

The Importance of Home in the Context of Aging in Place and Age Friendly Communities

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Special thanks to:

- Dr. Christine Venjovich – Methodist Health Systems, [Geriatrics and Senior Services](#)
- Tara Miller Donohue – Methodist College <https://www.methodistcollege.edu/>
- Randy Jones, Age Friendly Lincoln, [Aging Partners – City of Lincoln, NE](#)
 - Three Domains: Communication & Information, Transportation, Housing
- Ryan ZimmerMas, Age-Friendly Omaha, <https://www.agefriendlyomaha.org/>
 - Currently analyzing data from surveys and listening sessions to determine the top domains
- Each of you for truly caring about the aging experience.

Question to Ponder

“Regardless of your age, if you were looking to move into an ‘Age Friendly Home,’ what would it look like?”

1. What would **matter** most?
2. How would your **mobility** be supported?
3. Would you have sufficient cognitive stimulation (**mentation**) in your home (socialization, views of interest)?
4. Would you be safe if taking **medications** and other things to address health concerns?

Aging in Place – what does it mean?

- The ability to stay in one's home, remain independent, and have the support of family and friends when needed. [Aging in Place: Growing Older at Home | National Institute on Aging](#)
- **93%** of adults 65 and older live in an apartment or own home, with 9% having care provided to them. [Most older adults want to age at home, but many aren't confident they can | Pew Research Center](#)
- **60%** want to stay at home with care provided. Others envision assisted living, living with a family member, another option, or nursing home care.
[Most older adults want to age at home, but many aren't confident they can | Pew Research Center](#)
- **75%** want to stay in their home but uncertain how they can make this happen.
[AARP Survey: Older Adults Want to Stay in Home, Community](#)

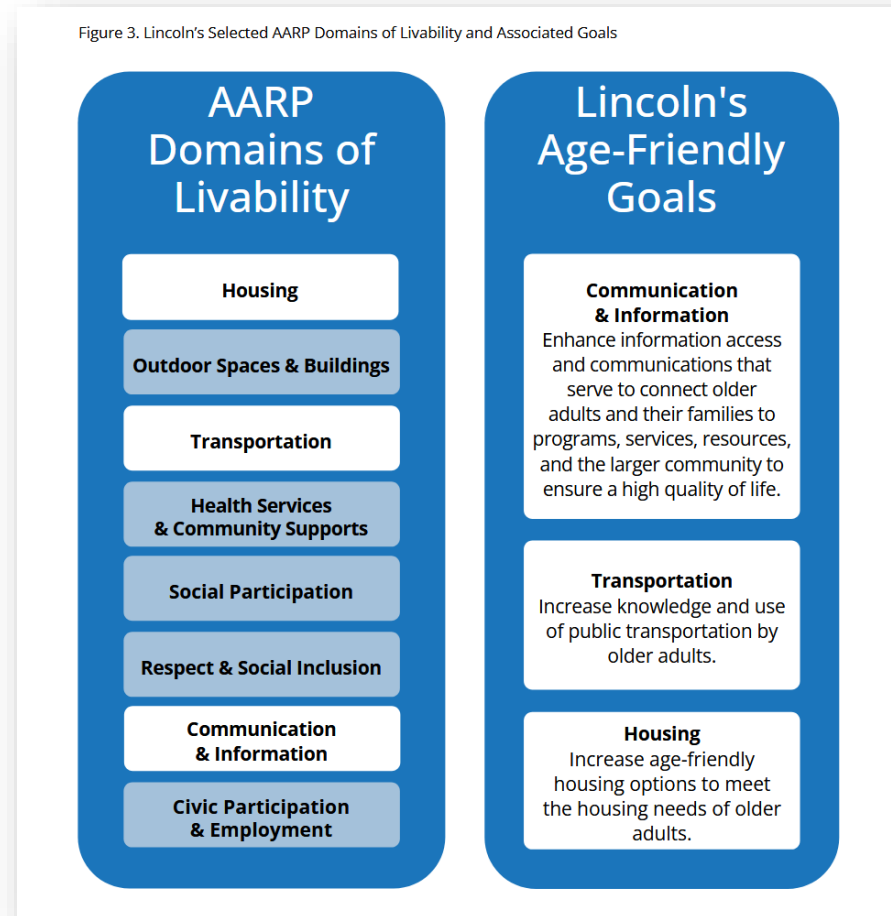
Age Friendly – the origins of a concept

- World Health Organization: Age-Friendly Cities are about tapping into the potential of what older adults can offer!
- A focus on health, engagement by the older adult in the community, and a sense of safety for the sake of quality of life.

The older person serves as the focal point.

[The WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework - Age-Friendly World](#)

Age Friendly Cities – What does it entail?



