

Statement from the Town Centre Board

Welcome to the second Town Centre Business Plan which sets out our aspirations for the future development and promotion of Darlington, building on opportunities created following completion of the Pedestrian Heart improvements.

Our first Business Plan aimed to improve economic vitality by encouraging business growth, promoting the town centre and supporting physical improvements to enhance Darlington's clean, safe environment. Working in partnership with key stakeholders, considerable progress has been made towards achieving these goals.

The Pedestrian Heart Scheme brought high quality improvements to the physical environment, including new signage, lighting and street furniture, enabling more events and street entertainment to be held in the town centre, substantially improving the town's vibrancy. Darlington has also successfully been promoted to a wider audience through the Summertime and Wintertime magazines and through enhanced information on the Town Talk website and newsletter.

Darlington draws on its great history of innovation, partnership and community life in the new vision for Darlington set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'. It seeks to carry this spirit forward and the Board is firmly committed to ensure the

This Business Plan incorporates priorities from the "Prosperous Darlington" theme in the Sustainable Community Strategy, to make Darlington a successful, competitive town centre, for retailers, shoppers and office-based businesses alike.

The Board intends to build on progress achieved; continue to provide strategic direction; consider new ways of bringing more people into the town centre and increase the town's vibrancy through new, exciting activities. The 'Oval' development will bring a new dimension to the town, creating huge opportunities to attract new retailers and business, which in turn helps extend the length of time people stay in the town centre. To ensure all key partners are represented at this important directional stage of Darlington's development, Board membership has been increased.

Learning from previous lessons, our new vision is set to make Darlington a major player, not only as a competitor in the North East but also in the country. It's a very exciting time for Darlington as we move towards the next phase of the town's development. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for the challenge ahead and will want to be part of the adventure.



Accessibility & Links

Pioneering Darlington... birthplace of the Golden Age of Transport

"Darlington has a comprehensive bus network with high frequency service links the town centre, all the major local centres and places of employment.

Regular services also link Darlington to Tees Valley, Durham City and County and Sunderland.

A fresh new bus network is planned for introduction over summer 2008, with new vehicles and a major marketing campaign. The new network is designed to create more opportunities to make journeys by bus in response to changes in areas of key employment and leisure".

Liz Esnouf, Commercial Director, Arriva Durham Tees Valley Airport is located in Darlington Borough and is undergoing a significant investment programme to improve facilities in order to attract both new airlines and additional passengers. The airport has an annual throughput of almost 1 million passengers. On average, 20% of all passengers use Durham Tees Valley Airport for business travel with the remaining 80% travelling for leisure purposes.

Darlington Town Centre is situated only 20 minutes from the airport itself with excellent links via the Tees Valley Sky Express Coach service.

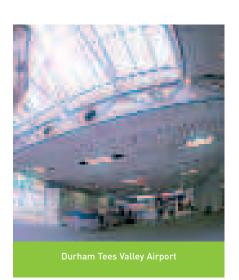
Darlington also boasts an excellent location for access to all major cities on the East Coast main rail line, with both London and Edinburgh being only a few hours away.

Darlington Local Motion is a boroughwide initiative aimed at getting Darlington residents out of their cars and onto their feet, bikes or buses. For more information call free on 0800 458 9810 or

www.dothelocalmotion@darlington.gov.uk

Good local cycling and walking routes are also a key component of Darlington's sustainable travel initiatives.

With over 3,500 car parking spaces and many town centre car parks boasting 'Secure Car Park' status (CCTV monitored), Darlington is a safe shopping and leisure destination. The new 'pay by mobile 'phone' car parking service; electronic parking space notice boards and 'Shopmobility' free wheelchair loan service all enhance the Darlington offer.





Darlington local transport



Sky Express Coach





Darlington is in the envious position of being located on the major spine of Great Britain with the A1(M) linking the town with Scotland and Newcastle in the North, and London in the South. It is also on the main A66 East-West route connecting it to the vibrant Tees Valley in the East and Lake District in the West. Darlington's new Eastern Transport Corridor will further enhance Darlington's Tees Valley links and transport infrastructure.

1 hour drive-time catchment

Accessibility of information about Darlington town centre can be found on three different, vibrant and resourceful websites.

