



# CORE REPORT

01.23.26

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- zinc
- coking coal

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## COST

### SPOT IRON ORE<sup>1</sup>

Spot iron ore slipped for the second consecutive week after climbing the previous five weeks.

Spot iron ore pricing ended the week at \$105.55/mt, down from \$107.70/mt a week ago.

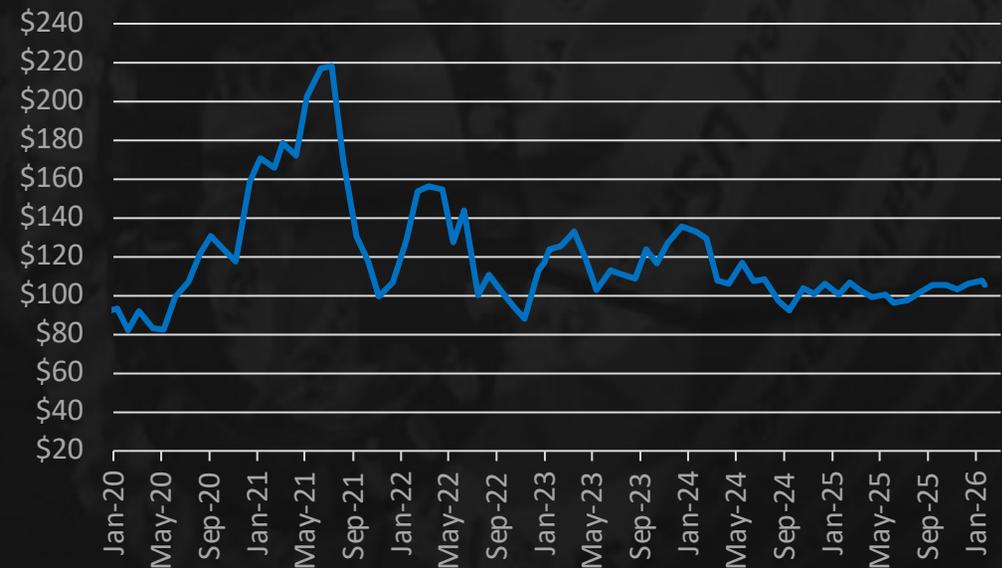
- This is the lowest price for iron ore since mid-November.

Pricing slipped five consecutive days as China's steel outlook cooled and supply stayed firm.

- Despite the drop, further restocking is expected ahead of Chinese Lunar New Year in mid-February.

Miner Rio Tinto said fourth quarter shipments rose 7%, boosted by record Pilbara output and smoother rail and port operations.

## IRON ORE COST



## WEEKLY ZINC PRICING



Zinc pricing increased for the second consecutive week, continuing its sharp upward climb.

Zinc pricing ended the week at \$3,220.50/mt (\$1.461/lb), up from \$3,201/mt (\$1.452/lb) previously.

- Zinc has now held over \$1.40/lb for several months and is expected to have continued upward momentum on improving demand.

Global zinc inventory increased slightly for the sixth consecutive week.

- LME warehouse inventory jumped this week, climbing from 106,700 metric tons to 111,700 metric tons.
- Shanghai warehouse inventory decreased slightly; however, sliding from 76,311 metric tons to 73,151 metric tons.

## COST

### ▼ COKING COAL<sup>3</sup>

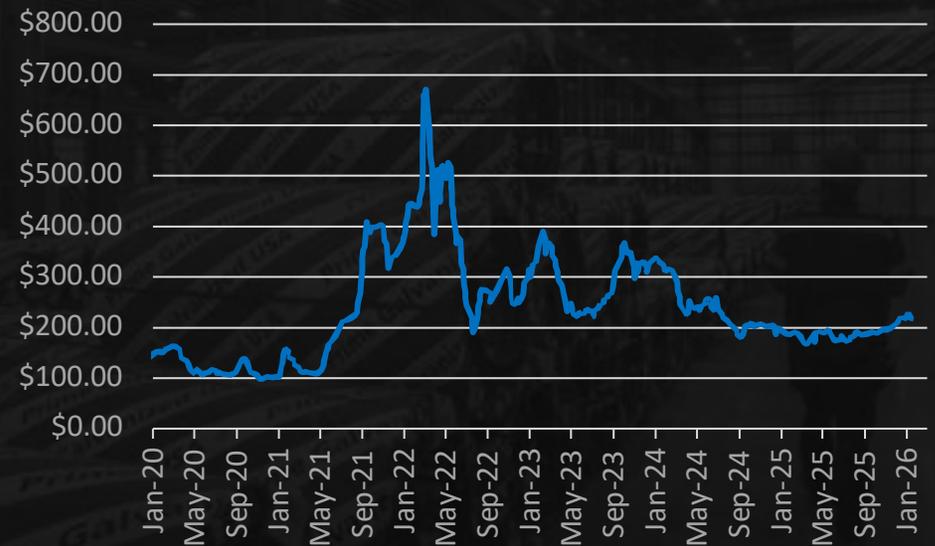
Coking coal pricing dipped slightly this week after climbing to an eighteen-month high last week.

