the plan where applicable.</p>

3.3 Project Tracking

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The City has a method to track development projects.	The City has a tracking mechanism and uses it.

3.4 Fee Schedules

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	Annually review the fee schedule.	Update the fee schedule to cover the City’s true cost to provide the service.

3.5 - Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

	Evaluation Criteria
●	<p>The “Guide to Site Plan Review”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting schedules • Conceptual meetings • Requirements checklist • Non-compliant applications • Easy to follow step-by-step flowcharts • Rezoning requests • Variance requests • Design guidelines • Approval timelines for reviewing body • Clear explanations for site plans that can be reviewed and approved administratively • Defined roles and responsibilities of all reviewing bodies • Fee schedules • Online payment
●	<p>Applications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review • Variance requests • Special land use requests • Rezoning requests • Special permits and approvals

04 – Zoning Policy and Regulations

Inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations often prevent cities from executing innovative redevelopment plans that encourage new types of development suitable for an urban environment. Consequently, mature communities face a disadvantage in attracting new investment, and their ability to impact the development patterns and character of their communities is significantly limited.

Cities need forward-looking zoning policies and regulations that integrate land use and transportation; that encourage modes of transportation other than the automobile, such as walking and biking pushing development toward less auto-dependency. RRC communities need to demonstrate that they understand smart growth development philosophies and have supporting zoning strategies in place.

The Zoning Policy and Regulations best practice evaluates the extent of the City’s zoning ordinance with these issues in mind.

4.1 - Zoning Regulations

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	Zoning Administration	Zoning ordinance reflects current master plan. Ordinance is easy to understand; reflects contemporary design and layout.
●	Mixed-Use Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actively promote range of uses. 	The City permits mixed-use in selected districts, by right. The City permits downtown height overlay district. Allow for pedestrian or transit overlay zones.
●	Density Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase height density in strategic areas. 	Eliminate required setbacks. Replace FAR requirements.
	Use districts	Determine what is allowed or not allowed.
	Commercial, Downtown Districts	Examples: Built to lines Open storefronts Ground floor use designation, retail use Predilection for the type of retail building standards to encourage retail use (higher % of glazing measurement) Outdoor dining encouraged Ground floor signage standards Entertainment district
	Residential uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ordinance allows for a variety of housing options. 	Identified a variety of neighborhood classifications. Allow mixed density residential. Allow residential uses in the downtown. Allow live/work units. Mixed-income housing height bonus.
	Planned Unit Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce reliance on PUD’s as the alternative to the master plan and zoning code provisions. 	Establish a minimum size for the PUD, identifying specific allowable locations, and prohibit waiver or weakening of important environmental and design standards.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Parking Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ordinance allows for more sensible parking requirements. 	<p>Justify off-street parking requirements. Require less impervious parking spaces. Allow for interconnected vehicle passage between lots. Allow shared parking agreements.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Pedestrian Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The City plans for improved walkability and pedestrian interest. 	<p>Sidewalk details (width) Require bicycle parking spaces with new vehicle parking requirements. Allow bicycle parking storage facilities.</p>
	<p>Clear Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ordinance clearly defines terms and uses. 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing Board of Zoning Appeals Conditional zoning Density compatibility Household living (dwelling units) Infill development LEED certified/green build Overlay district Parking, off-site Parking, shared Pedestrian-friendly development Pervious surface Redevelopment Residential character Special land use Street furniture, lighting, signage Transit-oriented development Transit-ready development
	<p>Industrial Districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage more flexible permitted uses through the ordinance that reflect new economy type businesses. 	<p>Identify obsolete uses. Identify emerging permitted uses.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixture of commerce, sales, trade, etc. Medical research Movie industry Indoor recreation IT or office Heavy arts Alternative energy

4.2 – Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

Evaluation Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	The zoning ordinance.
	Promotion of the City’s contemporary zoning practices

05 – Economic Reinvestment Strategies

This best practice assesses what financial tools the City uses and how incentives are applied for site assessment, due care, site remediation, demolition, infrastructure and other eligible redevelopment improvements.

Local governments have a pool of state and federal financial incentives available to them to help close the financial gaps to redevelop vacant, blighted and contaminated properties. Cities that define specific financial tools they are willing to use or negotiate are far more likely to attract investors and spur activity on unoccupied or underutilized property.

5.1 - Economic Strategies

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The City has an approved economic development strategy that is accessible in a published document.	The economic development strategy is either a chapter or sub-header in the master plan or a separate document. The economic development strategy relates master plan and capital improvement plan.
●	City council reviews the economic development strategy during annual budgeting sessions.	The City prioritizes policies and projects.
	The City tracks usage of redevelopment financial tools.	The City lists the primary economic development tools it is willing to use and negotiate.

5.2 - Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

	Evaluation Criteria
●	The financial tools the City is willing to use for specific sites.
	The financial tools the City is open to using through the negotiation process.

06 — Training for Public Officials and Staff

This best practice assesses how a City encourages training, tracks training needs and conducts recruitment and orientation for newly appointed or elected officials.

Planning commissioners, zoning board of appeals members and city council make more informed decisions about redevelopment and financial incentives when they receive adequate training on land use and redevelopment issues. Turnover in officials can create gaps in knowledge about key development issues, which makes ongoing training essential to the efficient functioning of a community’s redevelopment processes.

Evaluation

6.1 - Training for Elected Officials, Board Members, and Staff

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The City has a dedicated source of funding for training.	The City demonstrates it has a training budget allocated for elected and appointed officials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning commission • Zoning board of appeals • City council • Other boards and commissions
●		Budgets allocated for city staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Building • Economic development
●	Identify the redevelopment training needs for city council, boards and commissions.	The City manages a simple tracking mechanism for logging individual training needs and completion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What training do they need? • Who received training? • When did they receive training?
●	The City encourages board and commission members to attend trainings.	The City consistently notifies its elected and appointed officials about training opportunities.
●	The planning commission, zoning board of appeals and city council conduct collaborative study sessions.	City officials annual conduct review meetings about the master plan, zoning or redevelopment projects.

6.2 - Recruitment and Orientation

	Evaluation Criteria	Expectation
●	The City sets expectations for boards and commission positions.	The applications set expectations on the desired skill sets for an open seat and that training is an important responsibility as an appointed official.
●	The City provides orientation packets to newly appointed and elected members.	Include planning, zoning and redevelopment information in orientation packets for city council, planning commission and zoning board of appeals.

6.3 - Website Documents

Open and transparent processes make it easy for citizens and developers to locate pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents. The following documents must be easily found on the City’s website.

	Evaluation Criteria
●	Boards and commission applications



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