

## 2025 Annual Report

### Rahway SID LLC



## Introduction

Rahway Special Improvement District's mission is to promote the economic well-being of all businesses within the City of Rahway and to maintain a strong partnership between the arts and business communities. In March 2025, Rahway SID LLC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was designated as the management corporation that oversees programming and activities in the special improvement district.

Rahway SID uses four pillars to guide programming, services and activities: EXPERIENCE, ECONOMIC VITALITY, ACTIVATION, and ARTS.

## EXPERIENCE

The EXPERIENCE pillar tackles pedestrian experience in the Central Business District through beautification initiatives, supplemental maintenance services, and public safety. Initiatives and services are based upon the current conditions and needs identified.

The SID maintenance team works 6 days a week to clean and maintain streets and public spaces, including plazas, sidewalks, and parks, in and around the Central Business District as one of its core services. Supplemental services provided by Rahway SID include snow removal, litter and leaf removal, weeding, addressing graffiti, rodent mitigation, power washing, and trash removal.

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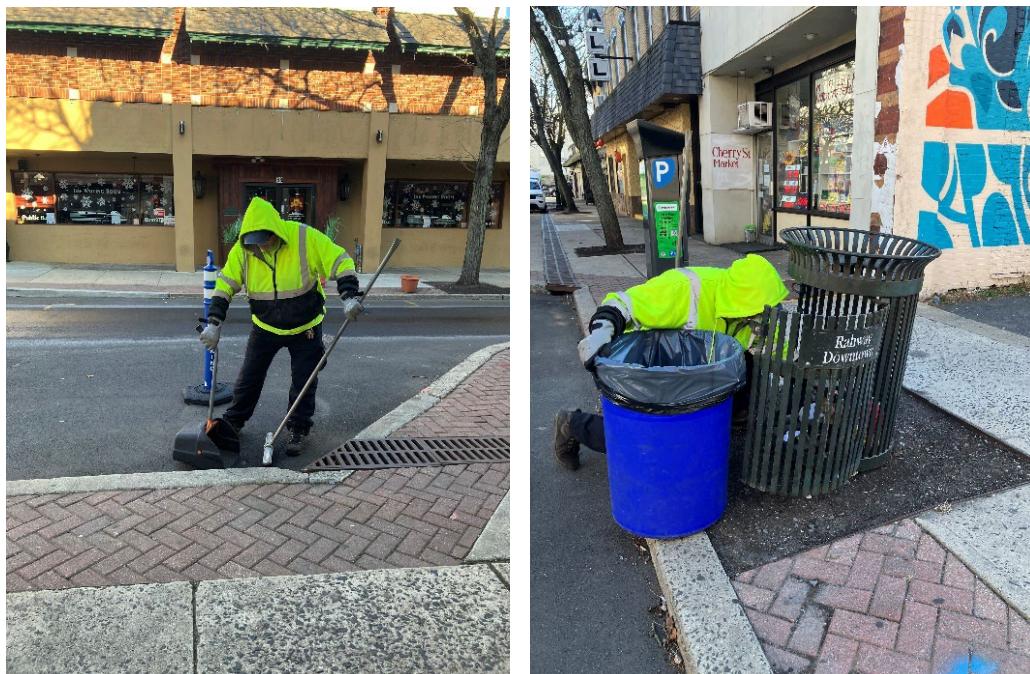


Figure 1: SID maintenance workers sweep litter and change liners in garbage cans on E. Cherry Street.

### Greener and Seasonal Plantings

Rahway SID enhances and maintains the Central Business District's landscaping, including upkeep and watering greenery, flowers and ornamentals in sidewalk planters along Main Street, Cherry Street, and Irving Street. The crew also maintains plantings in the Train Station Plaza, MLK Park, and Rahway Arts District Park. During the summer season, our maintenance crew regularly provides water to hanging baskets, rectangular and round planters as well as recently planted trees.