Coking coal pricing ended the week at \$215.00/mt, down from \$228.00/mt previously.

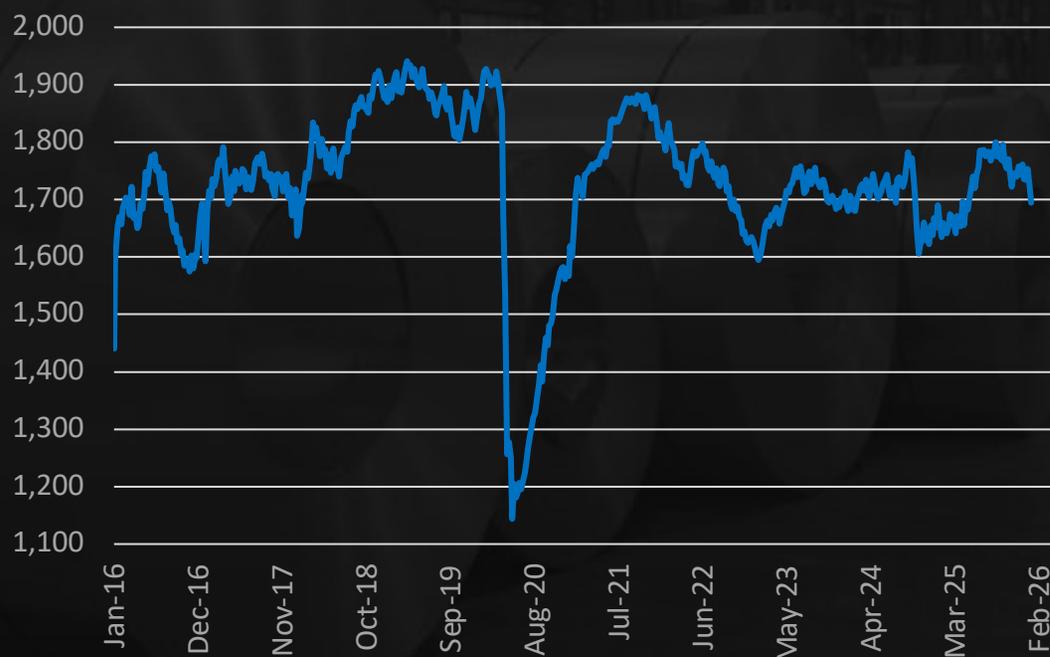
- This is down 5.7% from the highest level since the first week of July 2024.

Despite the drop, ongoing heavy rain and flooding in Australia have continued to disrupt mining operations.

### COKING COAL PRICE



## WEEKLY DOMESTIC PRODUCTION



## ▲ WEEKLY DOMESTIC STEEL PRODUCTION<sup>4</sup>

Domestic raw steel production increased slightly last week after a sharp jump the week prior, now up for the third consecutive week.

U.S. mills produced an estimated 1,756k tons at a 75.9% utilization rate, up from 1,752k tons and a 75.7% rate previously.

- This was the highest weekly output since mid-December.

Production rose slightly in three of the five regions, with the largest increase (in tons) coming from the Midwest region.

- Production in the Midwest region increased from 272k tons to 277k tons.

Year-to-date production is now up 6.2% compared to the same time frame last year.

## Ⓢ LIGHT VEHICLE ASSEMBLIES<sup>5</sup>

Assemblies of light vehicles in the U.S. slipped on a seasonally adjusted basis for the fourth straight month.