Darlington Towntalk

A dedicated website for Darlington town centre, providing news; shopping database and pages for each business; Darlington Markets micro-site; Town Centre Management information and plans; interactive map; vacant property directory and much more. Development of this website is on-going as we strive to continually exceed the expectations of the users' needs.

Visit Darlington

The new and improved tourism website for residents and visitors to Darlington. It features full details and listings on accommodation; things to see and do; shopping, including the 'unique' shopping microsite and 'dine' microsite; heritage and events. The site also offers downloadable features such as postcards, guides and an itinerary planner.

Darlington Borough Council

Darlington Council's website provides comprehensive information on all council services, including Business Support Services.



www.darlington.towntalk.co.uk



www.visitdarlington.com



www.darlington.gov.uk

The 'New Look' Darlington Town Centre

"Like many others, we had concerns over how the Pedestrian Heart would look. Now that it has been completed we are all unanimous in our approval, especially in the increased use and sense of enjoyment that people have".

Alasdair MacConachie, Chairman, Darlington Partnership



The number of pay and display tickets bought in Council car parks increased from 209,000 in July and August 2006 to 221,000 in the same months in 2007. Attracting more people to shop in Darlington, encouraging them to stay longer, and so contribute more to the economy was an aim of the previous Business Plan. During August 2006 51% of people bought 1 hour tickets in Council car parks, whereas in August 2007 43% did, demonstrating that an increase of 8% of people parking were intending to stay longer in the town centre than during the same period in 2006. Similar figures were also recorded for July 2007.

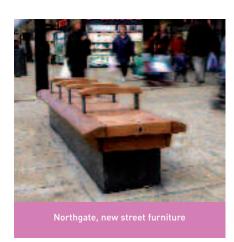
The number of people monitored walking across a cordon count into the town centre has increased too, from 25,000 in a 12 hour period in July 2004 to 32,000 in the same period in 2007, a 28% increase.

The scheme has increased the space available to pedestrians from 5,115 sq m to 10,933 sq m with the result that high profile events targeted to larger numbers of people can now be held throughout the town centre. The Grand Opening and Carnival Weekend and the award-winning Summer Markets Spectacular attracted numbers of people who could not previously have been accommodated in the town centre streets.

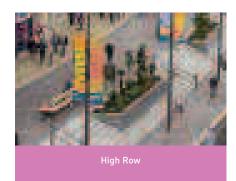
"Darlington is no longer a sleeping giant within the North East; but full of life, ready and willing to meet the challenges of the future. It's a great town centre for shopping with an abundant selection of multiple and independent retailers. House of Fraser is proud to be part of it".

Kevin Johling Manager

Kevin Jobling, Manager, House of Fraser









The 'Oval' Development

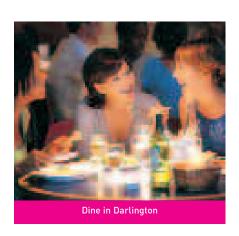
"Retail in Darlington is about to change! Opening in 2011, The 'Oval' is an exciting new shopping and leisure development in the heart of Darlington. It will provide over 27.500 sq m (300,000 sq ft) of high quality floor space and an exciting new range of retail and leisure usage. Darlington serves a large, loyal and affluent population, with 45% of catchment residents being ABC1, well above the North East average. Its catchment area extends across Tees Valley, Durham and substantially into the affluent areas of North Yorkshire. We are delighted to be working closely with partners, including Darlington Town Centre Management to bring this fabulous new development to Darlington".

Hugo Hawkings, Discovery Properties The growth continues! An exciting new centre for Darlington, The 'Oval', is designed on three different levels with a dedicated 'leisure deck'. Thirty six retail and leisure units in a wide range of sizes will provide a greater variety in the shopping, leisure and eating experience available in Darlington.

A spectacular triple-height atrium covered by an oval shaped roof, lending the project its name, will cover the leisure area. A 9 screen multi-cinema complex with other leisure entertainment facilities and restaurants will bring a new dynamic to the town centre, drawing even more visitors to the Darlington town centre experience.