Colorful annuals are carefully selected based on the season and conditions. Flower displays may include vibrant pansies in early spring, petunias and everblooming flowering plants during the summer, mums and millet in the fall, and ornamental cabbage and greenery in the winter.

### Holiday Decorations and Lights

Holiday lights and festive décor brighten up the Central Business District during the holiday season. The Train Station Plaza has become a picture-perfect place for selfies and family photos with the 'Greetings from Rahway' mural as a backdrop to the Christmas tree, dreidel, and kinara on display. The seasonal decorations are installed by our contractor before Thanksgiving and removed and stored after New Year's.

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*Figure 2: Winter greenery and holiday decorations in Rahway Arts District Park*



*Figure 3: Holiday decor at the Train Station Plaza*

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## ECONOMIC VITALITY

The ECONOMIC VITALITY pillar encompasses efforts and events that support Rahway's small business community. These include marketing and outreach initiatives, in addition to business programs and services.

Rahway SID supports Rahway's small business community through several programs. These include outreach and communications, grants and programs, ribbon cuttings and marketing initiatives. Dedicated staff connect local business owners and operators with important resources. Helpful information includes everything from how to apply for necessary zoning permits to spreading the word about business grants, and hosting business networking events.

### New businesses opened in 2025

In 2025, 64 commercial zoning permits were approved for new businesses operating in Rahway. Rahway SID conducts outreach to each new business to welcome them and provide information about available resources. The organization worked in concert with the City of Rahway and Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness of 13 businesses through ribbon cuttings and grand opening announcements in 2025.

Grand openings/ribbon cutting ceremonies supported by Rahway SID in 2025:

- Agapi Greek Restaurant, 124 Rt 27 (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Bagel Bar, 77 E. Milton Ave (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Delicias Restaurant, 1524 Irving St (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Dunkin Donuts, 1800 US-1 South (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Fork, 1519 Main St (Restaurants and other eating places)
- La Fogata, 1788 St. Georges Ave (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Legends Supermarket, 1593 Main St (Grocery and convenience retailers)
- Magralo Boutique, 1667 Irving St (Clothing and accessories retailer)
- Nettie's, 2186 Elizabeth Ave (Restaurants and other eating places)
- New Ink Association, 1591 Main St (Personal care services)
- Rahway's Best After School Program, 561 W. Grand Ave (Childcare day services)
- Sweetistry Dessert Bar, 1530 Irving St (Restaurants and other eating places)
- Zulley's Beauty Bar, 1657 Irving St (Personal care services)

