

COMMENTARY ON
DEVELOPMENT

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**THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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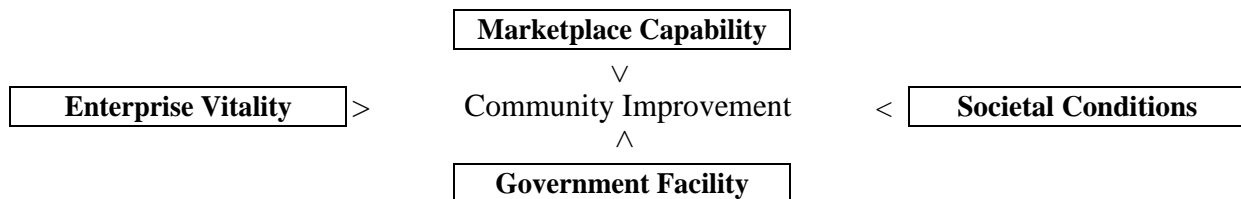
There are many groups in any area, whether it is a state, a region or a neighborhood, that are involved in efforts to promote the “development” of their area. Wade defines this community economic development effort as “purposeful [inter]action in an economy to improve economic well-being.” Many practitioners classify the components of well-being as to their economic development community development or characteristics. Waterhouse for example describes economic well-being as both rational growth and development and attaining or maintaining a high quality of life. These two broad expectations -- related to economic progress and quality of life -- are routinely adopted as the central themes or mission by many development organizations. For many localities, regions and states, development is characterized broadly as business competitiveness and community quality. Areas interested in community economic development gauge their successes based on the achievement of either or both of these missions.

Improvements can be pursued if community leaders, both elected and volunteer, are willing to advocate for, support, and commit resources to agreed-to approaches. This kind of regionally controllable community improvement depends on four steps: identifying the major influences acting on (and within) their regional economy; determine which features will be subject to purposeful interaction (features over which regional organizations have some affect or sway); decide on which program approaches to use to affect the risks or timing of progress or level or nature of community quality and finally, evaluate the results of the community’s efforts. This profile lays out, briefly, all of these important aspects of community economic development.

I. INFLUENCES ACTING IN A COMMUNITY ECONOMY

Communities of Interest. An economic system is the sum of a large number of individual actors and institutions interacting influencing the regional economy by making individual (discrete) decisions. But, because there are these large numbers of actors, and because these actors often act in a similar manner, there are communities of interest exhibiting identifiably similar sets of behaviors and interests. Fortunately, four readily identifiable “communities of interest” dominate the themes of community improvement: public interests addressed by public bodies satisfying; social interests of society and households; business interests of private enterprises pursuing profit; and the interests of marketplace institutions responding to the other three.

FIGURE #1 - INFLUENCES ACTING ON A COMMUNITY’S ECONOMY



adapted from J Ronald Fox

The community economic developer’s task is the purposeful interaction with these communities of interest to an end result of “economic progress” and “improved quality of life” (which can be

interpreted and subsequently measured in a number of ways). The task of the community economic developer is to lead, influence and support purposeful interaction in an economy to improve economic well-being, in a manner consistent with community vision(s).

Community Development: ‘Community developers’ might argue that the end point used as the guidepost for this state, regional, or local interaction is the improvement of the quality of life within the community. Community developers often pursue improvements that enhance or maintain a high quality of life and do so by seeking enhancements in public services and public works and by addressing social concerns. As Allan Bourt described it in *The Private Economic Development Process* “Community Development ... describes the physical development of the city’s infrastructure, or its community facilities or the social services provided to its citizens.” The practitioners attending to this civic arena -- dealing with public goods and targeted public services often call themselves community developers. Community development encompasses efforts that add to the capacity (whether defined as minimum and adequate or at pace) of public facilities as well as categorical aids for the betterment of regions or population segments. By achieving both ends, the community developer can add to the quality of residents’ lives.

Economic developers are involved in improvement of enterprise vitality and market institutions that leads to rational growth and development (economic progress that improves the standard of living). The practitioner who attends to the business arena -- the business sector and the marketplace -- have traditionally specialized as economic developers. Economic development focuses on the growth and the *vitality* of business enterprises in the markets they serve and the development of the *capability* of market institutions that foster and (*complement and*) support competitive firms. The community can benefit from new productive employment opportunities and an augmented tax base.