Alongside the 'Oval' Development will be the provision of a multi car park with facilities for over 850 car spaces. This will increase cark parking provision in line with the anticipated increase in business to the new retail and leisure facilities which the 'Oval' will provide.







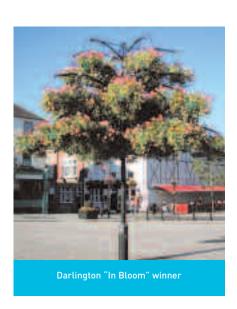
Darlington... Discover the Difference

"Built in the late 1960's, Queen Street Shopping Centre has played an integral part in the Darlington retail mix. The Centre is to receive a major 'face lift' to complement the arrival of the new 'Oval' Development. This is an exciting time for all the staff at Queen Street as we see the town grow and diversify its retail mix to encourage more shoppers. As a member of the Town Centre Board I am privileged to be involved, first hand, in the promotional and business aspects of what I believe will be an amazing shopping destination for thousands of people". Denise Jeffery, Manager,

Darlington boasts a wealth of elements which combine to produce a multifaceted and successful sub-regional town centre. The national and independent retail mix in Darlington is the envy of towns in the rest of the Tees Valley and surrounding area. Darlington has a high ratio of independent retail stores, two successful shopping centres, plus the new 'Oval' centre due to come on stream in 2011.

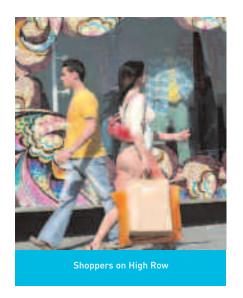
The relatively compact and fresh, new, cosmopolitan town centre has been completed following the ambitious Pedestrian Heart works which have brought new pedestrian zones; acclaimed public sculptures and water features; an enhanced performance space and a wonderfully floral environment. Darlington regularly captures the title of 'Best Small City' in the Northumbria in Bloom competition.

Darlington's Street Scene team maintain this clean and welcoming environment and the 'dine' experience and café culture and safe, vibrant night scene flourish in Darlington town centre.





Queen Street Shopping Centre



"The recent development in Darlington has created a town centre which is spacious, safe and family orientated. It has helped move Darlington town centre forward as a retail destination competing with larger towns and cities within the North East of England. However, to retain the momentum, Darlington must continue to re-assess and re-evaluate ... seizing the right opportunities at the right time, which ultimately will be of benefit to the town, its retailers, residents and visitors. Forthcoming developments within the town centre certainly meet these criteria and will help ensure its continuing success - I am delighted to be a member of the Town Centre Board supporting these initiatives". Susan Young, Manager, **Cornmill Centre**

"After several years of uncertainty, the evidence of Darlington's renaissance is becoming obvious. With a growing population, improving infrastructure, increased private sector investment and a muchimproved town centre streetscape, the future for Darlington's retail sector is looking significantly brighter". Andy Atkins, Proprietor, Cooks & Kitchens VN CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

Darlington Markets & Events

Darlington market has just won the top award at the Industry's 'Oscars'-"Market of the Year (Markets Attractions) 2008".



Award-winning and vibrant Markets

Darlington Indoor Market is housed in the magnificent Victorian Market Hall. This splendid historic building still maintains its prominent position within the very heart of Darlington with its iconic Clock Tower dominating the Darlington skyline. It boasts customers over many generations still sampling its wares.

Markets are synonymous with
Darlington reinforcing its proud
heritage and identity as a market town
and broadening the choice for
shoppers. Major refurbishments are
being planned for the Victorian Market
Hall, with the full support of Darlington
Council to ensure it maintains its
prominence within Darlington town
centre.

It was also placed in the Independent newspaper's "50 Best Markets in Britain" award in 2004 and the Market Hall building itself has been categorised as one of only 10 'significant market buildings' in the UK.

Darlington,
big plans, big ideas
and the passion
to realise them

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Spectacular Outdoor Markets

contribute to the vibrant market mix for Darlington. With the new town centre came the relocation of the outdoor market stalls closer to the Victorian Market Hall. This relocation maximised the diversity of the markets' full product range, creating a vibrant 'add on' to what the town centre naturally offers. Working in conjunction with the retailers in the town the variety of market events, whether continental markets; Christingle markets; craft and farmers markets or the regular market, they all combine to make for the complete shopping experience.

