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Introduction

In recent decades, inner city neighborhoods within large North American cities have experienced major changes due to de-industrialization, gentrification and revitalization processes. These areas within cities were originally a focal point for employment, industrial activities and thriving public spaces that were used by all members of the community. As industrial activity moved away to suburban locations or outside of the country, these inner city neighborhoods were greatly affected in terms of physical landscape, working class residents and employment opportunities throughout the area.

Today, government, urban planners and local community groups must deal with neighborhoods that contain fragmented urban landscapes and understand ways to revitalize these areas. Heavy industrial buildings are transforming into loft style condominiums, or being demolished in order to create new developments in these neighborhoods. The existing populations within these areas are not what they used to be, as the employment opportunities have moved elsewhere, this has left these residents with few future economic opportunities. In terms of housing, gentrification is on the rise as middle class residents become attracted to edgy neighborhoods that contain a certain heritage and sense of authenticity. Planners must carefully decide on a hierarchy of importance when looking at methods of intervening in these areas. What we have described here is the current situation in Saint-Henri, a working class neighborhood within the Southwest Borough of Montréal, Quebec. This neighborhood is also going through a process of important physical and social changes as the physical landscape and local residents change. Saint-Henri has considerable opportunities, but also has major constraints and this must be addressed in a cautious but complimenting manner in terms of redevelopment proposals.

This report will focus on a redevelopment intervention within the Saint-Henri neighborhood of Montréal, Quebec.



Source: www.flickr.com

Historical Context

Around 1850, a series of settlements surrounding the original village of Saint-Henri began to form, including Turcot, Brodie, Saint-Augustin and Sainte-Marguerite. These villages that were predominantly working class joined in 1875 to form the municipality of Saint-Henri. By 1881 this municipality had a population of 6,400 (Steam, 39). Soon industrial activities and factories started to characterize Saint-Henri. Housing began to develop in order to accommodate the needs of these working-class families, much of which is still present today. By 1905, Saint-Henri had 21,192 inhabitants (Steam, 40). After World War II Saint-Henri had become the largest industrial center in Canada (CLSC, 1999, p. 21). Several factors such as the great depression and deindustrialization forced some companies, in need of more modern industrial facilities, to leave the area; combined with massive highway construction and the closing of the Lachine Canal, Saint-Henri was then bounded and secluded by thoroughfares setting in motion the decline of the neighborhood.

In the 1960's -70's the trend was focused toward suburban home-ownership while the majority of inner city housing stock was quickly deteriorating. The inner city districts of Montreal were comprised mostly of rental housing or apartment units. In the late 1970's and early 1980's the city began looking for ways to increase their property tax base and promote middle-class resettlement in the inner city, specifically in areas that had lost much of their population and economic vitality, Saint-Henri being one of these areas in particular (Rose, 2000, p.161). Some initiatives by the City of Montreal towards the improvement of infrastructure, public spaces and housing in Saint-Henri were undertaken during this period. According to Rose the underlying factors of these programs were to make these neighbourhoods of the Sud-Ouest more attractive to the middle-class, ultimately fostering gentrification (2000, p.184). The city of Montreal also developed a policy of reacquiring vacant industrial and commercial buildings turning them over for residential use, many of these are located along the Lachine Canal (Rose, p. 171). This revitalization of the Lachine Canal waterfront district and the improvements to the public realm and green spaces surrounding the Atwater market further strengthened the attraction of Saint-Henri to urban redevelopment and increases in residential density.





Source: www.historycooperative.org

Source: www.imtl.org

Socio-Economic Account

The urban character of Saint-Henri has changed drastically over the past several decades. During the early 90's, zoning changes along the Lachine Canal created an ideal environment for real-estate developers. Large tracts of land, as well as old-industrial buildings were rezoned residential and mixed use development. Developers were able to charge a premium to new residents in this revitalized and sought-after sector (Bradley, 2007). From this we noted a changing nature in its population base. The neighbourhood has, and is still presently in the process of gentrification. The present population of Saint-Henri is now divided, both culturally and economically. The new developments along the Canal and throughout the neighbourhood have contributed to the influx of a new population demographic, while much of the existing working-class population still remains. In order to better understand the state of the population in Saint-Henri, it was necessary to obtain a statistical account of the present conditions.