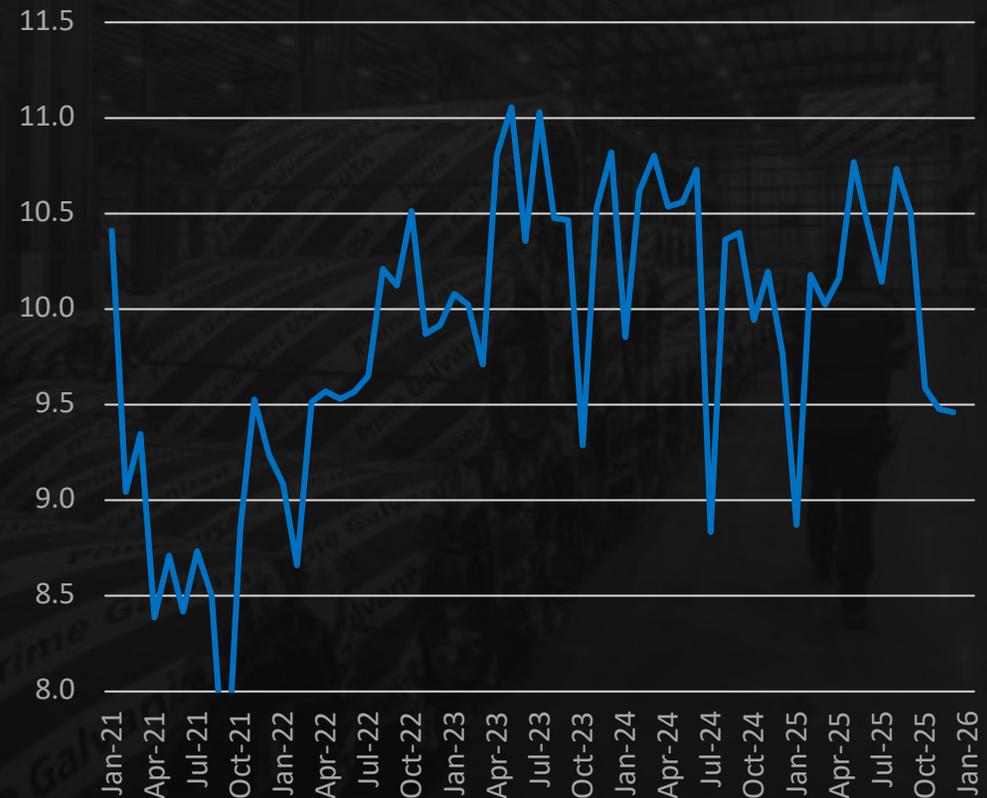
U.S. assemblies of light vehicles came in at a 9.462 million unit rate in December, down 0.2% from November and down 3.2% compared to the 9.771 million unit rate last December.

- This was the third straight month in which assemblies fell on a year-over-year basis.

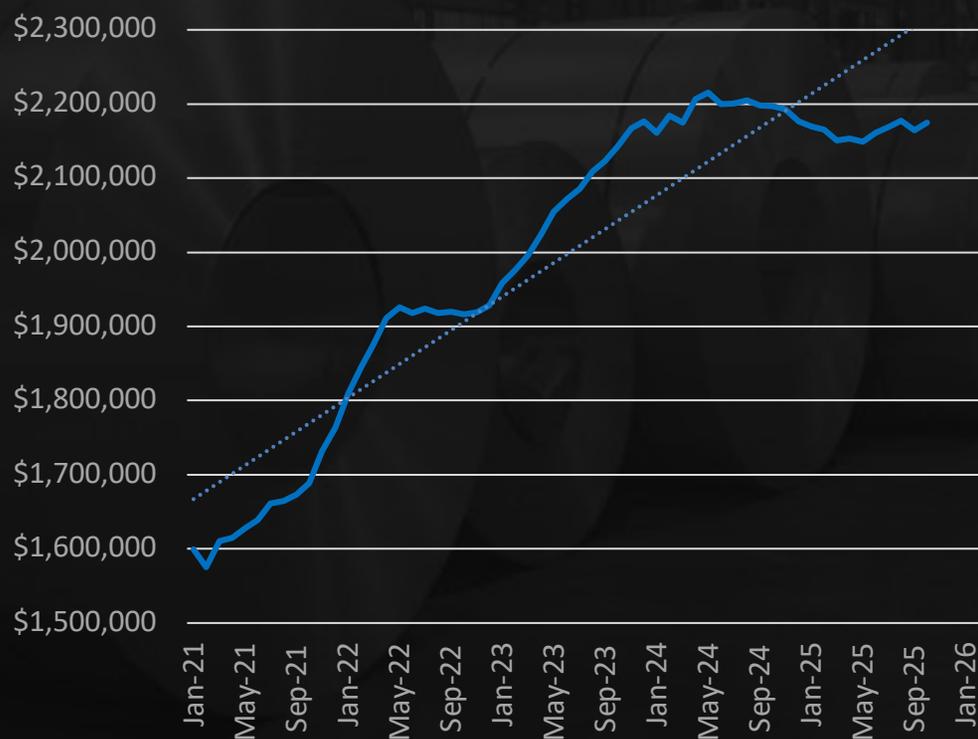
The three-month average slipped to a 9.509 million unit rate, the lowest level since April 2022.