[age-friendly-action-plan-final-5.27.26.pdf](#)

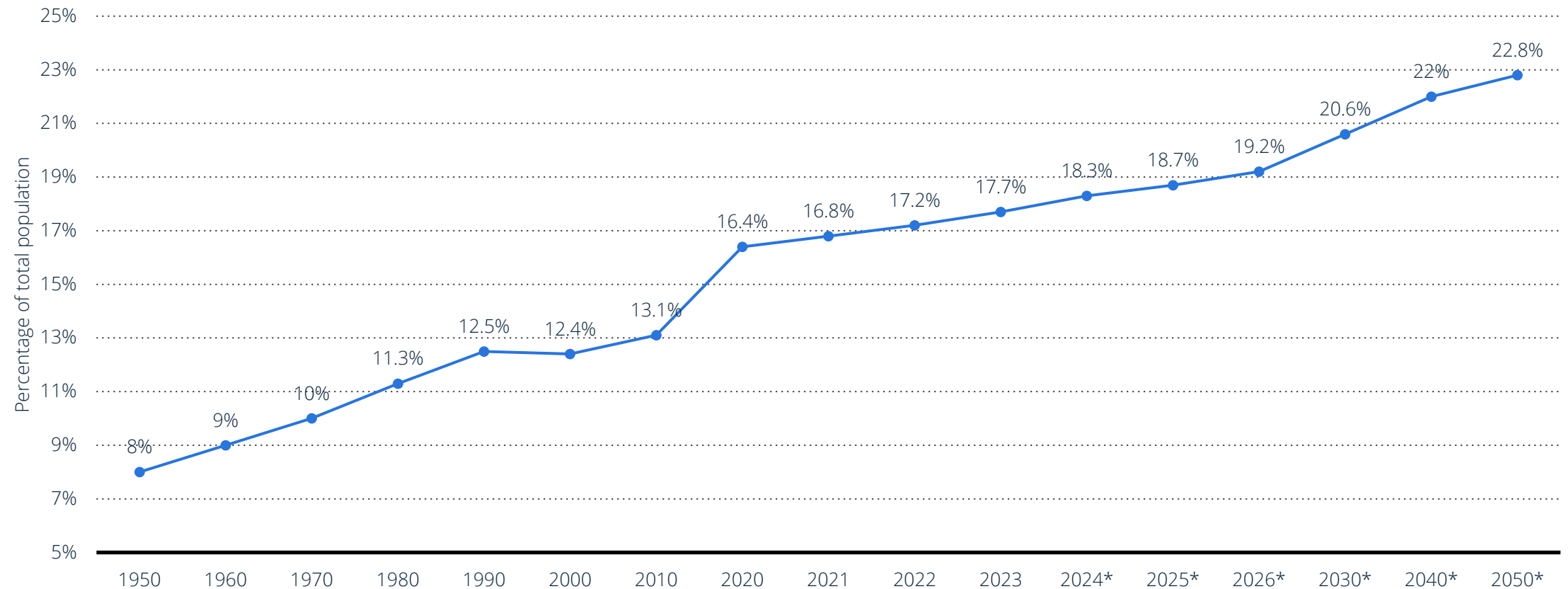
Demographic Reality – Aging is a Global Issue.

- **By 2050**, the world's 60 and over population predicted to be **22.8%** of the population.
 - (where will you be in 2050???)
- By 2030 “3 out of 5 people will live in cities.”
- Yet, **people who are aging do so over the life course** – and creating space that supports their quality of life is not only good for them but good for all others including young families, people with limited mobility, and those who plan to age in place.

[Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide](#)

