

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

November 01, 2023

HDRC CASE NO: 2023-424
ADDRESS: 405 N ST MARYS ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB: 403 BLK: 14 LOT: 13 TRAVIS BLDG.ON THE RIVERWALK
ZONING: D, RIO-3
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
APPLICANT: Paula Ortiz
OWNER: ICONIC TRAVIS BLDG LLC
TYPE OF WORK: Signage
APPLICATION RECEIVED: October 13, 2023
60-DAY REVIEW: December 12, 2023
CASE MANAGER: Claudia Espinosa

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install the following signs:

1. One (1) vinyl banner on the west façade, facing St. Mary's, measuring 40 square feet.
2. One (1) vinyl banner on the east façade, facing Travis, measuring 15 square feet.
3. One (1) A-Frame on the riverwalk level, measuring 5.3 square feet.
4. One (1) metal sign on the entry gate on the riverwalk level, measuring 4.5 square feet.
5. One (1) plastic sign on the riverwalk level, measuring 3.5 square feet.
6. One (1) plastic sign on the riverwalk level, measuring 6 square feet.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Unified Development Code Section 35-678, Signs and Billboards in the RIO

(a) General Provisions.

1. This section governs all exterior signs and all interior signs hung within ten (10) feet of an exterior fenestration, or those signs intended to be read by exterior patrons.
 - A. All signage within an RIO district shall conform to all city codes and must have approval of the historic preservation officer prior to installation.
 - B. Permits must be obtained following approval of a certificate of appropriateness.
 - C. No sign shall be painted, constructed, erected, remodeled, refaced, relocated, expanded or otherwise altered until it has been approved and a permit has been obtained from the development services department in accordance with the provisions of this section and applicable city code.
 - D. Signs, visual displays or graphics shall advertise only the business on the premises unless otherwise allowed in this section.
 - E. Temporary displays for permitted events are authorized if in accordance with chapter 28 of the City Code of San Antonio, Texas.
2. When reviewing applications for signage the historic preservation officer and the historic and design review commission shall consider the visual impact on nearby historic resources.
 - A. Signs should respect and respond to the environment and landmark or district character in which constructed.
 - B. Signs should respect and respond to the river improvement overlay districts character and the historic Riverwalk.
 - C. The content or advertising message carried by permitted signs shall pertain to the business located on the same premises as the sign or to any otherwise lawful noncommercial message that does not direct attention to a business operated for profit, or to a commodity or service for sale, provided that signs erected on buildings with multiple businesses within shall pertain to any such business within.
3. For signs with changeable message panels, the changeable message area of the sign shall not exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the total sign area, except for gasoline price signs which shall not exceed seventy-five (75) percent of the total sign area. Electronic changeable message boards shall be prohibited.

4. The name of a business may be changed through the administrative approval process if the sign conforms to the provisions of this section, and if the color, size, and style of lettering, and illumination of the sign remain the same.

5. Provisions under this section shall comply with chapter 28 of the City Code of San Antonio, Texas. In cases where provisions under this section are stricter or a sign is designated as a contributing structure, then this section shall control.

6. Special consideration should be given to the character of the sign itself proposed in the application, and whether the proposed sign has inherently historic characteristics which may fall outside of the guidelines presented below but which would contribute to the historic district, landmark or area for which it is being proposed. Additionally, when reviewing applications for signage the historic preservation officer and the historic and design review commission shall consider the visual impact on nearby historic resources.

7. Memorials, markers, naming rights of public property, and recognition of charitable donations given to the City of San Antonio shall be additionally governed by any formal action passed by city council.

(b) Sign Definitions. For signage definitions, refer to subsection 35-612(b) and chapter 28 of the City Code.

(c) Standards for Sign Design and Placement. In considering whether to recommend approval or disapproval of an application to construct or alter signage on a building, object, site, or structure in a river improvement overlay district, review shall be guided by the following standards in addition to any specific design guidelines approved by city council.

1. Primary sign design considerations shall be identification and legibility. Size, scale, height, color and location of signs shall be harmonious with, and properly related to, the overall character of the district and structure. Sign materials shall be compatible with that of the building facade. Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are not permitted.