Community Economic Development. For the development practitioner, each of the communities of interest (public agents, societal expectations, regional institutions and business interests) will influence their work. This reflects the reality of the mixed economy of the U.S. where both the public sector and the private sector share in providing for material welfare and community quality. Developers find they must correctly balance a number of competing interests, to improve economic circumstances in a manner consistent with community visions. Taken as a collection, these political, social, economic and institutional components represent the chief aspects of the regional economy over which developers might exert influence, provided they advocate, support and commit resources.

To help a region capture the benefits that might accrue from development, practitioners must have a working knowledge of the structure, behavior and operation of their regional economy. Even when there is agreement that the context for development is the community and the economic region of which it is a part, there are no ‘general equilibrium economic models’ that can predict with certainty how all the various parts of the community operate to influence or generate outcomes. Even so, because the four communities of interest are recognized as influencing the regional economy, these ‘communities’ also provide a framework for understanding the strengths and capacities of regional economies.

The Economic Foundations -- Recently, practitioners have begun to classify the components of improvement in terms of the foundations of growth (public facilities capacity and marketplace institution capability) and the functions of progress (community betterment and enterprise growth).

While different regions will face divergent circumstances requiring different solutions, this framework of four components provides a convenient structure for deciding on individually tailored development programs and strategies.

II. THE MAIN FEATURES OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

To understand the contributions of these four important components to community improvement, practitioners rely on the expertise of regional planners, community sociologists, economic developers and political economists. These disciplines offer critical insights about how to further local facilities capacity, community betterment, enterprise vitality and marketplace capability, respectively. The careful observers among these disciplines note that each major dimension of the community economy consists of a number of basic features. A list of those features follows.

FIGURE #2 -THEMES, COMPONENTS AND FEATURES (ELEMENTS?) OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
FOUNDATIONS	Public Facilities Capacity Public Administration Balanced Regulations Physical Infrastructure Education/ Social Utilities	Marketplace Capability Market Framework Financial Access Material Resources Work Force Mobility
FUNCTIONS	Community Betterment Growth Management Area Redevelopment Employment Status Self Sufficiency	Enterprise Growth/Vitality Industrial Investment Trade/Export Development Production Operations Entrepreneurial Innovations

Public Facilities Capacity. Government’s most traditional mission is to provide for common goods, providing public services, and maintain the public order which society values. The basic conveniences which residents typically expect are: administration of ordinances and tax systems; providing appropriate infrastructure and facilities like constructing major public roads, water, and waste treatment facilities; and production of social utilities with extensive civic benefits such as education, protective services and amenities. Governments deliver goods and services considerate of the desires and needs of households (voters). While these public goods and services are not sufficient in themselves to create new growth, they do affect the convenience of personal, social, cultural and economic pursuits. Adequate public works and services are essential to private sector progress in a market economy. For information on the nature and quality of our public facilities, we often turn to city and county managers and to regional planners that have a command of the day-to-day workings of public organizations.

Community Betterment. Any of a number of undesirable conditions may affect the well-being of residents, the region, population segments or industry sectors. The problems of a locality can include unemployment and underemployment; the physical degradation of neighborhoods; inadequate distribution of social support services and other related issues. Steps can be taken to overcome these shortcomings and to meet needs of population segments or geographic areas left out of the mainstream of economic activity. These particular problems exist because the skills and talents required for economic endeavors are not equally distributed among workers and because economic growth rarely occurs at a uniform rate across a region.

For specialists attentive to the people of a region or the on the nature of the region itself and who can provide advice major socioeconomic conditions that concern the well-being of areas and residents, one

might look to community nonprofit organizations and sociologists. These practitioners have experience with area revitalization of the physical environment; the employment status required for individual livelihood; and social conditions for self sufficiency.

Enterprise Growth/ Vitality. Communities normally define economic progress as a sustained increase (or in some cases stability) in the total output of goods and services. While national economists concern themselves with macro-economic factors that impact growth and development, economic developers tend to focus on the firm's transactions and the processes within the business enterprise that influence the volume of productive activity locally. Increasing or maintaining enterprise vitality will result in new jobs and increased taxes. The community's efforts themselves do not create jobs, rather jobs are created *indirectly* by influencing the economic related decisions of commerce and industry. Ultimately, the community is looking to an expanding job base and expanding tax revenues and the jobholder is looking to gains in real income and buying power.

