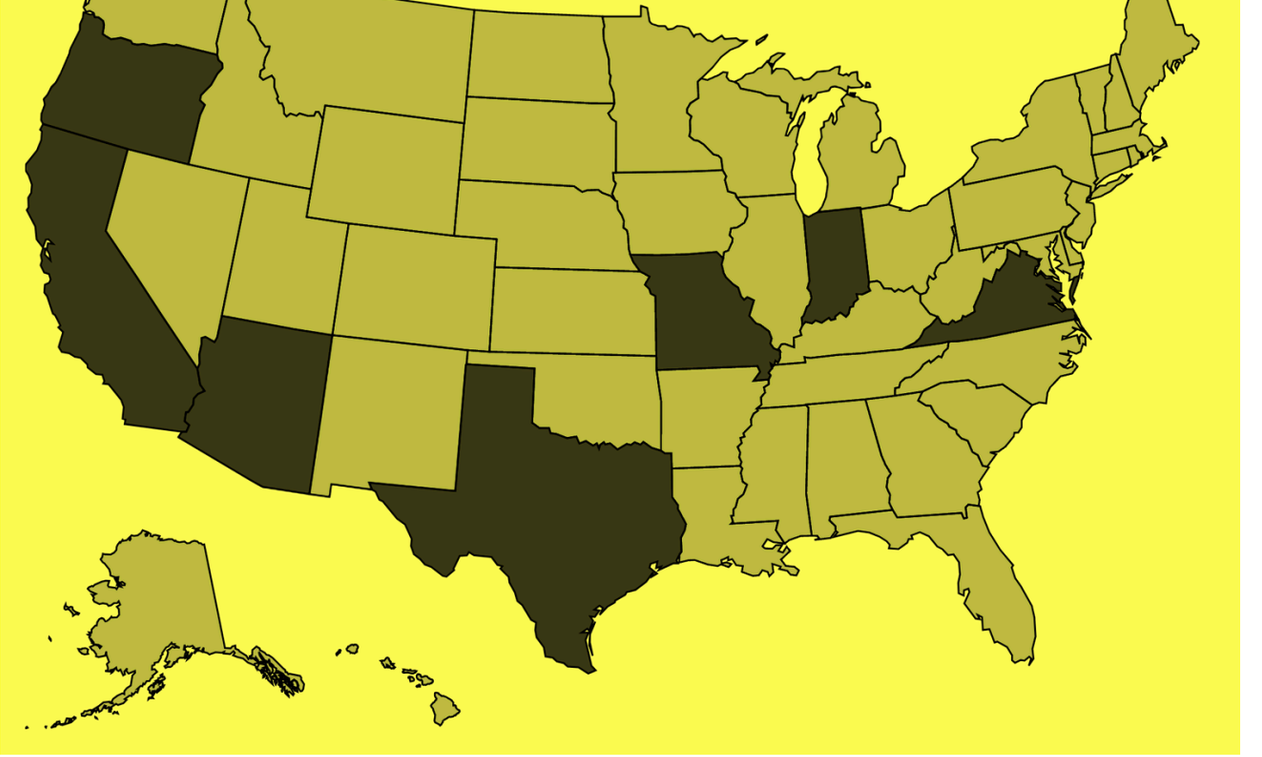
$64 billion of data center projects have been blocked or delayed amid local opposition



Local activism threatens to derail the U.S. data center boom

TL;DR: $64 billion in U.S. data center projects have been blocked or delayed by a growing wave of local, bipartisan opposition. What was once quiet infrastructure is now a national flashpoint

— and communities are pushing back.

Report Objective: This report catalogs and analyzes the rise in local opposition to data center projects across the United States. It focuses on projects blocked or delayed over the past two years amid permitting or regulatory challenges, primarily driven by organized activist groups.

Note: This report highlights political risks and local opposition as frequent factors in data center project delays or cancellations, including community resistance, environmental concerns, and zoning issues. However, attributing delays exclusively to these factors oversimplifies a complex landscape.

Data center projects are influenced by multiple intertwined elements—regulatory compliance, infrastructure readiness, utility availability, economic incentives, and broader market dynamics. Each project's circumstances must be individually assessed to fully understand the combination of forces causing delays or obstructions.

Research Timeline: May 2024 - March 2025.

