DISCOVERY FOREST

topeka zoo
& conservation center

ORANGUTAN VIEWING STRUCTURE
TRAINING WALL
OUTDOOR ORANGUTAN YARD
PARALLEL PLAYGROUND
ORANGUTAN HOLDING
SCALE ROOM
ORANGUTAN DAYROOM
EQUIPMENT ROOM
INDOOR ORANGUTAN VIEWING
BUILDING VESTIBULE
KEEPER ROOM
CLOUDED LEOPARD DAYROOM
MOTHERING ROOM
AISLE
BED #1
BED #2
GREEN GALLERY
RED PANDA DAYROOM
AISLE
KEEPER ROOM
BED 1
BED 2
STORAGE
OUTDOOR CLOUDED LEOPARD YARD
OUTDOOR RED PANDA
VIEWING TUNNEL
RED PANDA VIEWING DECK
TUNNEL ENTRANCE
CLOUDED LEOPARD VIEWING DECK

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WHO WE ARE

Mission Statement
To enrich our community through wildlife conservation and education.

Vision Statement
We believe what we do changes the world. Every choice we make helps save the planet.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center identified the following five sustainability initiatives from which form the framework of the Zoo's strategic plan. Each initiative has overlap with more than one of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals:

- Slow the threat of extinction.
- Reduce the effects of plastic on the environment.
- Ensure food availability for the future.
- Create respect and empathy for water conservation.
- Innovation: Be a pipeline to solutions.

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Dear Friends of the Topeka Zoo,

We are thrilled to share a bold and inspiring vision for the future of the Topeka Zoo — the reimagination of Discovery Forest, an immersive, multi-species experience that will spark wonder, connection, and conservation action. At the heart of this transformation will be a dynamic renovated habitat for our beloved orangutans, paired with an innovative parallel play space where children can climb, swing, and explore just like their red-haired cousins. This isn't just a renovation, it's a celebration of our past and a leap toward our future.

As part of this exciting evolution, we are also preparing to welcome two incredible new species to the Zoo family: the Red Panda and the Clouded Leopard. These captivating animals will each be showcased in beautifully designed habitats featuring elevated boardwalks, indoor and outdoor viewing areas, and meaningful opportunities to connect through keeper talks and interactive conservation programs. Guests will learn how we care for these extraordinary ambassadors while discovering the challenges their wild counterparts face and how we can all help.

Discovery Forest will continue our legacy of celebrating Great Apes, honoring decades of commitment and care through storytelling, education, and innovation. The heart of this reimagined space will feature a breathtaking Green Gallery, showcasing the lush botanical richness of Borneo, home to the greatest plant diversity on Earth while bringing beauty, science, and awe under one canopy.

This is your invitation to be part of something truly transformative. Help us shape a future where animals thrive, curiosity leads, and conservation begins at home. Join us in reimagining Discovery Forest — for the animals, for our community, and for generations to come.

With excitement and gratitude,

Dr. Christina Castellano
Chief Executive Officer
Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center

DISCOVERY FOREST

BORNEAN ORANGUTAN

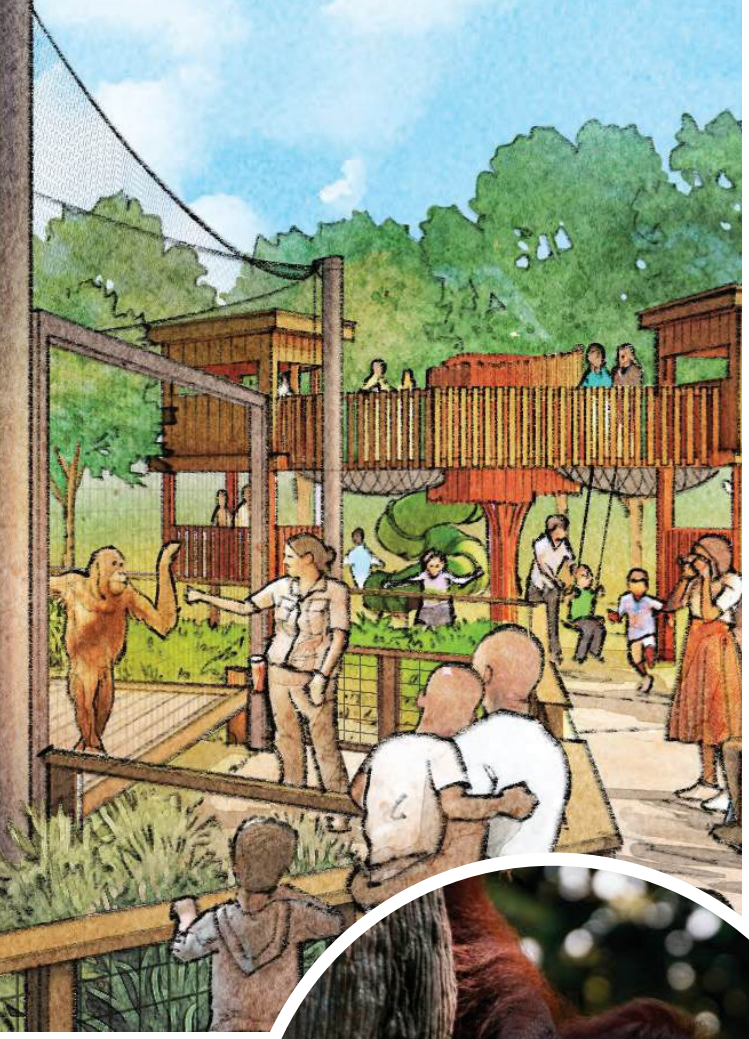
REIMAGINE THE RAINFOREST.