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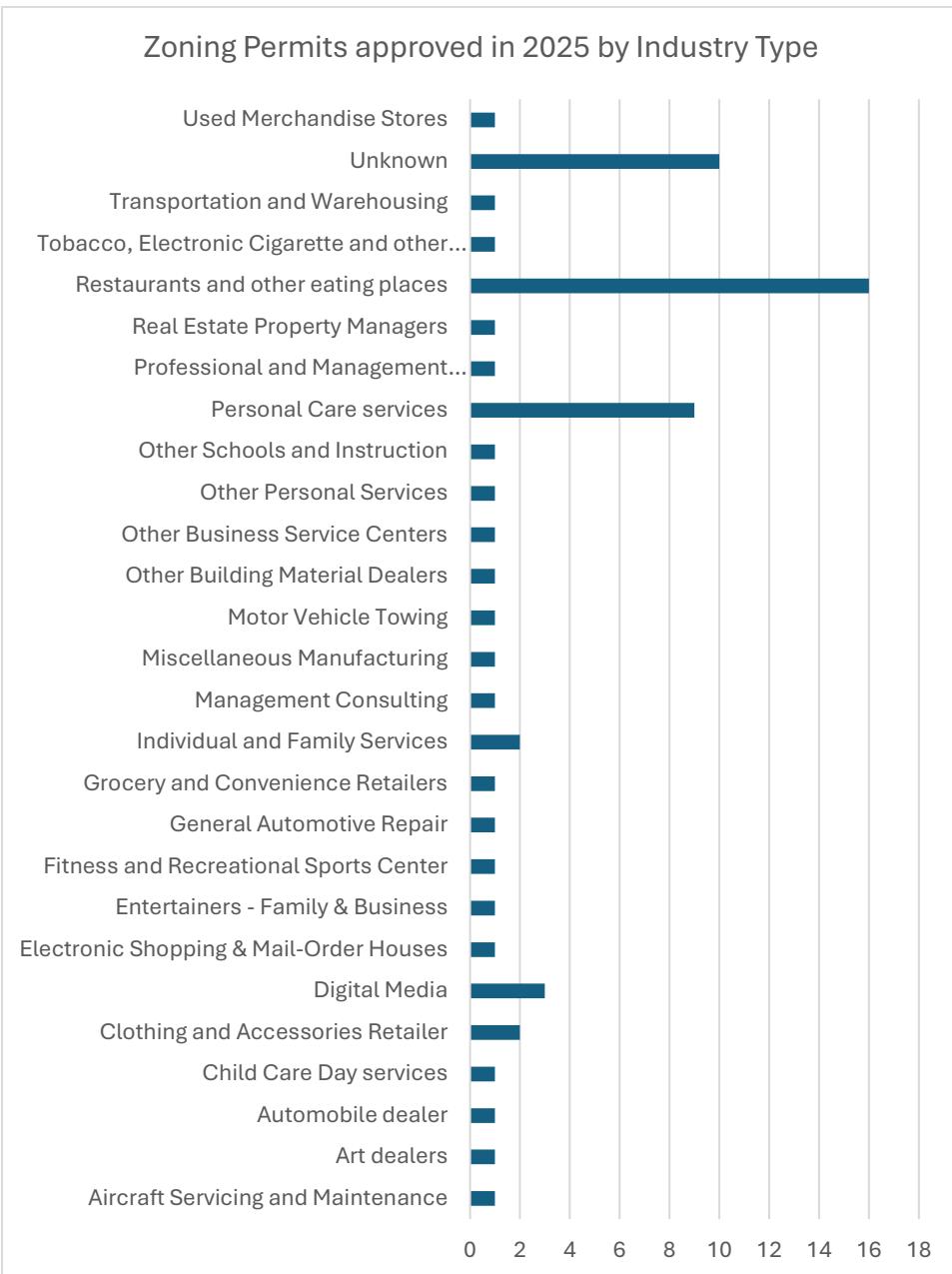


Figure 4: A breakdown of zoning permits approved in 2025 by business/industry type

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*Figure 5: Ribbon cutting ceremony at Rahway's Best After School Program & Summer Camp*

## Marketing

Rahway SID has a communications team that updates the Rahway Is Happening website, social media platforms, biweekly consumer email newsletters, and dedicated business newsletters. The website includes a business directory that helps residents and visitors learn about businesses and local landmarks, such as the Union County Performing Arts Center, and a calendar that lists events that may be of interest to them.

In 2025, the Rahway Is Happening website had more than 45,000 visits. Rahway SID strives to reach new audiences and increase engagement through multiple channels, including email marketing campaigns, paid ads and organic posts on social media, earned media, digital and print marketing campaigns.

Email campaigns are sent to a growing list of subscribers who are interested in Rahway's community events, arts, culture, dining and retail. In 2025, Rahway SID began using several engagement strategies that led to significant increases in open rates, clicks, and net new contacts.

The Rahway is Happening Instagram account gained over 415 new follows in 2025 and over 644,000 views during the year. Top performing content was event driven, as well as video and posts featuring

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people and community pride.



Figure 6: Statistics from Rahway is Happening's 2025 email marketing campaigns



Figure 7: Rahway Is Happening Instagram's 2025 engagement statistics

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#### **Outreach**

Rahway SID staff is in regular communication with businesses in the community to understand their needs and provides them with information about marketing opportunities, networking events, and other critical notices. Staff also acts as a liaison between the City of Rahway and business owners and operators, listening and elevating concerns to government leaders as needed.