Economic developers and industrial economists have established which of the basic business decisions of the firm are amenable to positive influence that in turn creates jobs in the community. Economic developers are concerned with minimizing business risks or by encouraging particular business decisions, so that communities can benefit from increased jobs and increased income.

Marketplace/ Institution Capability. Recently, numerous communities have begun to recognize that competitive advantage is a key to community survival. The growth of an area depends on the competitive advantage offered by specialized human, financial, material and market factors. These factors are not a part of the natural landscape of a region, but rather are created by various marketplace organizations and institutions. The marketplace serves matters of "plural" interests by mediating economic and social interactions of many groups. It is comprised of human resources, financial resources, market organization and material resources. The extent of the marketplace institution's effect depends on whether it is optimizing its influence or simply "satisficing", doing enough to get by. Political economists have been at the forefront in illuminating the importance of these institutional factors that make it possible for the region to produce the goods and services which people value: human capital in the form of a skilled work force; financial capital in the form of debt and equity funds for business operations; material resources such as technology and plant and equipment; and a market framework allowing private transactions to buy and sell goods and services.

III. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Community economic development has its roots in the implementation efforts and experiments of literally hundreds of communities across the U.S. since the early 1800s. During this long history of practice and learning by doing, development has been grounded in the belief that there are always immediate actions which can be taken to aid community prosperity.

With their implementation orientation, developers want to know to what extent should they employ practices and programs, and what kinds of results should they expect from their efforts. Knowing the basic features of community improvement is a critical first step. For each major feature or element, community economic developers also need to know which program approaches and strategies to be used to achieve their expected growth and development goals. This requirement for practical program applications adds to the complexity of community economic development. Most regions will want to

address *all* of the components of community improvement: local facilities capacity, community betterment, enterprise vitality and marketplace institutions capability.

Most developers recognize that there are actions which government can undertake, if done rationally, which will assist in the growth of business or economic activity. This ability to "plan" a future of economic growth is not the same as planning a new multilane road to carry a designated load of traffic or planning for and adjusting for the impact of an increase in the number of student aged children. While few can predict where the next generation of industries or technologies will absorb the growing labor force (not only difficult but perhaps not even preferable), many economic development can be taken to capitalize on economic opportunities as they arise.

Public Facilities. The levels of capacity of public facilities (public organizations, public laws, public works, public services) are decided in the political arena. A plan for public facilities will deal with at least the four elements of public administration, common taxation/ regulations, physical infrastructure, and public services (social utilities). A brief list of the typical issues -- desired public goods and services -- follows.

Public Facilities Component			
Administration Management Civic Action	Commons Environment Police/Fire/Health Land Uses	Infrastructure Transportation Utilities	Social Utilities Parks/Amenities Education

Public Administration -- Areas must have the "organizational infrastructure" to undertake development. Program efforts may be needed to assure efficient public operations, for example:

- Efficient management of government affairs (using strategies such as property management or budget planning) is needed since excessive costs of government will retard economic growth and a balanced, stable, predictable tax system (property taxes, sales taxes, user fees or special services financing) is needed to collect revenues for public goods and services.
- Civic action programs that engage public participation in public activities can be accomplished with the creation of a region-wide development organization, leadership development, a community sense of responsibility, volunteer engagements, etc.

Regulation -- Areas must have a balanced regulatory system, to balance powers of different parties, such as households and firms.

- Environmental protection, such as air and water protection, is needed to reduce undesired side-effects of commerce without unduly retarding an area's production activity.
- Protective services, like police and fire protection, provide safekeeping from the accidental or man-made hazards; hospital and health care facilities provide medical and surgical care.
- Consumer protection is beneficial such as product safety codes and private utilities regulations.
- Localities need an adequate land use planning program (comprehensive plans, land use zoning, and building codes) to assure compatible uses and maintain property values.

Physical Infrastructure -- The presence of basic public works and physical infrastructure, both for on-site operations and for transportation of finished goods/ services to markets, is another key to maintaining a viable consumer and production sector.