2. Signs which describe, point, or direct the reader to a specific place or along a specific course, such as "entrance," "exit," and "disabled persons access," as well as government signs, shall be reviewed but shall not be included in total allowable signage area. Emergency signs shall be exempt from historic and design review commission approval.

3. All graphic elements shall reinforce the architectural integrity of any building. Signs shall not disfigure, damage, mar, alter, or conceal architectural features or details and shall be limited to sizes that are in scale with the architecture and the streetscape. Emblems and symbols of identification used as principal structural or architectural design elements on a facade shall not be included in the total allowable signage per facade per structure when approved. Review shall be guided by the building's proportion and scale when such elements are incorporated.

4. Graphics and signage may be illuminated by indirect, internal, or bare-bulb sources, providing that glare is not produced; by indirect light sources concealed by a hood or diffuser; by internal illumination with standard opal glass or other translucent material or with an equal or smaller light transmission factor. All illumination shall be steady and stationary. Neon lighting shall be permitted when used as an integral architectural element or artwork appropriate to the site. For purposes of this subsection, "Glare" shall mean an illumination level of six (6) Lux or greater at the property boundary. If internal illumination is used, it shall be designed to be subordinate to the overall building composition. Light fixtures should reflect the design period of the building on which they are placed. The use of ambient light from storefront or streetlights is encouraged.

5. Signage requests for multi-tenant buildings must complement existing signage with regards to size, number, placement and design, unless such existing signage is not in conformity with regulations in this article. It is recommended that the building owner or their agent develop a master signage plan or signage guidelines for the total building or property. If a property has an approved master signage plan on file with the historic preservation officer, then applications for signage may be approved administratively at the discretion of the historic preservation officer provided that they comply with such master signage plan. Notwithstanding the above, signs may not exceed the maximum size and height limitation of signage contained in chapter 28, article 9.

(d) Proportion of Signs. For all signage, signage width and height must be in proportion to the facade, respecting the size, scale and mass of the facade, building height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. The building facade shall be considered as part of an overall sign program but the sign shall be subordinate to the overall building composition. Additionally, signs shall respect and respond to the character and/or period of the area in which they are being placed.

(e) Number and Size of Signs.

1. Number and Size. The historic and design review commission shall be guided in its decisions by the total number of businesses or services per building and the percentage of visible storefront occupied by each business or service. Applicants may apply for up to three (3) signs total. Total signage for all applicants shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet unless additional signs and/or additional total footage is approved. Additional square footage may be approved provided that the additional signage is in conformity with, and does not interfere with, the pedestrian experience on the Riverwalk. The additional square footage shall be based upon the size and scope of the site. Signs should reflect the type and speed of traffic they are meant to attract. Signs designed for pedestrians and drivers of slow moving cars should not be the same size as signs designed for highway traffic.

2. Sign Area. The sign area shall be determined in the following manner:

A. Sign Areas. The area of a sign shall be computed on the actual area of the sign. Sign area shall be calculated as the area within a parallelogram, triangle, circle, semicircle or other regular geometric figure including all letters, figures, graphics or other elements of the sign, together with the framework or background of the sign. The supporting framework of the sign shall not be included in determining sign area unless such supporting framework forms an integral part of the sign display, as determined by the historic preservation officer. If the sign is located on a decorative fence or wall, when such fence or wall otherwise meets these or other ordinances or regulations and is clearly incidental to the display itself, the fence or wall shall not be included in the sign area. In the cases of signs with more than one (1) sign face, including but not restricted to double-faced signs, back-to-back signs, overhanging signs, and projecting signs, each side of the sign shall be included in total allowable signage area.

B. Channel Letter Signs. For channel letter signs, the sign area shall be the smallest rectangle that will encompass the limits of the writing, including spaces between the letters. Each advertising message shall be considered separately.

3. Building Identification Signs. An additional building identification sign may be placed on a building with multiple tenants, if the building name is not the same as the business(s) housed within and such sign is recommended for approval by the historic and design review commission. This type of sign is to identify a building as a destination, shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet, shall not be included in the total allowable signage area, and shall not include names of individual businesses.