The most telling statistics are included below in Table 1, more specifically, we would like to develop on the income variations between Saint-Henri and the Census Metropolitan Area of Montreal (CMA). The average household income of Saint-Henri was well below the average for Montreal in 2001, reflecting a difference of \$17, 773. The most significant of all statistical findings was the fact that 46% of Saint-Henri's population falls into the low-income bracket, 17% more than the average for Montreal. The new households establishing themselves in Saint-Henri surely do not fall into either one of these brackets, so our challenge as planners is to work with the many established community groups and organizations to create a sustainable environment for all the residents of Saint-Henri regardless of their socio-economic status?

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2001	Saint-Henri	Montreal (CMA)
Population	13, 563	3, 451, 027
Average Household Income	\$31, 656	\$49, 429
Average Gross Rent	\$531	\$568
Social & Affordable Housing	24%	6%
Low-income Population	46%	29%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri (CLSC), 2006

Administrative Aspects

There have been many initiatives taken by both the federal and provincial governments to rejuvenate many of the brownfield and underused industrial sites along the Lachine Canal and the Sud-Ouest borough. According to the 2004 Montreal Master Plan, the Canal was determined as a National Historic Site by Parks Canada in 1978 and is now considered an 'Area of Exceptional Value' (Appendix 1 - Built Heritage Map). Over a five year period between 1997 and 2002, more than 100 million dollars was invested by the city of Montreal and the federal government into the Canal and its surrounding areas. A network of new public spaces and green spaces was created along with a landscaped bicycle path (Ville de Montreal Master Plan, Part 1, Section 4.8, 2004).

The vibrancy and potential of the Lachine Canal has not yet been fully exploited due to the numerous infrastructural barriers present in the area. These impediments include the Turcot Interchange (a major automobile connector in the area), as well as the CN yards and surrounding railway corridors. The external effects of this infrastructure have for many years negatively affected the Sud-Ouest of Montreal, with a particularly harsh influence on Saint-Henri's neighbourhood character.

The newly proposed redesign of the Turcot interchange by the Ministère des Transports du Québec and the redevelopment of the Glen Site in order to accommodate the future McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) provides a great opportunity to look into redevelopment options for the connections between the adjacent neighbourhoods of Saint-Henri, Pointe-Saint-Charles, Westmount and Notre-Dame-de-Grace. The reduction of nuisances imposed by this infrastructure is in the City's best interests in order to improve the living conditions of Saint-Henri and of the residents these other municipalities.



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Removal of Rail Corridor

1.4

Our redevelopment proposal is based on the removal of the existing CN railway which pierces through the center of the neighbourhood. Activity along this line has the right of way over all other forms of transit in Saint-Henri. The removal of this rail corridor would serve to greatly reconnect the North and South sections of Saint-Henri. We propose to reroute the trains to the south most line running just adjacent to the Bonaventure expressway (see Map 1). This rerouting would free up a large portion of centrally located land and our proposals will be focused along this central corridor. The discussions taking place regarding the reconfiguration of the Turcot Interchange and the Turcot Yards to the west offers considerable redevelopment momentum and our proposal hopes to capitalize on this once in a lifetime opportunity.





Sites of Interest



Saint-Henri is a vibrant, diverse neighborhood that contains unique architecture and a strong sense of community. Although, the landscape has been marred by major changes in the past few decades and this has affected the day to day functions of the area. This section outlines the overall strengths and weaknesses of the entire neighborhood.

In terms of strengths, there are numerous aspects that can be built upon in terms of planning and revitalization efforts. The neighborhood is located within the Southwest Borough of Montreal and is in close proximity to the Central Business District. Saint-Henri also contains a rich stock of heritage buildings with historical civic buildings, a diverse mix of residential housing types and large industrial buildings. There are important social ties within the neighborhood and this is emphasized with a variety of community groups that engage in activities to better the quality of life for local residents. In regards to transportation, Place Saint-Henri metro is centrally located in the heart of the neighborhood which provides an access point to other parts of the city. In terms of blocks, the residential blocks in some parts of the neighborhood follow the standard Montréal Hstyle block configuration which is human scale and provides easy accessibility.