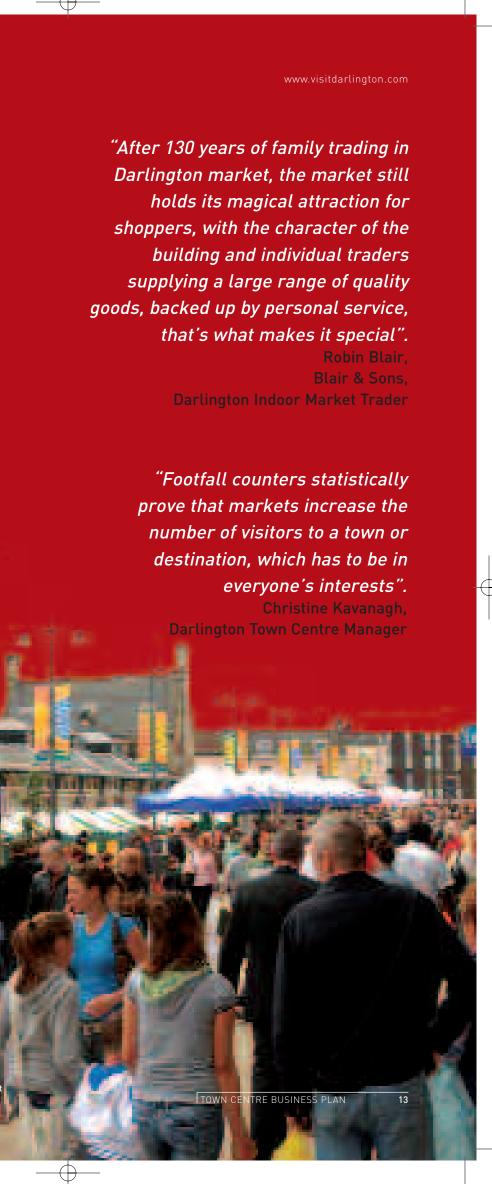


Darlington's commitment to a vibrant town centre is enhanced by the diverse annual programme of events which range from the international Rhythm n Brews Festival which packs the Market Square with thousands of visitors, to 'Darlington by the Sea' where the town is transformed into a beachscape. The town is building on the success it has achieved with its events programme and is continually driving forward with new and innovative events for the town centre.



Darlington French Market





Key Performance Areas

"The priorities and needs of the area fifteen years ago were different from those of today, and will change again as we progress. It is our duty to ensure that we are in control of these changes and to create the Darlington that meets our vision".

Alan Milburn, MP

Gateway Schemes

Darlington town centre is one of a number of complementary projects which have been delivered under Darlington Gateway Framework. Some of the key successes and planned activities so far include:

Creation of speculative warehousing and distribution space on Faverdale East by Easter Developments

Creation of high quality office space on Morton Palms Business Park

Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor

Tees Valley 'Connect' and Tees Valley Metro, and other complementary transport work with Darlington Team Local Motion which aims to influence and change people's travel behaviour and support businesses in workforce travel planning

Facilitating the creation of new office spaces at Lingfield Point Business Park

'Job Link' and other training schemes to help people from more deprived areas into jobs

The vision of Darlington in 2021 is of a community that respects its unique heritage and retains its character, friendliness and quality of life. At the same time we need to make the most of our potential for greater prosperity, and open up aspiration and opportunity for everybody. We want to build a genuinely sustainable, cohesive and caring town centre, and indeed, borough-wide community.

Since 2002, the Darlington Gateway
Strategy has been remarkably
successful in tackling what was the
principal barrier to economic growth:
the lack of sites and premises to meet
the needs of potential employers.
'Gateway' has attracted £420 million of
private sector investment into the
borough to date, resulting directly in
the creation of over 2,000 new jobs.
This is projected to increase to around
4,300 new jobs from over 1 million
square feet of new employment
accommodation by 2010, as a result of
the renewed Gateway Strategy.

One Darlington: embracing our approach to people, and specifically the need to make sure that people are not disadvantaged by their income, where they live or by any other potential disadvantage that could cause them to miss out on the opportunities that will be created by realising our vision.