For the full year 2025, light vehicle assemblies averaged 10.03 million units a month.

## U.S. LIGHT VEHICLE ASSEMBLIES (SAAR)



## TOTAL CONSTRUCTION SPENDING (SAAR)



## CONSTRUCTION SPENDING<sup>6</sup>

After slipping in September, seasonally adjusted construction spending regained its upward movement in October.

October total construction spending came in at a \$2.175 trillion rate, up 0.5% from September but down 1.0% compared to October 2024.

- This was the ninth consecutive month in which total spending was down on a year-over-year basis.

While non-residential spending was flat for the fourth straight month, residential spending saw a 1.3% month-over-month increase.

- On a year-over-year basis, non-residential spending was down for the fourth straight month while residential spending saw its ninth consecutive decline.

Within non-residential, the largest year-over-year increases came from sewage/water disposal and religious projects.

## DEMAND

# ARCHITECTURE BILLINGS INDEX<sup>7</sup>

The activity at the architecture firm level continued to contract in December, albeit at its slowest rate since November 2024.

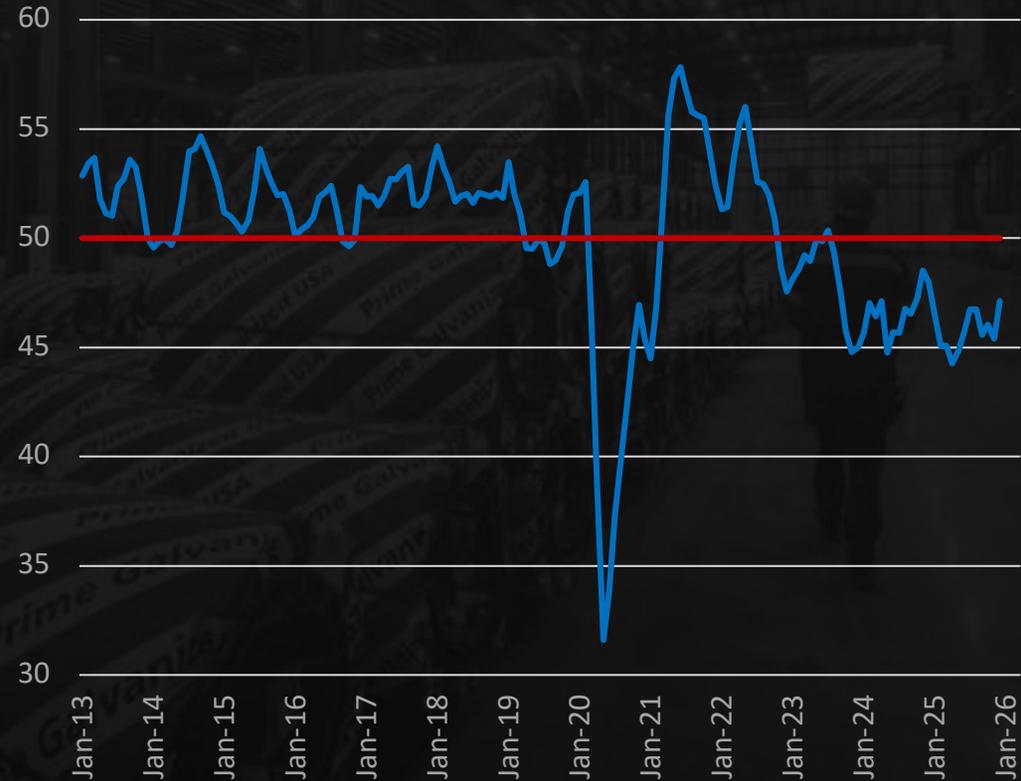
The December Architecture Billings Index came in at 48.5, up from 45.3 in November and 44.1 in December 2024.