Methodology: Data Center Watch tracks opposition to large-scale data center projects across 28 U.S. states, building a database of activist activity and public officials involved in blocking or delaying development. We reviewed public sources such as local media, government filings, petitions, social media, and official statements. The database is continuously updated, though some figures reflect estimates that may change.

About This Report's Focus: This report offers insights for stakeholders but does not assess — or in any way seek to diminish — the motivations or merits of activist concerns; such evaluation is simply outside the scope.

Big Takeaways:

1. **Bipartisan Backlash.** Opposition to data center development cuts across political lines. Republican

officials often raise concerns about tax incentives and energy grid strain, while Democrats tend to focus on environmental impacts and resource consumption. This cross-party resistance defies expectations and marks a rare area of bipartisan alignment in infrastructure politics.

2. **"AI Infrastructure" Isn't Always Welcome.** Despite the post-ChatGPT enthusiasm for AI, communities are not universally embracing the physical infrastructure behind it. Even when promised jobs and tax revenue, local residents often push back against data centers — challenging the prevailing narrative that tech development is always a local economic win.
3. **Data Centers Are the New NIMBY Flashpoint.** Where communities once rallied against factories, warehouses, or retail sprawl, they're now opposing data centers. From noise and water usage to power demands and property values, server farms have become a new target in the broader backlash against large-scale development. The landscape of local resistance is shifting — and data centers are squarely in the crosshairs.

Executive Summary

- **$18 billion worth of data center projects were blocked,** and another $46 billion of projects were delayed over the last two years in the face of opposition from residents and activist groups.
- There are at least **142 activist groups across 24 states** organizing to block data center construction and expansion.
- **Opposition to data center construction is largely motivated by local concerns.** While the exact reasons opponents cite vary from location to location, some common themes are higher utility bills, water consumption, noise, impact on property value, and green space preservation.

  - Data center projects that involve building their own power supplies are likely to attract additional opposition related to energy-generating infrastructure.
  - A recent survey shows that while a majority of Americans support data center construction in the abstract, most are skeptical of projects in their communities.

- **The backlash to data center development is bipartisan** and does not follow the typical ideological fault lines of American politics. There have been projects blocked in red states and blue states, and there are both Republican and Democratic officials opposing new projects.
  - A review of public statements by elected officials in districts with large data center projects (50 MW>) under consideration found that **55%** of the politicians who had taken public positions against the data center projects were **Republicans,** and **45%** were **Democrats**. This bipartisan opposition is notable because major data center developments tend to be located in red states, with Virginia and Oregon being notable exceptions. Even in famously business-friendly Texas, there is bi-partisan support for additional regulations on data center development in the State Senate.
    - While there is bipartisan opposition to data center development, the exact issues emphasized by activists often differ based on their partisanship. On the left, you often see arguments around **environmental concerns**, while on the right, conservatives will often cite **opposition to tax abatements**. However, concerns over **power consumption and grid strain** have gained support across the political spectrum. And the traditional NIMBY opposition to new developments is driven by local residents and doesn't tend to have a partisan lean.
  - **Data center challenges arise primarily at the local level, as most permitting decisions are made by local authorities.** Consequently, even a supportive White House has limited control over delays arising at the local level.

- **Data center development is becoming an important issue in local politics.**
    - In Cascade Locks, Oregon, **voters recalled** two Port Authority officials in June 2023 for supporting a $100 million data center project from Roadhouse Digital. Following the recall election, the **new board canceled** the data center project in July 2023.
    - In Warrenton, Virginia, **residents voted out** all town council members who **supported Amazon's** proposed data center in the **November 2024** election. The newly elected council, composed entirely of project opponents, now has the mandate to **block** the data center.
- **The future looks like Virginia**
    - The tremendous growth of the data center industry in Northern Virginia has spurred intense data center opposition.
    - Virginia is now the focal point for community opposition to data centers in the United States, with 42 activist groups campaigning to slow, stop, or further regulate data center development.
    - Opposition in Virginia is becoming increasingly professional and organized. In 2023, the Data Center Reform Coalition was founded to coordinate efforts among environmental, conservation, and homeowner association groups opposed to data center projects.
        - The Data Center Reform Coalition is a growing organization, adding new members to its platform as opposition to data centers continues to rise in Virginia.
    - Data center development has become an important political issue, with candidates for local, state, and federal office regularly taking positions on it.
    - Legislative and regulatory measures aimed at curtailing data center growth have been introduced at both local and state levels.
    - **As data center development accelerates elsewhere in the**

country, local pushback on data centers is likely to follow the same pattern seen in Virginia.