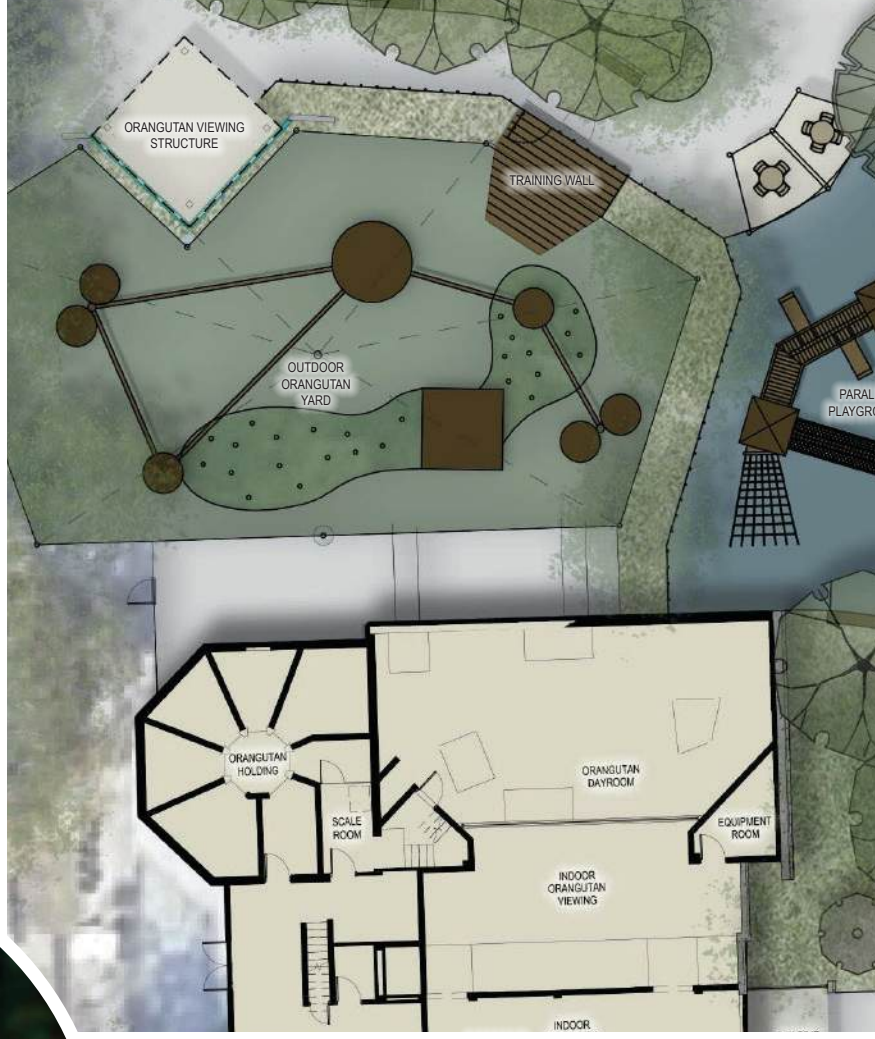
With impressive memories and remarkable problem-solving skills, Bornean orangutans are among the most intelligent animals on the planet. Native to the rainforests of Southeast Asia, these great apes are well adapted to an arboreal lifestyle, utilizing hand-over-hand movements to swing through the forest canopy in search of fruit and nesting sites.