The organization sends advisories and important notifications to business owners about road closures and other planned activities that may impact their businesses. In preparation for the County of Union's reconstruction of the Irving Street bridge, Rahway SID worked with the City's Department of Engineering and Land Use to develop appropriate street signage, address parking concerns, and raise awareness of businesses affected by the construction project.

#### **Marketing Events**

Rahway SID presents or sponsors numerous events throughout the year, some of which are marketing events and initiatives designed to spotlight retail businesses, local restaurants and eateries. These marketing events include Soup Stroll, Taste of Spring, No Sin Mi Bocadillo and the 'Shop Rahway, Support Local' initiative.



*Figure 8: Soup Stroll attendees pose with their cups*

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#### *Soup Stroll 2025*

This event was held on four Saturdays in January 2025. This is a unique opportunity for restaurants to greet new patrons and encourage return visits. Approximately 28,000 cups of soup were distributed over the four days which underlines the popularity of this event.

#### *Taste of Spring*

This is a well-loved annual event held each spring inside the Recreation Center. In 2025, 31 restaurants participated. Twenty-six restaurants were from Rahway and 5 from the local area. Additionally, 5 local breweries participated in the beer garden including Wet Ticket Brewing. Attendance at this sold-out event is typically between 850-1000 people.



Figure 9: Two Rahway businesses who participated in the 2025 Taste of Spring: Wet Ticket Brewing and Adeline Deli

#### *No Sin Mi Bocadillo*

This is a relatively new food stroll, now in its second year. In 2025, 10 restaurants participated with small bites that celebrated Latin food and culture. This event was timed with other Hispanic Heritage Month events organized by the City of Rahway.

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Figure 10: Hugo's Peruvian Restaurant and La Chula sold delicious bites during No Sin Mi Bocadillo

### Shop Rahway, Support Local - Small Business Saturday

This marketing initiative supports the small business community. It is timed around the national awareness campaign for Small Business Saturday, and the county-level campaign Union County Means Business. Rahway SID supported retail businesses by promoting their special offers, discounts, and events through:

- Inclusion on the Rahway Is Happening website's 'Shop Local' page
- Paid social ad campaign on Instagram and Facebook
- Organic social posts on Rahway Is Happening social media feeds
- Providing paper shopping bags with 'SHOP RAHWAY, SUPPORT LOCAL' branding for customers making purchases
- Customer raffle with \$100 gift cards distributed to three winning tickets
- Inclusion in the gift card directory on the Rahway Is Happening website

Rahway SID also partnered with Rahway Chamber of Commerce to hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Winter Window Decorations Contest. Twenty-five businesses got into the holiday spirit and competed for the public's choice award (plus a trophy and a \$200 prize). The online form received over 1,150 votes for favorite window decoration. The Rahway Senior Art Class also visited participating businesses to cast their vote for best window display.