- The three-month average improved to 47.1 from 45.4 previously.
- Despite the improvement, the index remains below 50, the key barometer that distinguishes between expansion and contraction.

Regionally, the Midwest (51.7) was the strongest while the Northeast (44.2) saw the strongest contraction.

All four sectors saw contraction in December, with the mixed practice (44.0) seeing the largest contraction.

## ARCHITECTURE BILLINGS INDEX (3MA)



## WEEKLY INITIAL JOBLESS CLAIMS<sup>8</sup>

The number of Americans filing new unemployment claims held relatively steady last week, suggesting the labor market maintained a steady pace of job growth in January.

The Department of Labor's Weekly Initial Jobless Claims report came in at 200,000 claims, up from 199,000 claims the previous week.

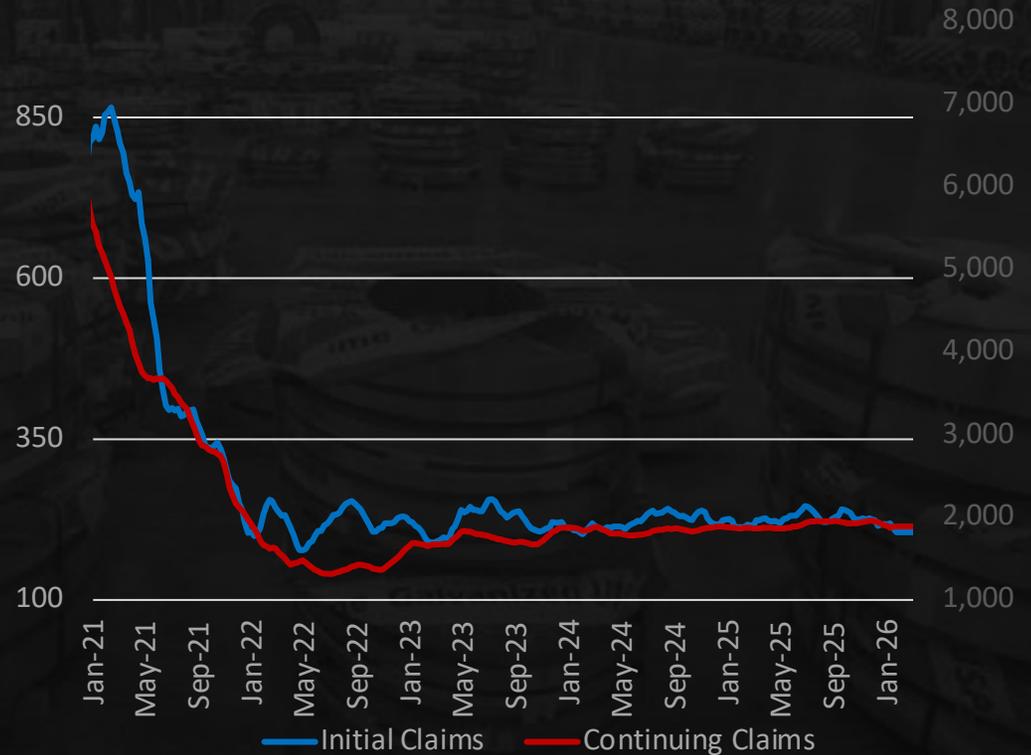
- The four-week moving average, considered a better measure of the labor market as it irons out week-to-week volatility, decreased to 201,500.

Continuing claims, or claims lasting longer than one week, dropped sharply for the second straight week.