- Utility oriented public works programs, for example water and waste disposal, should be designed to keep costs to a minimum (using appropriate user fees, privatization, etc.).
- Efficient transportation -- highways and bridges, rail systems, mass transit, air and water ports, may require use of capital improvement plans or capital budgets and user or impact fees.

Social Utilities -- The quality of life of an area is determined in major part by the social utilities, the public services which society values and which private markets are unlikely to provide.

- Education prepares students to assume and cope with their civic, social and economic responsibilities as adults. This includes primary education and literacy training; advanced secondary education (charter schools or adopt-a-school projects); and technical education.
- Amenities (libraries, recreation facilities, parks, cultural or festival events) are important both as a source of community entertainment and amusement and as a source of economic activity.

Community Betterment Component. Governments are called upon to use categorical aid to improve the social conditions for the people of a region or the region itself. Categorical assistance to specific areas or for particular groups can affect (i) the stability of defined geographic areas or (ii) the equity of opportunity to targeted groups of significant segments. A comprehensive community betterment effort will enhance community livability and maximize social welfare. It will undertake the challenge through categorical program approaches that respond to fiscal, physical, individual and social conditions or needs.

Community Betterment Component			
Growth Management	Area Revitalization	Employment Status	Self Sufficiency
Industrial Growth	Resource Steward	Empl. Training	Housing/Services
Commercial Growth	Rehabilitation/Reuse	Empl. Adjustment	Econ. Opportunity
Residential Growth	Area Conservation	Job Creation	Economic Assets

Growth Management -- Local elected leaders want to be assured of a stable tax base to run their municipality. To “prime the pump” for industrial, commercial, and residential growth, which provides for stable tax revenues, communities pursued a number of related program approaches.

- Industrial growth programs uses strategies such as planned use zoning, land assembly, infrastructure investments, construction support, fast track permitting and so on.
- A commercial district or central business district program can entail strategies to rehabilitate (facade improvements or National Main Street efforts) or to restructure (commercial diversification, festival marketplaces and so on.)
- A residential housing program focuses on sub-division planning, single family building design standards and so on.

Area Revitalization -- Areas make investments in the physical environment to conserve the character of neighborhoods or the resources of the area. Three programs that might be undertaken are: resource preservation, rehabilitation/reuse, or business sector adjustment programs.

- Resource stewardship and preservation embraces historic preservation, beautification projects, and community recycling efforts.
- Rehabilitation and reuse, such as anchor projects, improvement zones, enterprise zones, adaptive site reuse, brownfields redevelopment, are intended to reverse the decline of distressed areas.

- Finally, area conservation can involve farmland preservation, habitat preservation, and soil and water conservation efforts to promote sustainable use of area resources.

Employment Status -- Programs involving jobs for the unemployed -- employment training, economic adjustment and job creation -- address the frictional, structural and cyclical impediments to re-employment of the labor force.

- Training programs for unskilled workers pursue strategies such as providing work experience, classroom instruction, on-the-job training and apprenticeship training for targeted groups.
- An economic adjustment program helps dislocated workers to improve job seeking skills or build new marketable employment skills.
- A job creation program approach is designed to add to neighborhood income, with strategies such as first source agreements, subsidized employment, sheltered workshops, and so on.

Self Sufficiency -- A variety of program approaches can be used to promote family self-sufficiency through housing conservation, economic opportunity, and asset accumulation.

- A housing conservation program might be implemented with housing authorities, housing finance projects, and community housing redevelopment corporations.
- Economic opportunity (or business venture) strategies might involve tuition scholarships, limited profit enterprises, and self-employment assistance to low-income individuals.
- Asset accumulation attempts to attract financial aid or reduce expenses, to increase the level of community investment, for example through community development corporations.

Enterprise Growth and Vitality Component. Programs to affect enterprise growth and vitality will attempt to directly impact firms' operations and the risks that firms incur. Enterprises grow through (i) expansion of the volume of economic transactions or (ii) generation of new economic activity. As enterprises grow, the public derives benefits from employment opportunities (productive employment) or an augmented tax base (expansion of the economic base). Indicators of firms' successes include increased amount of investment, larger volume of sales, business starts (or reduced failures) and improved management/ productivity. The approaches to assisting the business sector cover capital investment, trade/export demand, invention/innovation and business operations.