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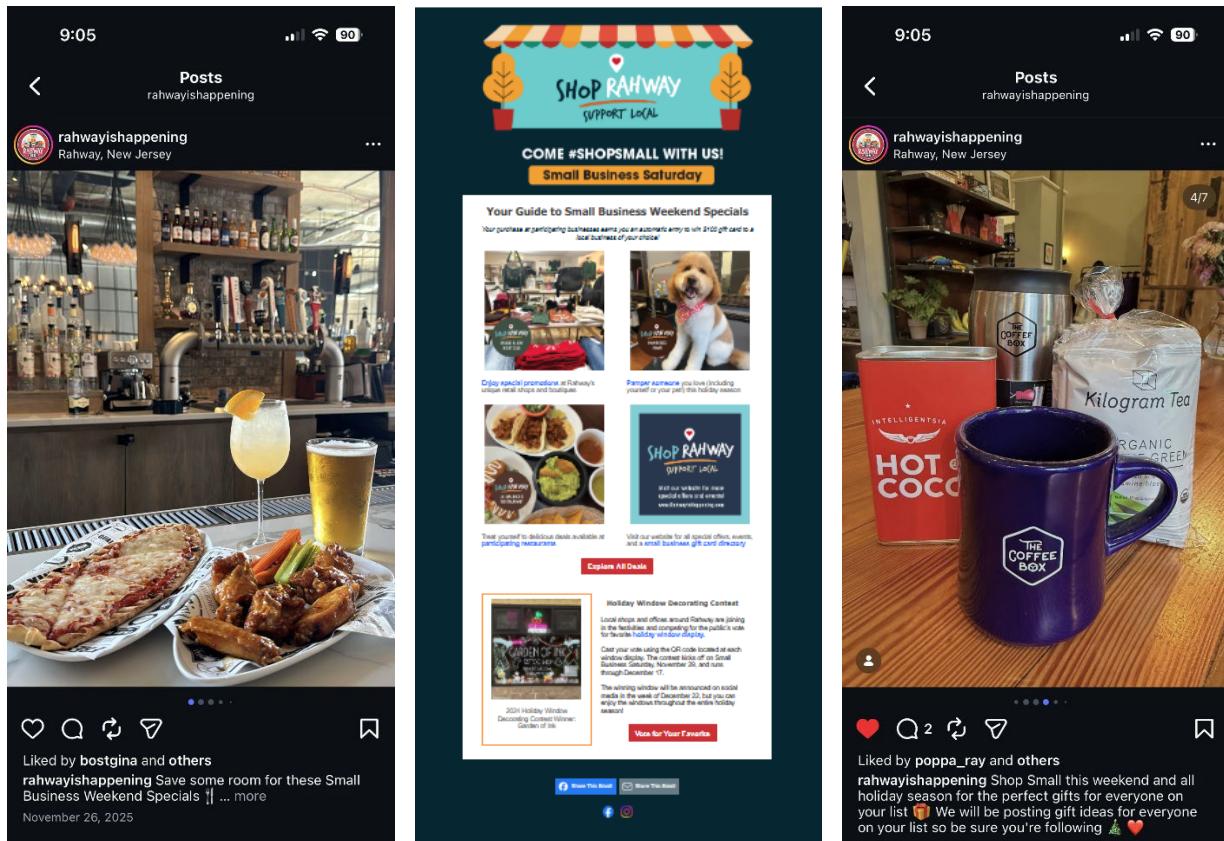


Figure 11: Some of Rahway SID's marketing initiatives promoting Rahway businesses for Small Business Saturday

## Business Programs and Grants

The Rahway Special Improvement District first made grants available to property owners and businesses in 2023 through two programs – the Façade Improvement Grant and the Business Improvement Grant. Applications for Façade Improvement Grants were open to property owners for improvements to exterior facades and storefronts. Thirty-two applications were received, and of those, 24 met the established criteria for eligibility. Ten property owners completed the required paperwork for funding.

Applications for the Business Improvement Grants were open to small businesses renting storefront spaces for interior improvements, signage, and brand/marketing design services. The SID received 130 applications. Of those, 109 met the established criteria for eligibility. Fifty-four completed all steps and received funding.

In 2025 and 2026, Rahway SID is working to close out the remaining open applications in the Façade Improvement Grant and Business Improvement Grant programs.

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Other business programs were administered or supported in 2025 by Rahway SID. These included Servsafe Food Handler Manager Training, offered in both English and Spanish sessions through the Health Department.

A Social Media and Branding for Small Businesses training program was offered to small businesses seeking to improve their social media reach and engagement. Three businesses participated in the training, and all saw results from implementing the recommended social media strategies.

Rahway SID also hosted several networking events for business owners, including one for Women in Business, a general SID business event, a networking meeting for Hispanic and Latino business owners, and one for restaurant operators.



Figure 12: Business owners enjoyed networking at a SID gathering

## ACTIVATION

The focus of the ACTIVATION pillar is to transform public spaces into vibrant community hubs by giving people reasons to gather. Rahway SID's programming has included both temporary and permanent strategies, such as pop-ups, markets, special events and music.