Reimagined to include modern updates to the Zoo's existing orangutan exhibit, the Discovery Forest orangutan habitat will feature elements to exercise the bodies and minds of our family group.

Elevated platforms and towers, both inside and outside, will indicate designated areas for foraging, training, and nesting. Creative climbers, hammocks, and sway poles will provide opportunities for physical activity, while a glass window puzzle feeder will provide cognitive challenges.

Guests can keep up with our agile apes through numerous viewing windows and vantage points designed to maximize visibility without sacrificing animal comfort and privacy.

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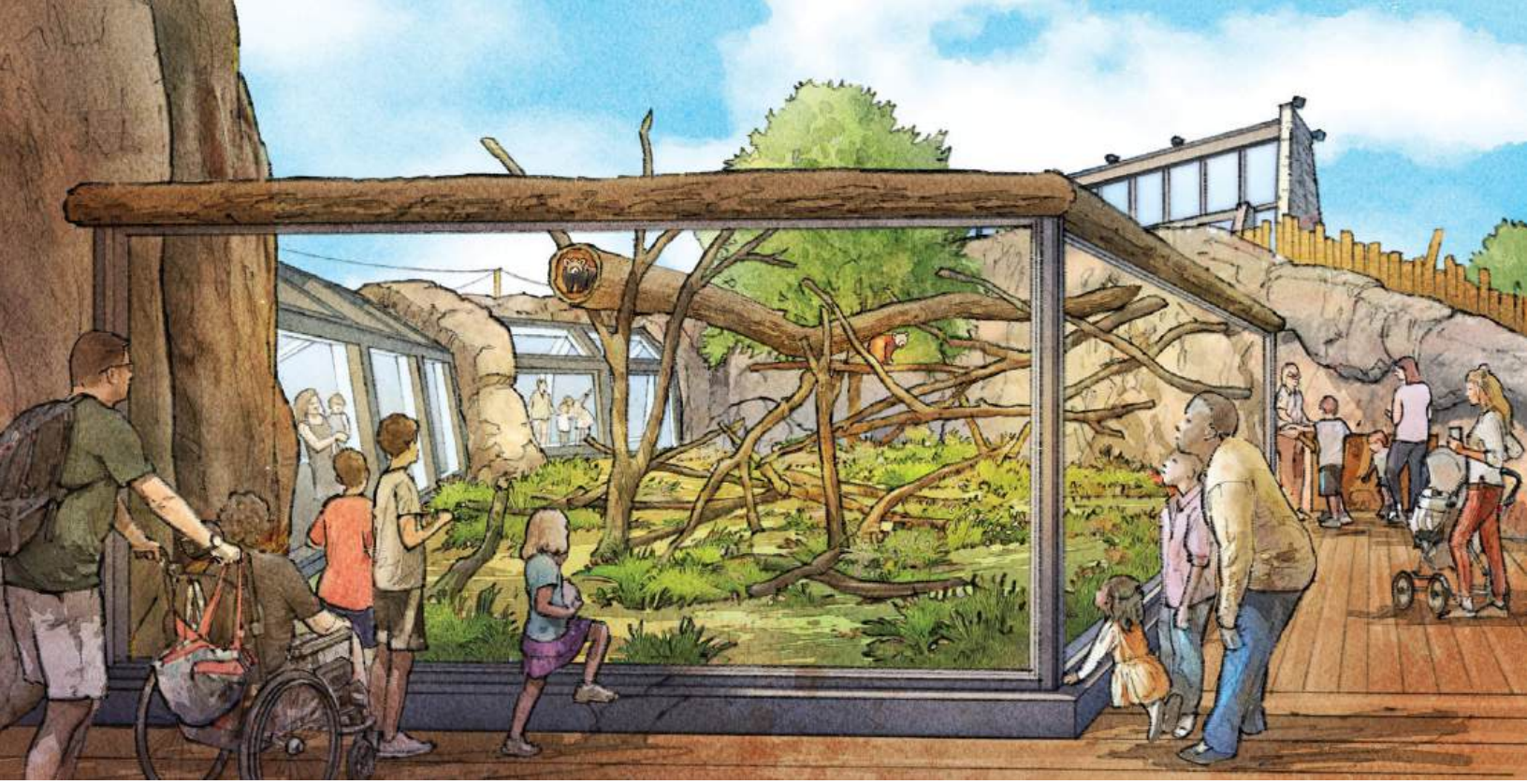

DISCOVERY FOREST

RED PANDA

TRAVERSE THROUGH THE TREETOPS.