<i>Enterprise Growth and Vitality Component</i>			
<i>Investment</i>	<i>Trade/Export</i>	<i>Innovations</i>	<i>Operations</i>
Recruitment	Tourism	Technology	Industrial Modern.
Expansion	Retail	Entrepreneurship	Business Mgmt.
Retention	Exports	New Ventures	Networks

Basic Capital Investment -- Over the long term, the level of the invested capital (plant and equipment) of an area determines its productive capacity. Development organizations seek out their 'fair share' of capital investment by capturing the relocation and expansion of business and by retaining the businesses already in the area. Program approaches include:

- Recruitment, or economic base attraction, makes use of advertising and promotion, sites and building information and location incentives to attract relocating firms.
- Expansion program strategies can involve permit assistance, low-cost financing, tax abatements and employee retraining.

- Retention programs encompass visitation efforts, industry appreciation days, and ombudsman service.

Encourage Trade/ Export Demand -- Over the short term, adding to the income of an area will increase its standard of living. Demand oriented programs focus on export promotion, income capture and import substitution. With these program approaches, regions help firms take advantage of market opportunities that exist to sell to a wider range of institutional and international markets.

- An export promotion program involves strategies such as export sales promotion, exporter development, and export infrastructure investment.
- Income capture programs, such as tourism, may depend on destination site investments like convention centers, advertising and promotion, and regionally based support councils.
- Import substitution, such as retail or wholesale market development, encompasses business to business directories, regional market promotion, bidders' conferences and fairs and so on.

Encourage Invention and Innovation -- Increasing the supply of new technologies and new high technology firms adds vigor to the regional economic base and will increase the number of jobs. This entrepreneurial activist element includes program approaches for technology commercialization, new venture formation and entrepreneur support. Areas with slow growth can emphasize new technologies to help companies start and grow.

- An entrepreneur support program emphasizes market analysis services, peer or mentor services, business training and micro-enterprise lending.
- Technology commercialization usually involves patenting assistance, prototype development or product commercialization financing.
- New venture formation program strategies cover both micro-enterprise (small business entrepreneurship) and product development (venture capital funding) projects.

Improve Business Operation Efficiency -- An area's ability to survive depends on the competitiveness of its industrial and supplier base. The various program paths to competitiveness are business development, industrial modernization, and industrial relations. Development groups support companies, not in adding production per se, but in building their capacity to produce.

- A small business development program will entail community market information, management counseling and consulting, loan packaging and so on.
- The typical industrial modernization program includes quality improvement awards, manufacturing modernization services, and productivity improvement grants.
- Industrial relations efforts can include business roundtables, multi-company networks, etc.

Marketplace/ Institution Development Component. Efficiently functioning marketplaces require complex adaptive organizational systems, mediating the type, cost and level of access to economic, social and individual transactions. For most regions, institutions that evolve and adjust to the changes in the economy are a factor in the creation of more economic growth. Marketplaces and marketplace institutions are developed through (i) reduction in barriers to market efficiency and effectiveness or (ii) increased capability to perform important economic tasks. To bolster the workings of the marketplace, the community developer must enhance the market framework, exploit the competitive advantage, improve labor market mobility and ease access to financial services. The result will be progress accompanied by sustained change in structure and organization.

Marketplace/Institution Component			
Market Framework	Material Resources	Finance Capital	Human Capital
Commercial Codes	Natural Resources	Revolving Funds	Labor Exchange
Open Markets	Support Clusters	Equity Financing	School to Work
Business Climate	Technology/ Inform.	Capital Access	Labor/Management

Market Framework -- The market framework shapes the operating environment and the institutional instruments of competition. Governments should use its regulatory powers and services delivery efforts, not to influence individual decisions, but to create the environment for open trading among buyers and sellers where it is easy to have access to market opportunities.

- Commercial codes attend to such issues as enforcing private contracts and minimizing the effects of private contracts on innocent third parties.
- A competitive climate depends on the maintenance of individual liberties, private property rights and intellectual property rights. Open markets require freedom from monopolistic or predatory business practices, from preferential purchasing requirements and so on.
- A business advocacy (business climate) program can include ombudsman efforts, regulatory advisory groups and so on.