4. Freestanding Signs. Freestanding signs are allowed provided the sign does not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Freestanding signs shall be perpendicular to the street, two-sided and no taller than six (6) feet. Freestanding signs shall not be located in the right-of-way.

A. Projecting Arm Signs. Signs hung from poles are allowed. Pole height shall not exceed six (6) feet and the pole diameter shall not exceed three (3) inches. Blade signs are not allowed to project over a sidewalk or other right-of-way.

(f) Allowable Signs Not Included in the Total Signage Area.

1. Parking lot signs identifying entrances and exits to a parking lot or driveway, but only when there is one-way traffic flow. No more than one (1) sign shall be permitted for each driveway entrance or exit, and no corporate or business logos shall be permitted. Additionally, parking lot signs to identify divisions of the parking lot into sections and to control vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic within the lot provided that no corporate or business logos shall be permitted. Signs approved under this category shall not be included in the total allowable signage per structure.

2. Dates of erection, monumental citations, commemorative tablets, insignia of local, state or federal government, and like when carved into stone, concrete or similar material or made of bronze, aluminum or other permanent type construction and made an integral part of the structure. The maximum size of such sign shall be thirty-two (32) square feet. Signs approved under this category shall not be included in the total allowable signage per structure.

3. Information signs of a public or quasi-public nature identifying or locating a hospital, public building, college, parking area, historic area or district, major tourist attraction or similar public or quasi-public activity; and also including signs identifying restrooms or other facilities relating to such places or activities. Signs approved under this category shall not be included in the total allowable signage per structure.

4. Incidental signs, including signs designating business hours, decals, street numbers, credit card acceptance and the like provided that the signs are not freestanding, the total of all such signs shall not exceed four (4) square feet for each business, and the signs are non-illuminated. Incidental signs shall not be included in the total allowable signage per structure.

5. Real estate signs, advertising the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the signs are displayed. The maximum sign area shall be eight (8) square feet.

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 6, Guidelines for Signage

1. General

A. GENERAL

- i. *Number and size*—Each building will be allowed one major and two minor signs. Total requested signage should not exceed 50 square feet.
- ii. *New signs*—Select the type of sign to be used based on evidence of historic signs or sign attachment parts along the building storefront where possible. Design signs to respect and respond to the character and/or period of the area in which they are being placed. Signs should identify the tenant without creating visual clutter or distracting from building features and historic districts.
- iii. *Scale*—Design signage to be in proportion to the facade, respecting the building's size, scale and mass, height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. Scale signage (in terms of its height and width) to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

B. HISTORIC SIGNS

- i. *Preservation*—Preserve historic signs, such as ghost signs or other signs characteristic of the building's or district's period of significance, whenever possible.
- ii. *Maintenance*—Repair historic signs and replace historic parts in-kind when deteriorated beyond repair.

C. PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION

- i. *Location*—Place signs where historically located and reuse sign attachment parts where they exist. Do not erect signs above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall, or where they will disfigure or conceal architectural details, window openings, doors, or other significant details.
- ii. *Obstruction of historic features*—Avoid obscuring historic building features such as cornices, gables, porches, balconies, or other decorative elements with new signs.
- iii. *Damage*—Avoid irreversible damage caused by installing a sign. For example, mount a sign to the mortar rather than the historic masonry.
- iv. *Pedestrian orientation*—Orient signs toward the sidewalk to maintain the pedestrian oriented nature of the historic districts.

D. DESIGN

- i. *Inappropriate materials*—Do not use plastic, fiberglass, highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read, or other synthetic materials not historically used in the district.
- ii. *Appropriate materials*—Construct signs of durable materials used for signs during the period of the building's construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, aluminum, and metal grill work.
- iii. *Color*—Limit the number of colors used on a sign to three. Select a dark background with light lettering to make signs more legible.
- iv. *Typefaces*—Select letter styles and sizes that complement the overall character of the building façade. Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate styles.