In regards to the weaknesses, Saint-Henri has many issues that must be examined when considering future development plans. The neighborhood is segregated from other parts of Montreal by three major barriers. The Lachine Canal which segregates the neighborhood on the south side, used to be the hub for industrial activity for the area. To the north and the west of the neighborhood, there are two major highways that segregate Saint-Henri from the central business district and further developments towards the west. Running directly through the neighborhood is the Canadian National Railway which dissects and divides the neighborhood and the north and south sides have developed independent of each other. Commercial activity is focused more on the central and eastern parts of the neighborhood, although very few amenities are located in the western part of the area. Within the central area surrounding Place Saint-Henri metro station, there are extremely large blocks, high automobile activity and overall poor connections to the neighborhood. There is also a demographic issues or socio-economic divide with new middle class residents moving into the new condominiums along the Lachine Canal. There is also a lack of job diversity and economic opportunities in the neighborhood for existing working class residents which has further divided the neighborhood in terms of social class.

Aims & Objectives

Connection

Based on our analysis of the neighborhood, we've formulated numerous aims and objectives for Saint-Henri's central rail corridor area. By taking into consideration the re-routing of the railway, this provides many new development opportunities. By conducting a removal of the railway, we can now focus on reconnecting the neighborhood by reweaving streets that end at the railway. The neighborhood has developed in a segregated manner and by reconnecting these streets, it will provide more accessibility and flow between both sides of the neighborhood.

Quality Public Space

Saint-Henri does contain numerous public spaces although we'd like to build on this and provide more quality public space for the community. By properly framing public spaces and streets and also creating proper texturization techniques and green spaces, this objective can certainly be met by our proposals. As well, the proposal should work to create a sense of identity and place and build on the neighborhood's historical character and rebuild the community in terms of providing local activities for residents.

Gentrification

As new residents move into the neighborhood and new high end developments taking place along the Lachine Canal, there has been an increase in demographic divide between old and new residents in Saint-Henri. A crucial aim of our proposal is to mitigate the impact of gentrification within the neighborhood by providing a diverse, mixed tenure of housing types that meet local residents concerns but also properly blend in future residents to the area.

Introduce Amenities and Commercial Activity

Saint-Henri also lacks proper amenities and commercial activity in certain pockets within the neighborhood. For example, within the western end of the neighborhood, there are minimal amenities to serve local residents, such as grocery stores and commercial activity. An important aim of ours is to provide local commercial street level activity and increase amenities within these areas. This enable residents to walk to obtain day-to-day goods and services instead of driving to different areas to obtain items such as groceries, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Retaining Architecture and Heritage

Saint-Henri contains many unique heritage buildings that range from residential architecture, important civic buildings and industrial/ manufacturing buildings that must be preserved in order to maintain the historical character of the neighborhood. Therefore, our aim is to implement a policy on low impact developments that compliment the existing built environment instead of destroying existing buildings. Within our proposal it is important to maintain a low yield; which is minimizing the impact on the existing built environment. By building on these strengths and examining the current weaknesses of the neighborhood, we can formulate a development proposal that meets these needs and requirements of Saint-Henri for the future.



By meeting these aims and objectives, our proposal will seek to provide increased connection, quality public space, reduce gentrification, introduce new locations for amenities and retain existing architecture



Preserving the essential character of the area in the midst of massive development implementation is the central challenge in our effort. In order to generate responsible effective and dynamic design proposals, we would like to pursue a set of principles deemed critical to healthy community design. Walkability within the area's street network, intimate sight lines, family oriented residential units, comfortable settings for sidewalk activity, quality public space and the reinforcement of existing community patterns are the key principles we seek to achieve. We also employ a policy of zero demolition in this proposal in order to actively preserve the unique setting for the neighbourhood's character.

Our proposal is an effort to reconcile the elemental traits of tissues, that differ in basic structure, yet exist in direct relation to one another across the rail corridor we propose to develop. The CN tracks which presently bisect St Henri should be rerouted around the area in the name of reconnecting the areas inconsistent urban fabric.