Possessing a ringed tail like a raccoon and a compact body built like a bear, the charismatic red panda is a captivating resident of Discovery Forest. Although only distantly related to giant pandas, red pandas share the same primary food source: bamboo. They spend much of their time in the forest canopy, foraging for food.

Featuring an indoor day room, outdoor climbing structure, and panda patio, the Discovery Forest red panda habitat will include all the elements these agile animals need in order to thrive in their new home. Additionally, tasteful Himalayan theming and finishes will pay homage to the native habitat of this endangered species.

DISCOVERY FOREST

CLOUDED LEOPARD

CLIMB INTO THE CANOPY.

Few animals possess the quiet grace of the clouded leopard, a shy wild cat that maneuvers elegantly through its forest habitat by using specially-adapted paws and ankles to climb up and down trees with ease. Clouded leopards are not a subspecies of leopard, instead belonging to a distinct species of wild cat that branched off from other cat species over 6 million years ago.

At the Discovery Forest clouded leopard habitat, guests can peek into the secret lives of these elusive animals as they scale their outdoor climbing structure, rest in their leopard lounge or indoor day room, and even care for cubs in the Birth & Bond Suite. A training area will enable caregivers to teach behaviors that allow our cats to participate in their own healthcare, such as standing on a scale and presenting their tail through a specialized “tail port” for voluntary blood draws.

A winding boardwalk trail outside will provide expansive views of their outdoor habitat, while viewing windows inside will ensure guests have numerous opportunities to watch these quiet animals in action. To capture moments that may not be visible to guests, a web cam will ensure unfettered access to the private lives of these fascinating cats.

MOTHERING ROOM
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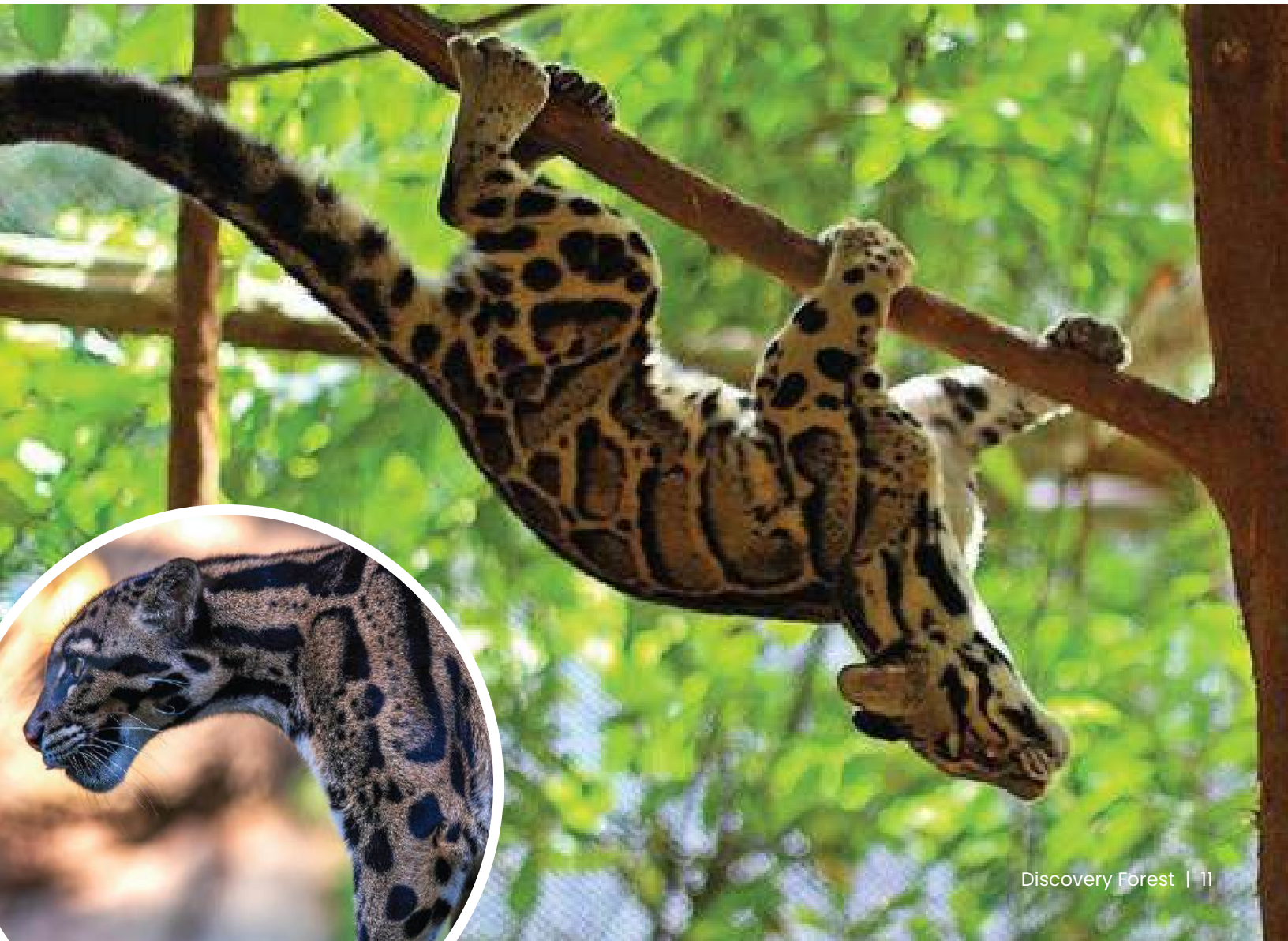