FINDINGS:

- a. The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install signage at The Travis Building. This property is located within the River Improvement Overlay, District 3. At this time, the applicant is requesting to install multiple signs at multiple locations. The Travis Building makes its first appearance in the 1931 Sanborn Map and 1924-25 City Directory under the address 407 N. St. Mary's. The current address is reflected in the 1951 Sanborn Map. At this time, the applicant is requesting additional real estate signage, currently the building has canopy signage and a directory sign.
- b. **ALLOWABLE SIGNAGE** – The Unified Development Code states that real estate signs, advertising the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the signs are displayed should not exceed a maximum sign area of eight (8) square feet. At this time, the applicant is requesting signage that exceeds the allowable signage per the UDC.
- c. **WALL SIGN (West Façade)** – The applicant has proposed to install one (1) vinyl banner onto the existing foam portion of the building, measuring 40 square feet. This sign will be located on the west building façade. The UDC Section 35-678(d) notes that signage width and height must be in proportion to the façade, respecting the size, scale, and mass of the façade, building height and rhythms and sizes of windows and door openings. Staff finds the proposed signage to be consistent with the UDC regarding size and placement. Staff

finds that the applicant reduce the overall square footage to eight (8) square feet to comply with the UDC. Additionally, staff finds that the location of the sign be placed on a window rather than the façade to limit the risk of irreversible damage to the masonry.

d. WALL SIGN (East Façade) – The applicant has proposed to install one (1) vinyl banner onto the east façade of the building, measuring 15 square feet. The UDC Section 35-678(d) notes that signage width and height must be in proportion to the façade, respecting the size, scale and mass of the façade, building height and rhythms and sizes of windows and door openings. Staff finds the proposed signage to be inconsistent with the UDC regarding size and placement.

e. SIGNAGE (RIVER LEVEL) – The applicant has proposed to install an A-Frame at the riverwalk level, measuring 5.3 square feet. The UDC Section 35-678(g) notes that signage Pedestrian menu boards shall not exceed two (2) square feet. Staff finds the proposed signage to be inconsistent with the UDC due to the proposed size and placement.

f. WALL SIGNAGE (RIVER LEVEL) – The applicant has proposed to install a metal sign onto the swinging gate at the river level, measuring 4.5 square feet. The UDC Section 35-678(f.5) notes that real estate signs advertising the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the signs are displayed should not exceed a maximum sign area of eight (8) square feet. Staff finds the proposed signage to be consistent with the UDC regarding size, design, and placement.

g. WALL SIGNAGE (RIVER LEVEL) – The applicant has proposed to install a plastic sign on an existing riverwalk wall with adhesive tape, measuring 3.5 square feet. The UDC Section 35-678(f.5) notes that real estate signs, advertising the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the signs are displayed should not exceed a maximum sign area of eight (8) square feet. Staff finds the proposed signage to exceed the allowable signage.

h. WALL SIGNAGE (RIVER LEVEL) – The applicant has proposed to install a plastic sign on an existing riverwalk wall with adhesive tape, measuring 6 square feet. The UDC Section 35-678(f.5) notes that real estate signs, advertising the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the signs are displayed should not exceed a maximum sign area of eight (8) square feet. Staff finds the proposed signage to be inconsistent with the UDC regarding size and placement.

i. MOUNTING – At this time, the applicant has not submitted adequate details for the mounting of the proposed signage at the street or riverwalk level. Per the Guidelines for Signage, 1.C. iii. avoid irreversible damage caused by installing a sign. For example, mount a sign to the mortar rather than the historic masonry. Staff finds that an updated signage plan with the mounting information should be submitted to staff for review.

RECOMMENDATION:

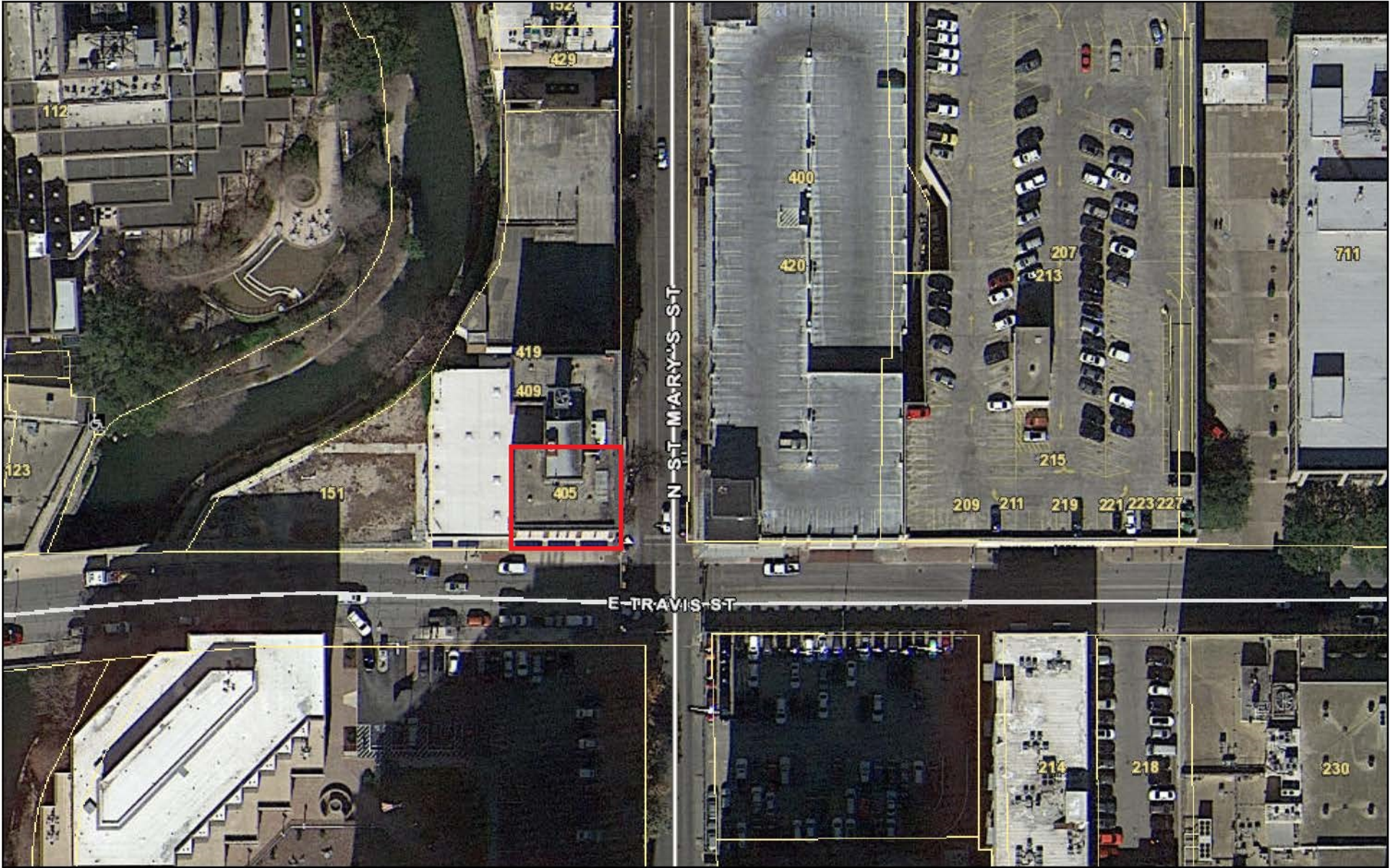
Staff recommends approval of items 1 & 4, the installation of one (1) vinyl banner on the west façade, facing St. Mary's St, and the installation of one (1) metal sign on the entry gate on the riverwalk level, based on findings b, c, and i with the following stipulations:

- i. That the applicant reduces the overall square footage of signage to comply with the UDC based on finding b.
- ii. That the applicant installs signage in the windows rather than the exterior façade as to not risk damage based on findings c.
- iii. That the applicant submits an updated signage package that includes mounting details of each sign to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness based on finding i.

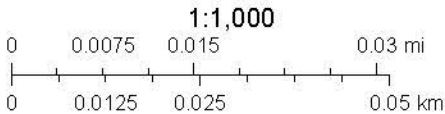
Staff does not recommend approval of items 2, 3, 5, & 6 based on findings b through h.

If the HDRC feels inclined to approve additional signage requested in items 2, 3, 5, & 6, staff recommends that the applicant submit mounting specifications to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness based on finding i.

City of San Antonio One Stop



October 18, 2023

















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8ft





3ft

5ft

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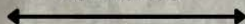
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