Source: www.mybis.net (all images on page)



Place St.-Henri

Place St Henri is the neighborhood's historical centre of activity. Place Saint-Henri's metro station still behaves as an important central node but, due to the dominance of the site by an automobile oriented configuration, it no longer functions as an important point of public congregation. This proposal seeks to restore an atmosphere conducive to public gathering and we believe Saint-Henri would benefit from a place which provides the citizens with a location to come together at the center of the neighbourhood.

Site Importance:

As Saint-Henri's centre it is an important area for unification of the neighborhood's segregated quadrants. By properly treating this area in terms of pedestrian activity and traffic, this can enhance the ability and use of the metro as a transportation node. Surrounding the metro station, there are historical and unique buildings that identify Place Saint-Henri as a focal point in terms of neighborhood identity.

Opportunities:

- •Behaves as the areas most important transportation node
- •Heritage architecture can inform the building design ultimately proposed
- •Existing bike path infrastructure implies alternative modal use
- •Symbolic importance of the areas historical centre

Constraints:

- •Bounded by large specialized blocks prohibiting potential residential/ commercial redevelopment schemes.
- •Existing railway tracks raised blocking sight lines
- •Abundant automobile infrastructure (underpass, wide road ways)
- •Awkward termination of the pike path
- •High school street frontage is hostile.



Source: Alex Carruthers



Place St-Henri 3D Aerial View Google Earth



Place St.-Henri: Ideas

4.1

In order to bring Place St-Henri to its former function as a point of neighbourhood congregation; accommodating, agreeable, open hard-space needs to be introduced. In the following images, a new place is introduced drawing pedestrian activity west along the extension of the existing bike path. The center building might serve as a larger commercial function such as a hotel. The building to the left is a proposed civic center for attracting and consolidating public gatherings. The leveling of the Notre Dame under pass is seen here from the east.

Before







Place St.-Henri: Ideas

4.1

This is a view of the Notre Dame underpass from the west. From this vantage point we get a better view of the space in front of the civic building. It is easy to imagine the introduction of meaningful public art, or a fountain in this location, which would be an enticing option for building on the neighbourhood's identity.

Before







Place St.-Henri: Proposal

4.2

Place St-Henri, as the historical center of the neighbourhood, aught to be reclaimed for pedestrian activity. The dominance of existing automobile infrastructure represented by Notre Dame and St Jacques should be mitigated by the introduction of formidable pedestrian space. The existing bike path will have continuity through the hardspace in front of the proposed landmark hotel. The square's bank buildings provide a precedence of grand identifiable architecture. The civic building proposed on the opposite side of Notre Dame provides the area with a center for the community. These implementations are meant to provide services and facilities which are deemed to be lacking in the area. Implementing useful urban form will help create a sense of neighbourhood identity in the areas historical centre.



Residential Area

With the elimination of the heavy rail use along the central corridor, an enormous area is opened up for redevelopment potential. St Henri is a neighbourhood which would benefit from an increase in the critical mass of local residents. This is important for the support of existing and proposed local amenities. By generating plans for a layout of agreeable residential tissue this involves promoting intimate street atmosphere, low automobile traffic flow, and sympathetic public space.

Site importance:

This area's existing physical tissues on opposite sides of the rail corridor are incongruent in layout and character. Redevelopment of this portion of the neighborhood involves the successful re-knitting of street networks on either side of the central rail corridor.

Opportunities:

Existing bike path infrastructure and culture
Opportunity to implement social housing
Block size and street configuration around St Zotique implies permeability

Constraints:

•Inefficient and arbitrary plot configuration

•Existing built form configuration inhibits simple breakthrough routes

•Existing residents sensitive to change within this area







Residential Area: Ideas

5.1

In regards to housing types, we believe the three story walkup style can be maintained within this area's proposal. Emphasizing a local residential street of agreeable scale with wide sidewalks is important to this part of our proposal. In terms of housing, we are promoting subsidized housing that provides an opportunity of owner-occupied properties within the area. Trees are also important for the street in order to create an atmosphere of congenial pedestrian activity on the street.

Before







Residential Area: Ideas

5.1

Eliminating harsh pedestrian conditions like this under pass on Saint-Marguerite in favor of clear sightlines and consistent at grade surface for active high visibility public space. Trees line the street in order to provide shade and enclosure to the space are important. This along with exploring different street surface textures can enhance the area's atmosphere.