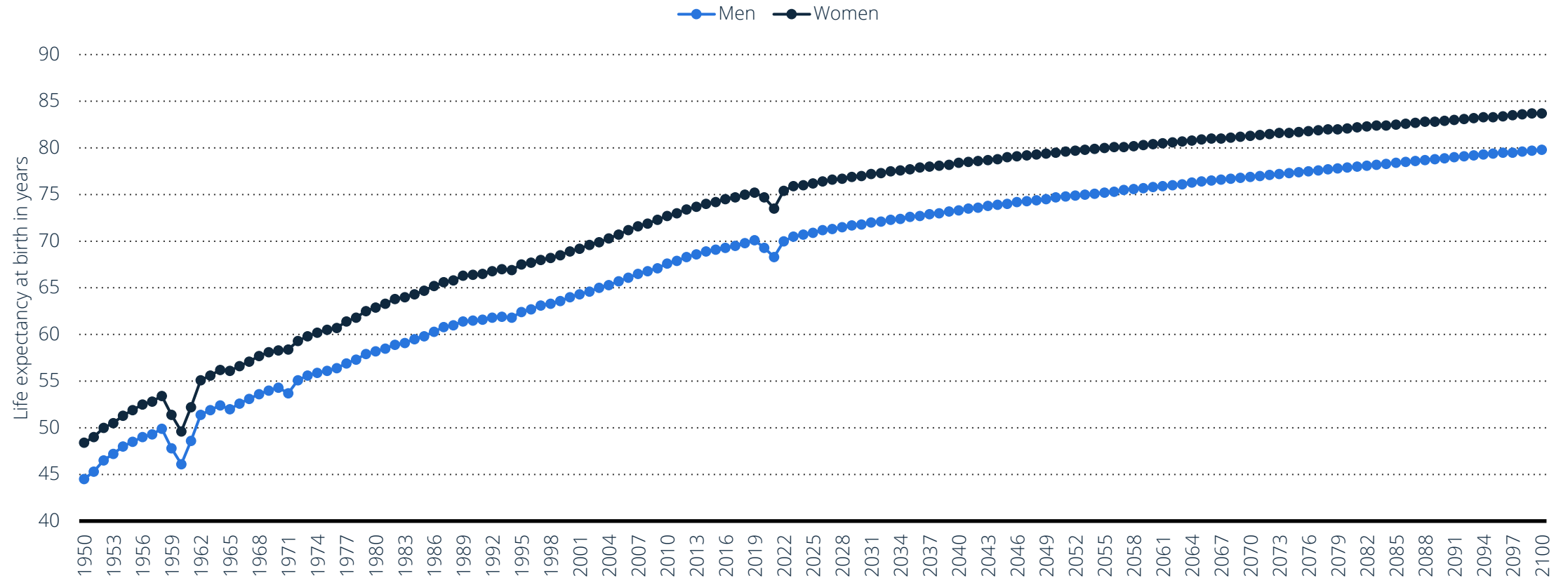
Share of the United States population aged 65 years and older from 1950 to 2050

Older Adults as a percentage of the total population in the U.S. 1950-2050



Global life expectancy at birth by gender from 1950 to 2023, with projections until 2100

2050 (men 74.7, women 79.5) 2100 (men 79.8, women 83.7)



Note(s): Worldwide; 2024; Life expectancy at birth

Source(s): United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA); ID 673420

Key Points

- The increase in global life expectancy is due to fewer maternal and neonatal deaths along with communicable diseases. More deaths will be due to obesity and metabolic disorders
[BMJ 2024 Global Life Expectancy](#)
 - Healthy aging becomes an issue – what can we (you and me) do now to remain healthy?
- By 2030 – births and deaths will be the same, and then deaths will exceed births impacting population and workforce numbers. Who will provide the care? [CBO Demographic Outlook 2026 to 2056](#)
- Life expectancy gap between men and women will shrink to 3.9 years in 2050.
 - The availability of a caregiver becomes more real. But are they both in good health?

Supporting the Need for Age Friendly Living

- People want to live in their same home/community but are not sure their community will age with them.
 - Creating spaces that afford safe walking (even sidewalks, cross-walks) access to needed services/resources (Third places, Chia-Yuan Yu, 2025), and safe transit (ease in accessing service and convenience, Wenwen Shi et al, 2025)
 - See Chia-Yuan Yu (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci9050141>
 - See Wnwen Shi et al (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251396642>
- Aging adults (50 +) are less likely to want to move to a retirement community compared to younger adults (18-49).
 - What about intergenerational living (Kar Him Mo et al, 2025)?
 - See Kar Him Mo et al (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.106633>

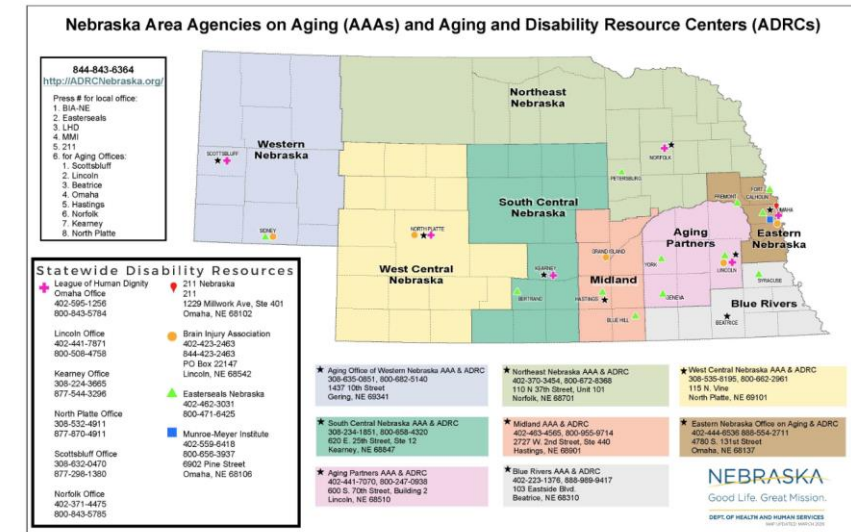
Supporting the Need for Age Friendly Living

- Most people expect to be a caregiver at some point in time. Who will support them and how can they continue in this role? The need for Area Agencies on Aging is key!

