



## INCREASE THE EMERGENCY RECOVERY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CUSTOMER CREDIT FROM \$250 TO \$400 & APPROVE THE RESTART UTILITY BILL REPAYMENT PROGRAM

### Riverside Public Utilities

City Council  
October 6, 2020

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## RPU BACKGROUND

### 1. COVID-19 Emergency Declared

- a. City Declared an Emergency on March 17, 2020
- b. **Suspended utility shutoffs for all customers** from the start of the statewide emergency (effectively, March 1, 2020)
  - i. Applied to Residential and Commercial customers

### 2. City Council on May 5, 2020

- a. Approved the **Emergency Recovery Assistance Program (ERAP)** for residential customers that have lost jobs or had wages reduced
  - i. Program launched on May 12, 2020
- b. Approved the concept of the **ReStart Program**
  - i. Assistance for customers that have been unable to pay their RPU utility bill(s) due the COVID-19 emergency



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## ONGOING IMPACTS

- 1. Duration of the impacts from the COVID-19 Pandemic are lasting longer than initially expected**
  - a. Residents facing longer terms of unemployment and reduced wages
  - b. Some industry sectors and businesses are facing ongoing uncertainty and limitations on their ability to resume operations
- 2. Customers continue to be unable to pay their utility bills**
  - a. RPU cannot waive these outstanding bills
  - b. The bills are accumulating
  - c. With summer heat, average monthly customer bills are increasing



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## COVID-19 EMERGENCY RECOVERY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ERAP)

**Low-Income Program for customers who have lost their jobs, been furloughed, or have had work hours reduced due to the COVID-19 Emergency**

- 1. Program details as originally proposed**
  - a. Limited time program – start of emergency to 3 months following
  - b. Provides a one-time bill credit of \$250 for residential electric customers
- 2. Funding**
  - a. Paid for solely by Public Benefit Funds (electric customers only)
  - b. Total cost is \$5 million



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## COVID-19 EMERGENCY RECOVERY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ERAP)

### 3. Staff has a better understanding of the long-lasting nature of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Customers experiencing longer term loss or reduction of wages

- a. Utility bills are increasing with onset of summer and use of air condition increases

### 4. Proposed Program Changes

- a. Increase the total benefit for ERAP Program recipients from \$250 to \$400
- b. Customers that have already qualified will be automatically credited the additional \$150 to their accounts so that they do not need to reapply
- c. New applications will be approved for \$400



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## RESTART PROGRAM PURPOSE

### 1. Customers that are currently unable to pay their monthly utility bills due to COVID-19 continue to receive utility services

- a. These **bills accrue each month** that they are not paid
- b. **Increases the difficulties for customers** to recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 emergency

### 2. Utility bills cannot be waived

### 3. Establishing a process to help customers repay their bills will:

- a. **Help customers** with their economic recovery that will follow the COVID-19 emergency
- b. Provide a **path for the utilities to recover revenue** that may be lost if a customer cannot repay their bill – this helps all customers



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## KEY COMPONENTS OF THE RESTART PROGRAM

Standardized  
repayment  
agreements

6-month delayed start  
for repayment

Flexible repayment  
timelines

No penalties, fees, or  
interest



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to increase the COVID-19 Emergency Recovery Assistance Program customer credit from \$250 to \$400 for residential electric customers that have been adversely financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined in this report;
2. Approve the Restart Utility Bill Repayment Program and standard form Business Restart Payment Agreement for commercial customers and standard form Restart Agreement Letter for residential of Riverside Public Utilities Department;



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## RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

3. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to implement the Restart Utility Bill Repayment Program for all customers that have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
4. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute the standard form Business Restart Payment Agreement for commercial customers and standard form Restart Agreement Letter for residential customers.