Before







The Proposed residential area is built around a street that extends from place St-Henri along the existing rail corridor to St-Henri's western portion and the proposed market area. This street is designed to accommodate several modes of transportation including bicycles automobiles and all forms of pedestrian activity. This idea capitalizes on the opportunity to reconnect existing street networks on either side of the rail corridor.

The built form lining this street will dictate the provision of a variety of tenure be zoned strictly residential. The mandate to provide affordable housing can be met through design solutions such as the provision of small triplexes which enable independent purchasers and promote potential for owner occupancy. There are precedents for the incorporation of a policy of up to 40% social housing which should mitigate the full fledged effects of gentrification.

Along with the increase of residential density we aim to implement quality public space at the street level in order to promote active street life.



View 1



Park Place, along proposed avenue to allow existing houses on southside to have addresses on avenue



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Floor area: 35 388m²

Residential Area: Connectivity Analysis

5.3

The existing street network will be used as the foundation to reconnect the grid-like pattern on opposing sides of the rail corridor. The accessibility to our proposed street will be greatly enhanced through the reconnection of these streets as well as strengthening pedestrian connections to Metro Place Saint-Henri. Seen below are figure ground representations of the conditions before and after our proposal. One can see the impermeability that the previous rail corridor had on the street grid, our proposal could serve to reduce the number fragmented blocks in the area and increase residential connections.



Proposed



Fattal Complex

The Fattal complex of industrial buildings offers the western end of St-Henri the exciting opportunity of developing a unique and vibrant node of commercial activities. This would provide much needed amenities to the area and enable local residents a venue for conducting local level commerce in a high quality comfortable setting. The layout of the space between these old industrial buildings provides an attractive canvas to work from for the creation of an active and intimate commercial district.

Site Importance:

This site introduces amenities to the western end of Saint-Henri and the overall proposal. The western area of St Henri is lacking commercial activity and especially the availability of food for local residents. The Fattal buildings create a pre-existing interface between the existing districts of the acorn industrial area and the village des tanneries. A marketplace is particularly useful for this area, considering the existing culture of local urban agriculture which has developed spontaneously in the area.

Opportunities:

- •Abundant availability of land adjacent to existing complex
- •Attractive configuration of industrial built form
- •Attractive and historical existing residential area
- •Existing culture of urban agriculture
- •Land is already zoned for mixed use development and our proposal can build on this opportunity

Constraints:

- Incongruous block configuration
- •The current activities in the Fattal complex are already functional







Fattal Complex 3D Aerial View Google Earth



Fattal Complex: Ideas

6.1

The Fattal Complex is a remnant of Saint-Henri's rich industrial past. It occupies a strategic location in the neighbourhood's west end. This area suffers from marked inactivity due to its isolation from adjacent communities. Saint-Henri's western residents are prevented from convenient use of the eastern area's amenities due to the lack of permeability and prohibitively long distances. Presently the Fattal complex is not being used to its full potential. This proposal is oriented to enhance the complex's appearance and general appeal by implementing a vibrant urban market.

Before







Market Place: Ideas

The St-Remi underpass offers this area an opportunity to cultivate a romantic belvedere. The space on top of the overpass will make a visible meeting point and include park benches under trees offering views of the area in each of the cardinal directions. Staircases will lead up from beneath the bridge to allow for improved access and permeability.

Before







Market Place: Precedents

6.2

This concept of a new market place built upon the skeletons of old industrial complexes has seen much success in other areas, such as Pike Place Market in Seattle, the Distillery District in Toronto and the Ottawa Byward Market. Such a market would provide amenities for local residents and a central focal point for activity in the area.

Ottawa Byward Market







Pike Place Market, Seattle



Distillerie District, Toronto





Fattal Complex: Proposal

6.3

The introduction of a new marketplace in the south western portion of Saint-Henri will promote more activity and bring forth a new form of character to the area. By simultaneously providing local amenities, local housing and commercial space, the market place is designed to maximize the areas potential while maintaining the areas existing character. This is a substantial contribution to the area's available professional space. There will be 7000 m2 of quality public hard space accentuated by water features, public seating, visible and vital market kiosks.