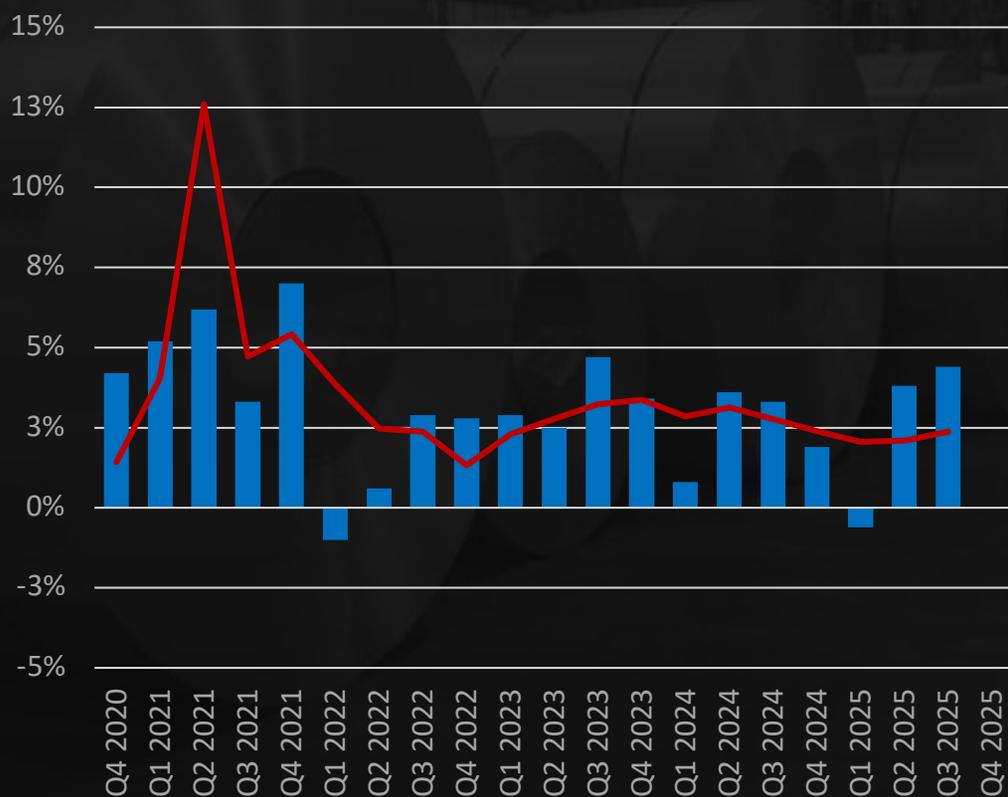
- Continuing claims came in at 1.849 million claims, down from 1.875 million claims previously.

After the Fed lowered interest rates three times in 2025, it's likely that the recent stability in the job market will support a central bank vote to hold rates steady to start the New Year.

## WEEKLY INITIAL JOBLESS CLAIMS



## GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT



## ▲ GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT<sup>9</sup>

The latest estimate showed the U.S. economy grew at an annual rate of 4.4% in Q3.

- This revision is up from the initial 4.3% growth rate and up from the final 3.8% growth rate from Q2.

The upward revision reflected increases in consumer spending, exports, government spending, and investment.

- Imports, which are a subtraction to GDP, continued to decline.

Compared to Q2, the acceleration in growth came from increases in consumer spending, investment, exports, and government spending.

Due to the government shutdown, this revision was in lieu of the regularly scheduled revision and is considered the final revision for Q3.

## SOURCES

- 1 Platts, Spot Iron Ore: January 23, 2026.
- 2 London Metal Exchange, Weekly Zinc Price and Inventory Report: January 23, 2026.  
Shanghai Futures Exchange, Weekly Zinc Inventory Report: January 23, 2026.
- 3 Platts, Coking Coal Price: January 23, 2026.
- 4 American Iron & Steel Institute, Weekly Domestic Steel Production: January 21, 2026.
- 5 Fed Reserve of St. Louis (FRED), U.S. Light Vehicle Assemblies: December 2025.
- 6 U.S. Census Bureau, Construction Spending: October 2025.
- 7 American Institute of Architects, Architecture Billings Index: December 2025.
- 8 Department of Labor, Weekly Initial Jobless Claims: January 22, 2026.
- 9 Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gross Domestic Product: Q3 2025.

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