Material Resources -- Communities must nurture the specialized factors of production for which the area already has a competitive advantage, whether that is in natural resources, capital resources or information/technology based resources. The quality of the basic factors -- natural resources and capital equipment and so on, will be important to the livelihood of a community economy.

- Natural resources programs (and value-added strategies) address sustainable development of mining, forestry, ranching, livestock, fishing, or grain crops.
- Improvements in the capital base -- manufacturing, distribution, producer suppliers -- might include industry representatives, targeted tax benefits, or specialized legislation and ordinances. At the national level, strategies like the trade adjustment assistance, military base reuse assistance, and so on help selected business sectors to adjust to changes in the marketplace.
- Technology and information resources can be improved through targeted investments in university centers of excellence or in support of industry university partnerships.

Human Capital -- The skill, motivation and productivity of the workforce are universally accepted as basic ingredients for economic vitality. Some studies attribute one-third of growth to labor productivity (from education, skills, etc.). The economic challenge for communities will be to enhance the productivity of work of its core industrial base and the skill of its workers.

- Labor market exchange efforts cover adult employment services -- reverse commuting, job matching services and other initiatives to link people to jobs.
- Investment in raining institutions (community colleges, technical schools, adult education centers); in training alternatives (school to work transition, two plus two projects); and in school to work services (apprenticeships, cooperative education, work-based learning) are needed.
- Labor management program such as labor management cooperation projects and councils are important to strengthen both groups.

Financing Capital -- Ease of access to financial markets -- both debt and equity sources providing venture, mezzanine, fixed and working capital -- is important to a vibrant community economy. Both the cost of capital and access to financing are important.

- Debt financing initiatives in the form of extra-market support are beneficial, such as revolving loan funds, community development corporations, capital access programs, and banker training.
- Equity financing -- venture capital clubs, small company stock offerings, venture capital pools -- are important program areas required by new and advanced technology firms.

IV. CONCLUSION

The task of the community economic developer is the purposeful interaction in an economy to improve economic well-being, in a manner consistent with community vision(s). Developers do not assume that growth or development will happen on its own, rather, developers take an active role in improving various facets of their community. Successful *community improvement*, widely shared and sustainable economic progress, is comprised of two main thrusts or missions: community development and economic development. (While some development groups operate as if these are separate, economic development cannot be separated from community development because they are simply alternative dimensions of the same economy.)

Most development organizations are involved in the four significant components of the community economy: public facilities and community betterment, together referred to as community development, and enterprise vitality and marketplace institutions capability, together referred to as economic development. Each component represents a potential scope of work for a development organization.

The community improvement efforts often reflect a variety of the possible different program initiatives. Improvements are pursued where community leaders (elected and volunteer) are willing to selectively interact to influence the risks or timing of progress (growth and development) which in turn affects the nature and location of progress, according to the community's expectation of the future. A community with a comprehensive set of development initiatives will cover items such as:

- Civic involvement in a progressive government and strong development group;
- A balanced regulatory posture to mediate consumer, business and societal needs and a realistic land use plan with manageable land use and building codes;
- Superior transportation systems involving roads, rail, and ports and public utilities like electricity, gas, potable water, and waste disposal;
- Educational programs, health facilities and protective services and area amenities;
- Support for the growth of the sales and property tax base of the community;
- Sustainable development and reuse of the areas resources and capital investments;
- Jobs programs for the unemployed and under-employed;
- Special support services for the significant segments of the population in need;
- Healthy business investment prospects from plant expansions and re-investment;
- Access to sales opportunities including consumer, institutional and international markets;
- The generation of new, productive employment activities through entrepreneur activities;
- The modernization and application of new technologies to current productive efforts;
- Open and free markets and opportunities to exploit those markets;
- A trained reserve of skilled employees and the institutions to support their lifelong learning;
- Access to debt and equity capital for fixed asset and working capital purposes; and
- A comparative advantage that serves as the competitive strength of the community.

This Commentary was prepared by Eric Rinehart. This document may be freely cited with an appropriate referral to this source. Comments may be directed to the author at Rinehart@e-d-solutions.com
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