Urban Agriculture: Community Garden

7

A community garden is a place for gardeners to enjoy the activity of organic gardening, learn gardening techniques and social interaction.

At the western end of the proposal area, a large community garden is given to the neighbourhood. This community garden will not only act as a produce growing garden, and a meeting place for residents of the neighbourhood, but also be linked to the Fattal Marketplace where products from the garden will be sold.

This community garden will primarily serve, aided by the Fattal Marketplace, a source for sustainable, affordable quality food. Since food is grown locally, this fact reduces "food mileage" as it will be sold at the marketplace. This local marketing will add value to this food, as it is produced by the community instead of outside the neighbourhood. It will also allow for greater control over what and how much is produced at the garden. The producers, growers and customers are going to have direct face to face contact, and potentially these members of the community will take part in all three activities. Direct information exchange will help reduce wasted food, since the community's needs are easily communicated.

This community garden will potentially strengthen the sense of community within Saint-Henri's western section by bringing "life" into the area. This garden will be dynamic, as it will develop according to the local community's needs. The community can not only come, meet and work together to provide for the neighbourhood's food needs, they can use this space to implement a more direct program to build a stronger community. An example which might act to serve as precedence for this is Champlain Place in Toronto, Ontario (torontogreen.ca). This space is a place where a nearby seniors centre has partnered with the management of another nearby building to create intergenerational programming where the youth from the building and the seniors from the seniors centre come together to garden ecologically.

The size of the proposed community garden is approximately one hectare (~10,500 m²), which is comparable to some city farms in the U.K. This "city farm" concept was originally developed in the U.K. in 1972, when the first city farm was established in Kentish Town, London. This larger project not only included gardening space but also farm animals (FCFCG, 2008). City farm principles place importance in urban sustainability and being a vital resource in a localities needs. The designated garden in this proposal should be considered as a potential place to have Montréal's first city farm. The size of this garden is comparable to that of New Ark Adventure Playground and City Farm in Peterborough, U.K.

(newarkadventureplayground.co.uk). A city farm of this approximate size like New Ark, can offer the opportunity not only have a large community garden, but also have animals, such as poultry, goats, pigs, rabbits, and sheep. Also located at New Ark City farm is a playground, some workshop space, and a café. These are amenities that could be considered for this proposed space as well, since they will only act to enhance the community experience and revitalize this part of the neighbourhood.







Conclusion

Saint-Henri has dawned a post industrial era character which offers development schemes a sound and exciting departure point. Those lifegiving features which once provided the area industrial vitality, namely the Lachine Canal and the Canadian National Railway, now present the area with constraints which must be overcome.

In our proposal we recommend the removal of the railway alltogether. Its rerouting around the area along the existing highway infrastructure represents an intuitive consolidation of transportation infrastructure and opens up a huge tract of land for redevelopment and the reconnection of two isolated sections of the neighborhood.

Saint-Henri was divided into two sections by the rail corridor. The redevelopment of this area binds these two sections together by reweaving the streets that formerly ended at the railway. This reconnection increases permeability across the neighborhood.

The reinforcement of Saint-Henri's character is elemental to our proposal. At Place Saint-Henri we sought to introduce substantial built form that mirrors existing historical built form in order to give the place a sense of landmark. Place Saint-Henri also should behave as the area's natural centre and point of public congregation. To this end, we proposed substantial quality hard space and the implementation of a civic centre.

Arcing from Place Saint-Henri across the neighborhood, along the historical path of the CN Rail, we propose a new avenue (Oscar Peterson Ave). The built form along the avenue should be zoned strictly residential. Using design and policy initiaves we sought to mitigate gentrification which is a primary concern of local residents. By offering a mixed tenure housing and the suggestion to retain 40% of social housing, we hope to address the concerns of the local community.

At the end of our proposed avenue, we have introduced a multi-functional urban marketplace to address that end of Saint-Henri's lack of amenities. The Fattal Industrial Complex represents an existing quality atmosphere which would be appropriate for hosting such a marketplace. Minimal augmentation to the existing industrial form would be necessary. The western part of the neighborhood has an existing practice of urban agriculture. This is a culture we would like to encourage by introducing expanded gardening facilities. The marketplace provides a convenient venue for selling locally produced food.



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