<https://eldercare.acl.gov/home>

Area Agencies on Aging

Area Agencies on Aging deliver a wide range of services to the community.



[View AAA and ADRC Map as PDF.](#)

Supporting the Need for Age Friendly Living

- For those without a caregiver, the benefits of bringing the 4Ms into a person's home (What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility) with the help of **nonmedical home care** (Chandler et al) and **Community Health Workers** (De Lima et al, 2026) can have a positive impact.
- Serves as a connection between the health care provider and the patient.
- Better health outcomes, greater focus on care plans, and detection of any changes in health.
 - See Chandler et al (2026), <https://doi.org/10.3928/00989134-20251203-01>
 - De Lima et al (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.70279>

Supporting the Need for Age Friendly Living

- To live in one's own home, there is a need contact with others. **Third places become important.**
 - Grocery Store, Costco, Bank, Coffee Shop – **people who know about me and care if I show up.**
 - See Chia-Yuan Yu (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci9050141>
- **A need to connect with others** through dining, retail, fun and inexpensive activities, nearby community centers and libraries, and other entertainment. Parks are a great starting place if designed well. Park benches, bathrooms, even sidewalks, shade for hot days, water, wayfinding, secure parking lots, etc. (LeeHsueh Lee & ChiaAn Chang, 2026).
 - See LeeHsueh Lee & ChiaAn Chang, 2026
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26892618.2026.2708968#d1e503>

Case Example – Bob (88 ½) and Mary (70)

The lake is their third place

- Bob sometimes walks up to 28,000 STEPS a day. Between walking around a 4-mile lake, mowing his lawn twice a week, and getting on the treadmill – just because, exercise is part of his routine. 68 years of marriage to his lovely wife.
- Mary walks with Bob around the lake, serves as a caregiver to her husband (navigating VA services), and cares for her sister with multiple health issues. 48 years of marriage to her husband who depends on her for remaining at home.



Age Friendly is More than Zero Entry/One Level Living

- In our quest to make homes age friendly – do we leave out the benefits of physically challenging designs? (Environmental Fit vs. Environmental Press).
- How can we encourage ongoing exercise in our homes and neighborhoods? “Avoiding Bungalow Legs.”
- See: Gilroy, R & Townshend, T. (2024). Avoiding “bungalow legs”: active aging and the built environment.
<https://DOI:10.1080/13574809.2024.2363826>



[Wood Stairs & Railings for Interior and Deck Builds | Lowe's](#)

Age Friendly Home Tips to Age in Place

- People wanting to remain in their homes want (and need) their home to be age friendly.
- Electrical outlets – raising to a level you can reach standing or sitting.
- Dropping light switches and using paddle switches.
- More is better with lighting – LED lighting offers better illumination.
- Double handrails on stairs, grab bars in bathrooms, outswing doors for the bathroom.

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2016/aging-friendly-renovation-improvements.html>

Age Friendly Home Tips

- Bathroom – can it be adjusted for a wheelchair (if needed)? Height of toilet can be switched to make it easier to get up and down.
- Kitchen – LED lighting, user friendly appliances, non-slip flooring, varied height for workspaces, or a place for a cushioned seat.
- Laundry Room – toggle lights, (again) non-slip flooring, front-loading washers/dryers
- Outside the home – lighting along sidewalks, doorways, bench for packages, covered entryway



Travel and the Benefit of Age Friendly Airports

- **21% of leisure travelers are 80 and older.**
- Air Travel is thought to be easier than traveling by car because of the convenience.
- However, there are challenges.
 - Signage/wayfinding
 - Distance between gates (Regardless of age)
 - Few places to rest
 - PA system (your gate has changed!)
 - Toilets and grab bars (Seattle)
 - Travelers with cognitive issues
- Working with older adults to audit airports



See: Glover et al, (2024). Age-Friendly Airports: Exploring the Experiences of Older Travelers. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924788.2024.2323315>

Age Friendly Applies to Many Things

- Airports
 - Automobiles (best cars for older drivers)
 - Cities
 - Health Systems
 - Home
 - Language – how we treat people as they age
 - Technology – patient portals!
 - Transportation
 - Universities!
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- Do we see aging as a disease or a process?
What about your own aging? How is your environment helping or hindering your aging?



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we have — 

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