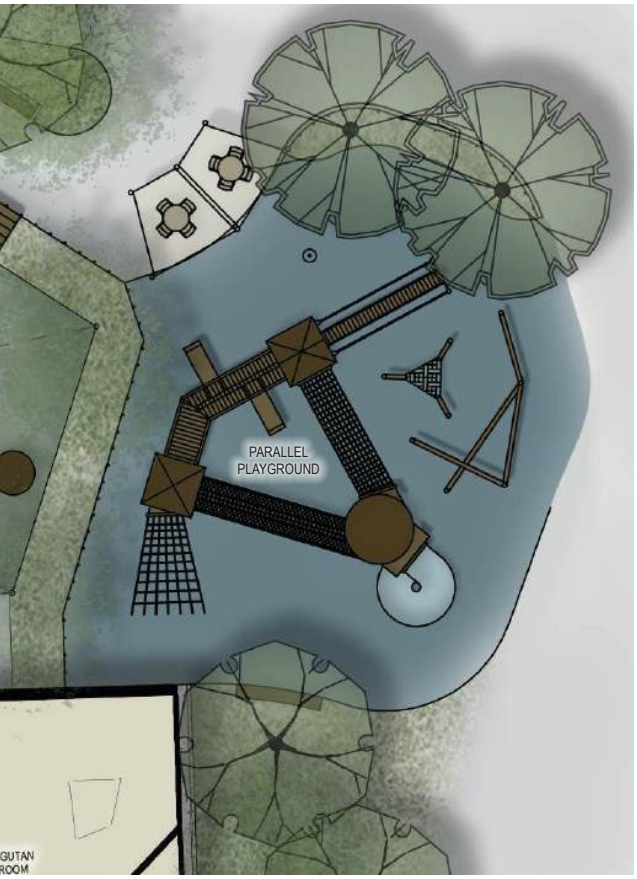
GREEN GALLERY

EXPERIENCE A CLOUD FOREST.

As you make your way through Discovery Forest, venture into the lush cloud rainforest of the Green Gallery. Showcasing the verdant tropical flora native to the wild homes of orangutans, red pandas, and clouded leopards, this central atrium will feature orchids, carnivorous plants, and air plants.

Known for consistently high humidity levels year-round, cloud rainforests maintain the perfect environment for plant life to flourish. These high-altitude forests are cloaked in low-hanging clouds that provide constant moisture to enable delicate plants to thrive.

A living plant wall anchors the experience, complemented by interpretive features and dynamic 4K digital projections that transform the atrium into an immersive garden unlike any other.



PARALLEL PLAY

PLAY LIKE AN ORANGUTAN.

Run, jump, swing, and climb your own way through the Discovery Forest Parallel Playground. This creative play area mirrors the structures guests can see in the Bornean Orangutan habitat, including a foraging nest, sway poles, towers, and more.

This playground features thoughtful elements for every member of the family, whether you prefer to go ape and channel your inner orangutan or simply relax in the seating area while listening to an educational chat from one of our knowledgeable docents.

LEADERSHIP

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