Grassroots and Organized Opposition Overview

The map below shows the geography of the emerging data center backlash and how it compares to states where Amazon, Google, Meta, and Microsoft (hyperscalers) have 50 MW> data center projects in the early planning stage.

Data Center Watch examined the 28 states where American hyperscalers have 50 MW> data center projects in planning or development. In those states, Data Center Watch identified 142 advocacy organizations actively organizing to block or increase regulatory burdens on new data center developments.

Data Center Opposition: We define data center opposition as efforts

to obstruct data center construction or the infrastructure required to supply them with energy, such as transmission lines. These activities may include blocking specific projects, advocating for restrictive zoning, or championing new regulations, administrative oversight, or taxes aimed specifically at data center development that would increase development or operational costs. Additionally, we include groups that focus on related issues that could indirectly hinder data center expansion in an area, such as opposition to new power plant developments.

Gathering of the Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition. Credits PECVA.

We've divided the data center opposition landscape into two main categories, reflecting the level of organization and professionalism.

Grassroots Groups: These are small groups of individuals without a formal legal structure that use social media platforms, online petitions, and word of mouth to oppose data center projects (or that indirectly impact them). These groups typically emerge organically around a single proposed project. Their most common tactic for conducting advocacy is to organize letter-writing campaigns and public comments at government meetings. While these groups don't typically have a lot of resources, they are generally local residents with influence over local officials.

The emergence of grassroots groups is often the first sign of upcoming challenges for a potential project.

Formal Organizations: There are a few types of formal organizations that organize against data centers. The most common are the local chapters of national organizations like the Sierra Club or Clean Water Action. These organizations will generally focus on concerns about data center development that align with their national missions. For example, the Sierra Club tends to focus on energy consumption and green space conservation. Established local civic groups also take up data center opposition as part of their mission. Some examples of these include Friends of the Columbia Gorge in Oregon and Manassas Battlefield Trust in Virginia.

There are also dedicated organizations opposed to data center construction, such as the Data Center Reform Coalition, which coordinates data center opposition efforts across 41 organizations in Northern Virginia.

Formal organizations bring resources and professionalism to their campaigns. **They often have full-time staff to lobby and organize, and the resources to file lawsuits challenging data center projects in court.**

Formal organizations are also better equipped to **promote national narratives opposing data centers** in the media. For example, there have been several high profile stories recently advancing environmental objections to data center expansion, with claims that the rapid expansion of AI data centers drives up fossil fuel-based energy consumption.

Petition Tracking: Data Center Watch also tracks online petitions against data center development. We have identified over 23 petitions with more than 31,000 signatures since 2022, initiated by both groups and individuals. These petitions serve both as an online organizing tool for data center opponents and as an additional rough measure of data center opposition in a given state.

Future Research

Data Center Watch has conducted the first comprehensive mapping of data center opposition across the country, which is a relatively new phenomenon in the United States. As this movement continues to evolve and grow, we are already witnessing its first instances of coalition-building in Virginia, marked by the formation of the Data Center Reform Coalition and early efforts to establish cross-state networks among opposition groups.

The goal of this project is to closely monitor the evolving landscape of data center opposition and further assess the risks emerging from data center opposition.

Avenues for future research include

- **Historical trend analysis:** Showing changes in the number of groups over time and the intensity of their activities to track momentum.
- **Opposition effectiveness:** Comparing regions where opposition has led to concrete policy shifts with those where it has failed.
- **Regulatory trends:** Analyzing state and local regulations restricting data center development, tracking new zoning laws, environmental regulations, or tax policies that impact data center development.
- **Emerging narratives:** Investigating how opposition narratives are forming across different ideological lines, their impact on public perception, and pickup on social and traditional media.
- **Local elected officials:** Tracking public positions taken by state and local politicians in offices with jurisdiction over potential data center projects.

Overview of Blocked & Delayed Projects

The map below shows states where data center projects have been blocked or delayed in the last two years, with details about each blocked or delayed project below.