Perfectly Placed: describing Darlington as a **place** and helping us shape our investment decisions, spatial planning and care for the environment.







Indicator	2007 Figure	Notes
Number of ground floor retail units	454 (+40 from the 'Oval' Development)	There is a general trend for consolidation into larger units, and because of this, businesses such as Primark, River Island and Starbucks have merged smaller units into one larger shop, resulting in a loss of some units. The 'Oval' Development will provide a huge increase in the retail units available in the Town Centre with a further 40 units in a variety of sizes being planned.
Vacancy rate -Of ground floor retail units	9.2%	A drop of 1.3% from 2006 (10.5%), which in real terms is a drop of over 12% on the year.
-Of ground floor class A1 floor space	6.6%	A drop of 2% from 2006 [8.6%], which in real terms is a drop of over 23% on the year.
Amount of retail class A1 floor space	100,900 sq m	Current town centre retail floor space.
	+ 20,339 sq m	This is the A1 floor space for the new 'Oval' Development. It does not include all of the leisure facilities that will be opening.
Retail rents (£ per sq m Zone A1)	£1076	Increased from £969 in 2006 – an 11% increase in real terms - this demonstrates a growing confidence and demand in the local retail sector.
Footfall - At High Row	wk 26 of 2007 = 89,335	On completion of the Pedestrian Heart footfall monitors were installed throughout
- At Northgate	wk 44 of 2007 = 98,029	the town centre. The statistics produced allow us to evidence if an event held within the town has been successful or not and
Average monthly footfall (2007) across the town	1,045.100.00	also allows us to look at the flow of footfall traffic within the town. It is important to note that the figures for the daily and weekly
Average daily footfall (2008)	54,161	footfall were taken from January / February 2008 – the slowest months of the year.
Average weekly footfall (2008)	379,129	2000 - the stowest months of the year.
Catchment population - Residence	Approx. 100,000	Every effort is being made to engage with a wider audience to promote Darlington town centre.
- Within 30mins of the town centre	Approx. 250,000	centre.
Sunday Trading As the profile of the town centre has increased so has the trend to open shops on a Sunday	-	Town Centre Management engaged a consultant to identify trends on Sunday shopping and to remove blockages for smaller independents to open. The 'Oval' Development retailers will be contracted to open on Sunday thereby resulting in a 7 day week shopping experience in the majority of the town.
Borough Population	99,800	As at mid 2007.
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All figures quoted above were correct at time of going to press

Action Plan for Next Three Years

ACTION	FUNDING NEEDED	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	08/09	09/10	10/11
MARKETING DARLINGTON Engage with businesses	/	Chief Exexecutive/ Leader/TCM	/	/	/
Continual upkeep and marketing of town centre websites - Town Talk - Visit Darlington		TCM/Marketing Team	/	/	/
Promote the 'Making Waste Work' Initiative		Public Protection			
Review signage in Clark's and Buckton's Yards	/	TCB/TCM	/		
Produce town centre brochures - Unique - Dine 2 - Summer / Winter Time magazines - Visit Darlington	/	тсм	/	/	/
Design colour coded banners to be located throughout the town centre		TCM			
TV Advert – update the TV advert created in Summer 2007	✓	TCM	/		
Town Crier – Hold a competition to find a Town Crier for Darlington	/	TCM	/		
Environmentally-friendly bags – develop a sustainable marketing project	1	TCM	/		
Sunday Trading – use research information to encourage greater participation in making Darlington a 7 day week shopping experience		тсв/тсм			
Produce a new Investors Information Pack - to include footfall statistics and relevant town centre information.	/	тсв/тсм	/		
Develop the 'Art in the Yards' Initiative	/	TCB/TCM	/		
Examine the options for further town centre features, eg street furniture, signage etc	/	TCB/TCM	/		