The Rahway Special Improvement District supports many of the City's popular events including the Cherry Street Soiree, Viva Rahway, the Mayor's Summer Concert Series, and the annual Tree Lighting.

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Additionally, Rahway SID organizes the Mayor's Music Series, musical performances that take place weekly June-September on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Performances held in Rahway Arts District Park, the Paseo, on Cherry Street, and in the Train Station Plaza bring the community out into these public spaces. Residents may bring their lawn chairs, purchase takeout at neighborhood restaurants, and let their children play outdoors while enjoying these free concerts. The music series features a range of musical styles, genres, and performers.



Figure 13: Music all summer long in Rahway Arts District Park and the Paseo

## ARTS

The ARTS pillar includes arts and cultural programming, such as arts-focused community events, as well as temporary and permanent installations and presentations of public art within the City of Rahway.

### Arts Fest

Now in its 4th year, Arts Fest was held on September 20, 2025. The afternoon event featured live musical performances, an artist market, and an artist who created a 3-D chalk artwork on the sidewalk to the delight of attendees. Approximately 60 vendors sold handmade arts, crafts, home

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décor, clothing and accessories showcasing the diversity of creativity at home in Rahway. This event typically draws 500-750 attendees to Irving Street from Rahway and surrounding towns.



*Figure 14: The chalk artist poses with his completed sidewalk drawing at Arts Fest*

### NJ Arts & Music Express

The City of Rahway and Rahway SID partnered with Woodbridge Township for a second year to celebrate the arts across communities in New Jersey Arts & Music Express. With free fares onboard NJ TRANSIT trains between Rahway, Avenel, and Woodbridge stations, visitors could ‘hop on, hop off’ to experience a variety of arts, music, and cultural activities at each stop.

### Festival of the Moon

Rahway SID and the City of Rahway sponsored the presentation of the globally touring artwork Museum of the Moon by U.K. artist Luke Jerram inside Union County Performing Arts Center on October 4-20, 2025. The artwork merges art and science, allowing viewers to see the detailed surface of the moon up close through NASA imagery. This is the first time Museum of the Moon was presented in New Jersey.

The City of Rahway, Rahway SID, and UCPAC organized ‘Festival of the Moon’, a series of unique arts and cultural performances and events themed around the moon. Fourteen City/SID sponsored events took place between September 26-October 21, 2025, drawing attendance in the thousands.

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Special events included a concert by the New Jersey Symphony, dance performances by American Repertory Ballet and Chinese Culture Arts Association, as well as theatrical performances by TheaterWorksUSA and New Jersey Opera. Attendees visited from Rahway, Linden, Clark, as well as other communities in Union County and Middlesex County.



*Figure 15: Museum of the Moon hangs overhead as NJ Symphony performs onstage at UCPAC during Festival of the Moon*

The arrival of Museum of the Moon and the event series overall were marketed through both paid advertising and earned media. Rahway SID and UCPAC collaborated to present a special preview event for social media content creators. This strategy led to thousands of content interactions on social media and numerous articles in online news publications.

The SID's role was critical not only in sponsoring the presentation of Museum of the Moon but integrating the business community into the festival. Twenty businesses participated by hosting events, creating special menu items, or offering discounts. These businesses were marketed on the event website, and in email and advertising campaigns. Restaurants near UCPAC reported revenue increases of 12%-25% on event days.

Moonlit Market was the City's first curated night market. The date was timed with an evening moonrise and was supportive of the opening night performance by NJ Symphony inside UCPAC. Approximately 400 people attended Moonlit Market, with vendors reporting better than expected sales and an overall positive experience.

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*Figure 16: Moonlit Market attendees browse and buy from vendors selling their unique and artistic wares*

## Conclusion

The Rahway Special Improvement District substantially contributes to community vitality through the many events, business programs, and marketing efforts it organizes and funds throughout the year. Rahway SID is committed to the four pillars that support business patronage and elevate experience for residents, visitors, and businesses in Rahway.

## Rahway SID LLC Board of Directors

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