Blocked: A project is considered *blocked* when its development has been definitively halted, either due to permit denials by local authorities or the voluntary withdrawal of the proposal in response to local opposition. While blocked projects can sometimes be reactivated by developers, for the purposes of our research, any such reactivation is classified as *delayed*, as activist actions have disrupted the original timeline. If a company submits a new proposal with similar characteristics in a different but nearby location after withdrawing a previous project, we treat it as a distinct project.

Delayed: A project is considered delayed when its original development timeline has been disrupted, but the developer is still working to get permitting and regulatory approval. This may occur due to extended regulatory reviews, temporary permit denials, legal challenges, or significant opposition from local communities that forces developers to modify or postpone their plans.

$64.4b of data center projects have been blocked or delayed by local authorities in the last two years.

Blocked Delayed

Source: Data Center Watch

Made with Flourish • Create a map

Blocked data center projects, sorted by investment value.

1 – Goodyear and Buckeye, Arizona. $14 billion. Tract. — Blocked (Withdrawn by the developer)

Tract's $14 billion project in Arizona was withdrawn in May 2024 after residents in the surrounding area pressured local authorities not to approve the required rezoning. Opponents of the data center raised concerns about the project's building heights, noise pollution, and the strain it would place on local resources.

In August 2024, Tract announced another project in the Buckeye area, near the airport, with similar characteristics to the one blocked after engaging with authorities and securing support from the Mayor.

2 – Peculiar, Missouri. $ 1.5 billion. Harper Road Technology Park, Diode Ventures. — Blocked (Local authorities amended zoning to prohibit data centers)

Diode Ventures' $1.5 billion proposal faced opposition from the group "Don't Dump Data in Peculiar," which raised concerns about the project's visual impact, noise, and effects on property values. In response to grassroots pushback in June 2024, the Peculiar Board of Aldermen sent the proposal back to the planning committee in August for reconsideration. On October 3, 2024, Peculiar's Planning Commission Board announced an ordinance to remove data centers from the city's zoning ordinance, beginning October 17, effectively blocking Diode Ventures' project.

3 – Chesterton, Indiana. $1.3 billion. Provident Realty Advisors. — Blocked (Withdrawn by the developer)

Provident Realty Advisors' $1.3 billion data center project was canceled in June 2024 after significant local pushback. Residents raised concerns about potential negative impacts on air quality, water resources, wildlife, and property values, which prompted the town council to reconsider the scale and location of the proposal. Public forums highlighted community resistance, leading Provident to withdraw its application.

4 – Richmond, Virginia. $500 million. DC Blox. — Blocked (Withdrawn by the developer)

A $500 million proposal by DC Blox for a data center project was deferred by the Henrico County Planning Commission in July 2024. The project, which would have been DC Blox's first in Virginia, aimed to develop up to 195,000 square feet of data center space with a 50 MW capacity. The deferral was recommended to address concerns about noise and aesthetics raised by county staff and local residents. In November 2024, DC Blox withdrew its application.

In February 2025, DC Blox announced plans to proceed with a revised project on the same site. The updated plan involves constructing a smaller, single-story, 65,000-square-foot data center situated behind

an existing self-storage facility. This adjustment aims to address previously raised concerns by relocating the facility farther from residential areas and placing it on a portion of the property that does not require rezoning. DC Blox still needs site plan approval from Henrico County authorities, and the new project could again spark opposition from local residents.

5– Catlett Station, Virginia. $400 million. Headwaters Site Development. — Blocked (Withdrawn by the developer)

Headwaters Site Development LLC withdrew its $400 million data center project on July 18, 2024, before a scheduled Planning Commission hearing. The developer had planned to rezone 67 acres in Fauquier County but opted to halt the application. Organized opposition from local residents centered around noise, water, power demands, and environmental conservation issues.

6 – Cascade Locks, Oregon. $100 million. Roundhouse Digital Infrastructure. — Blocked (Local authorities stopped the project)

A $100 million data center project by Roundhouse Digital Infrastructure was canceled in July 2023 after residents recalled two local officials responsible for the approval of the project. Residents raised concerns about increased utility rates and the developer's credibility, leading the Cascade Locks Port Authority to discontinue the project due to political backlash.