www.visitdarlington.com

ACTION	FUNDING NEEDED	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	08/09	09/10	10/11
DEVELOPING DARLINGTON Improve accessibility to the town centre by public transport - Introduction of a new bus network - Continue Local Motion Initiative	✓	Arriva/Transport Policy Local Motion Team	/	/	
Participate and oversee the progress of all development schemes in accordance with DBC strategies - The 'Oval' - Feethams and Beaumont Street - Victorian Indoor Market - Town Centre Fringe Manage the 'change' during development	<i>y</i>	Discovery/DBC F&M Working Group F&M Working Group TC Fringe Project Group TCB	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>y y</i>
Continue to develop and expand the Independent Retail Group through: - Meetings - Create incentives (town crier, editorial in brochures, website input, retail therapy etc)		ТСВ/ТСМ	/	1	/
Monitor relevant KPI's on an annual basis and the retail mix portfolio on a bi-annual basis		TCB/TCM	/	/	/
PROMOTING DARLINGTON					
Develop a new town centre marketing strategy		TCB	/	/	/
Develop a medium term plan for the growth of the Markets - Encourage Continental Markets		тсв	/		
Develop and continue to promote a new Town Centre Traders Association		TCB	/	/	/
Develop best practice guidelines for evening economy		TCB	/	/	
Develop a programme of town centre events/activities for residents and visitors	/	TCB	/	/	/
Review plans for the maintenance of the town centre environment (street furniture, signage and paving)		Street Scene/TCM	/	/	\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \
Develop café culture - increase and improve existing offer		Public Protection/TCM	/	/	/

Encouraging Business Growth

"Darlington is 'perfectly placed' in terms of its location and accessibility, and also in being poised to make the most of its opportunities to attract business investment and increase employment and wage levels. We can also exploit these opportunities to add to the existing excellent leisure and cultural facilities, and create an exciting, vibrant quality of life, whilst retaining the friendly, attractive and accessible feel of the place".

Peter Roberts, Policy Adviser, Darlington Borough Council

"CTC is delighted to be part of the on-going development of Darlington, both in terms of employment growth and in developing a high quality office building that will complement and enhance the town centre".

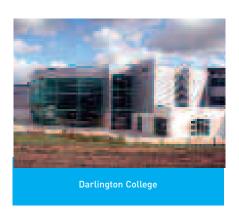
Tony Inglis, Managing Director,

Darlington's recent jobs growth is predominately credited to strong performance in the business services sector (such as Call Centres) and financial services, including the insurance industry. Business services have been a key driver of employment growth, accounting for around 3,000 net new jobs to Darlington.

We are working closely with the LSC to ensure that we have the trained staff to meet the needs of the Darlington business community. At the same time, there are plans for Darlington College to become a partner for the planned Northern Skills Academy for Hospitality. This is a huge growth area for Darlington with the 'Oval' Development planning to introduce many new restaurants to the town and with the growth in the accommodation sector in Darlington.

Partnerships have been formed to ensure that as much help and information is gathered in order to directly help or signpost queries to the correct body. The Darlington Business Information Guide has been developed to gather key information and contact details within one publication. Copies of the guide can be obtained from the Economic Regeneration Marketing Team on 01325 388685 or e-mail: businesssupport@darlington.gov.uk

CTC Marine Projects, is a Darlington-based company, which has been established for more than 10 years. The company's head office is looking to expand in Darlington rather than move to a different location, in part thanks to the support they have received here in Darlington.





CTC Marine Projects



The Beehive, Lingfield Point

The Darlington Town Centre Team



Councillor John Williams
Leader
Darlington Borough Council



Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)
Darlington Borough Council



Durham Constabulary



John Coxor Proprietor Leggs Ltd



Councillor Heather Scott OBE Member of Health&Wellbeing Scrutiny Cttee Darlington Borough Council



Alasdair MacConachi Chair Darlington Partnership



Councillor David Lyonette Cabinet Member for Transport Darlington Borough Council



Store Manager
Binns House of Fraser



Susan Young
Centre Manager
Cornmill Shopping Centre



Denise Jeffery Centre Manager Queen Street Shopping Centre



Jonathan Hutchinson Manager Marks & Spencer



Robin Blair Trader Darlington Indoor Market



Mark Reason Manager Alpha Radio Station



Roots the Chemist



lan Hughes Director The Art Shop



Peter Turnbull
Director
The Old Yard Tapas Ba



Liz Esnouf Commercial Director Arriva



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Town Centre Management & Marketing Team







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