Delayed projects, sorted by investment value.

7 – Prince William, Virginia. $24.7 billion. QTS & Compass Data Centers. — Delayed

The $24.7 billion PW Digital Gateway project, led by QTS Realty Trust Inc. and Compass Datacenters, has been delayed due to widespread local opposition and is currently being contested in court through at least three lawsuits filed by activist groups. Opponents have raised concerns about the project's environmental impact, noise pollution, strain on the power grid, and potential damage to nearby historic sites. In October 2024, a Prince William County judge dismissed a lawsuit challenging the rezoning approvals for the PW Digital Gateway project, citing insufficient grounds for trial. The plaintiffs have since appealed to the Virginia Court of Appeals, leaving the project's future uncertain.

Current Status: As of March 2025, the PW Digital Gateway data center project, led by QTS Realty Trust Inc. and Compass Datacenters, remains delayed due to ongoing legal challenges and local opposition.

8 – Culpeper County, Virginia. $12 billion, Culpeper Acquisitions. — Delayed

Culpeper Acquisitions LLC's $12 billion data center project in Brandy Station was unanimously denied by the Planning Commission on June 12, 2024. Reports suggest that the end user may be a major hyperscaler, potentially Google or Meta. The 426-acre rezoning request faced local opposition due to concerns about rural preservation and the potential impact on Culpeper Battlefields State Park. The project's consideration by the Board of Supervisors has been deferred at the applicant's request. Debates over the rezoning of Brandy Station are ongoing, and activist groups remain alert to the possibility of the data center's project reactivation.

Current Status: As of March 2025, Culpeper Acquisitions LLC's data center project remains inactive. However, the Board of Supervisors has not yet issued a definitive decision.

9 – King George, Virginia. $6 billion. Amazon. — Delayed

Amazon's $6 billion King George data center project, initially approved in December 2023 with a performance agreement and tax abatement, faced new challenges in early 2024 when the newly elected Board of Supervisors voted to renegotiate the agreement. The project had already met resistance from local residents concerned about its impact on infrastructure and resources. During a meeting in March 2024, Board Chair T.C. Collins accused Amazon of hiring a "big old company in Arlington to dig up dirt on people," declaring that the county was "ready to go to war." In April 2024, the Board voted to reconsider rezoning over 500 acres of Amazon's land back to agricultural use, threatening the project's viability. Negotiations are ongoing, with demands for improved infrastructure, enhanced buffers, and potential policy reversals, while the enforceability of Amazon's agreement remains contested.

Current Status: As of March 2025, Amazon's data center project in King George County remains in a state of uncertainty due to ongoing disputes between the company and the county's Board of Supervisors.

10 – Midlothian, Virginia. $3 billion. Province Group. — Delayed

Province Group's $3 billion proposal for a 300MW, 1.525 million square feet data center project was deferred by the Powhatan County Planning Commission in July 2024 amid local opposition. Opponents of the project raised concerns about potential noise, traffic congestion, and environmental impact. The project was approved on October 28th, 2024, by the Powhatan County Commission in a tight 3-2 vote despite local opposition. Nevertheless, Dominion Energy would need to install a new substation and power lines to supply the data center buildings, potentially creating another source of delays and a battleground for local opposition.

Current Status: As of March 2025, Province Group's proposed data center campus has secured approval. However, activists remain vigilant, seeking alternative ways to prevent the project from moving forward.

11 – Fort Worth, Texas. $750 million. WUSF 5 Rock Creek East — Delayed

The Fort Worth Zoning Commission narrowly voted against a proposed $750 million Rock Creek Data Center Campus on July 11, 2024. Local opposition raised concerns about traffic, light pollution, and noise.

However, on September 12, the Fort Worth City Council approved zoning for the project despite the Zoning Commission's recommendation against it. The project is still not ready to proceed, as additional regulatory hurdles remain, and ongoing opposition may cause further delays in its implementation.

Current Status: As of March 2025, despite securing City Council approval, the company must still submit a site plan for approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Additionally, it must address concerns about compliance with city water regulations—key issues where local opposition has vowed to intervene against the project.

12 – Alexandria, Virginia. $165 million. Starwood Capital Group. — Delayed

Residents mobilized to block a $165 million project, Starwood Capital Group's Plaza 500, in the Bren Mar district. Neighbors, organized around the platform Save Bren Mar and opposed to the data center, pressured the Fairfax County Planning Commission, and the project was "deferred indefinitely" on November 16, 2022. In February 2024, the company filed for the project again, and, in September, it got initial approval from the County's Board of Supervisors. However, the project requires Dominion Energy to build a new electrical substation and transmission lines near homes, which has become the new focus of data center opposition. A public hearing on December 5, 2024, allowed residents to voice concerns, with another hearing scheduled for January 21st and 23rd, 2025. At the time of publication, Virginia's State Corporation Commission (SCC) has not yet made a decision.

Current Status: As of March 2025, the Plaza 500 data center project is awaiting a decision from the SCC on the proposed electrical substation and transmission lines by Dominion Energy. The opposition group, Save Bren Mar, encouraged its supporters to keep pushing against the data center project and submit their concerns to the SCC before the hearings.

13 – Santa Clara, California. $79 million. GI Partners. — Delayed

On March 6, 2024, the Santa Clara Planning Commission denied a conditional use permit for GI Partners' proposed four-story data center at 2805 Bowers Avenue, a property purchased for $79 million. Opponents of the project raised concerns about the increasing concentration of data centers in the area, as well as water and power consumption. GI Partners appealed the decision to the Santa Clara City Council and, after five months of further community engagement, received approval for the data center project on August 29, 2024.

Current Status: As of March 2025, GI Partners' data center is progressing through the development process but is experiencing a five-month delay on the planned construction timeline amid initial local opposition.

14 – Warrenton, Virginia. Investment undisclosed. Amazon. —Delayed
Amazon's proposed 220,000-square-foot data center campus on a $39 million, 42-acre plot received site plan approval from Warrenton town staff in April 2024, with 27 conditions. The project faced significant backlash from Warrenton residents in 2023, with over 500 people attending a Town Council meeting and nearly 130 speakers expressing opposition, including Oscar-winner Robert Duvall. Currently, the project faces multiple legal challenges from Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC), including lawsuits over the special use permit, withheld emails, and appeals processes. The disputes continued over the Board of Zoning Appeals' authority to hear CFFC's appeal, with the town initially blocking the appeal and later funding legal defense for the board. Starting in 2023, every town council member who supported the data center project has subsequently lost re-election. In the November 2024 general election, the remaining Town Council members who backed the Amazon project lost their seats. The results suggest the council may reconsider or halt the data center plans, reflecting the electorate's preferences. In the meantime, a court ordered the project to stall for at least one year.

Current Status: As of March 2025, Amazon's data center campus is facing at least a one-year delay following a court order related to one of the three ongoing lawsuits filed by Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC). The project also faces potential political obstacles following the recent victories of candidates critical of data center development in the Town

Council elections.

15 – Burns Harbor, Indiana. Investment undisclosed. Provident. — Delayed

Provident Realty Advisors' data center proposal in Burns Harbor, Indiana, faced strong opposition from local residents, leading to multiple delays and reconsiderations by city officials throughout the summer of 2024. Following sustained grassroots pushback during public hearings, Provident withdrew its petition on October 2, 2024, with plans to modify the proposal and address community concerns. An updated proposal has yet to be submitted.

Current Status: As of March 2025, Provident Realty Advisors has yet to submit an updated proposal for its data center project. The project remains in limbo as the company considers modifications to address community concerns.

16 – Manassas, Virginia. Investment undisclosed. Amazon. — Delayed

Amazon's Ashton data center proposal in Manassas, Virginia, faced strong community pushback over plans to build near homes and schools. After a 6-1 Planning Commission vote against it on June 26, 2024, citing noise and wildlife concerns, Amazon withdrew its October 2024 Board hearing request. The company still plans to build on the 52-acre site but aims to engage more with the community. The project, which sought to rezone agricultural and residential land for 95-foot industrial facilities, faced criticism from Crestwood and Tarawood residents and raised concerns about its impact on the Sudley corridor redevelopment. A public hearing before the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, originally set for January 21, has been postponed to an unspecified future date—the second postponement in the past three months.

Current Status: As of March 2025, local activists have successfully delayed Amazon's Ashton data center proposal, prompting the Prince William Board of County Supervisors to postpone its hearing twice. No new date has been set.

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