



REVISIONS TO THE RESTART UTILITY BILL REPAYMENT PROGRAM

Customer Engagement

Customer Relations/Finance Committee

June 21, 2021

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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 (effective, March 1, 2020)
2. City Council on May 5, 2020
 - a. Approved ERAP for residential customers that have lost jobs or had wages reduced
 - b. Approved the concept of the ReStart Program

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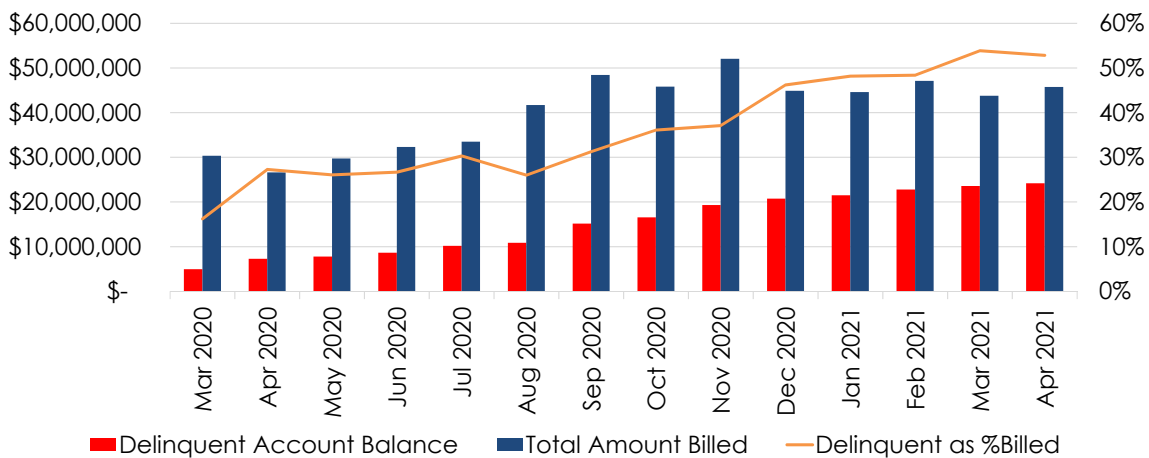
PANDEMIC IMPACT

1. Duration of the impacts from the COVID-19 Pandemic have been prolonged
2. Customers continue to be unable to pay their utility bills
3. City has experienced significant increases in customer accounts receivable
 - a. A/R increased by 51% or \$15.4 million from March 2020 to April 27, 2021
 - b. During the same period, delinquent accounts receivable has increased 391% or \$19.2 million.

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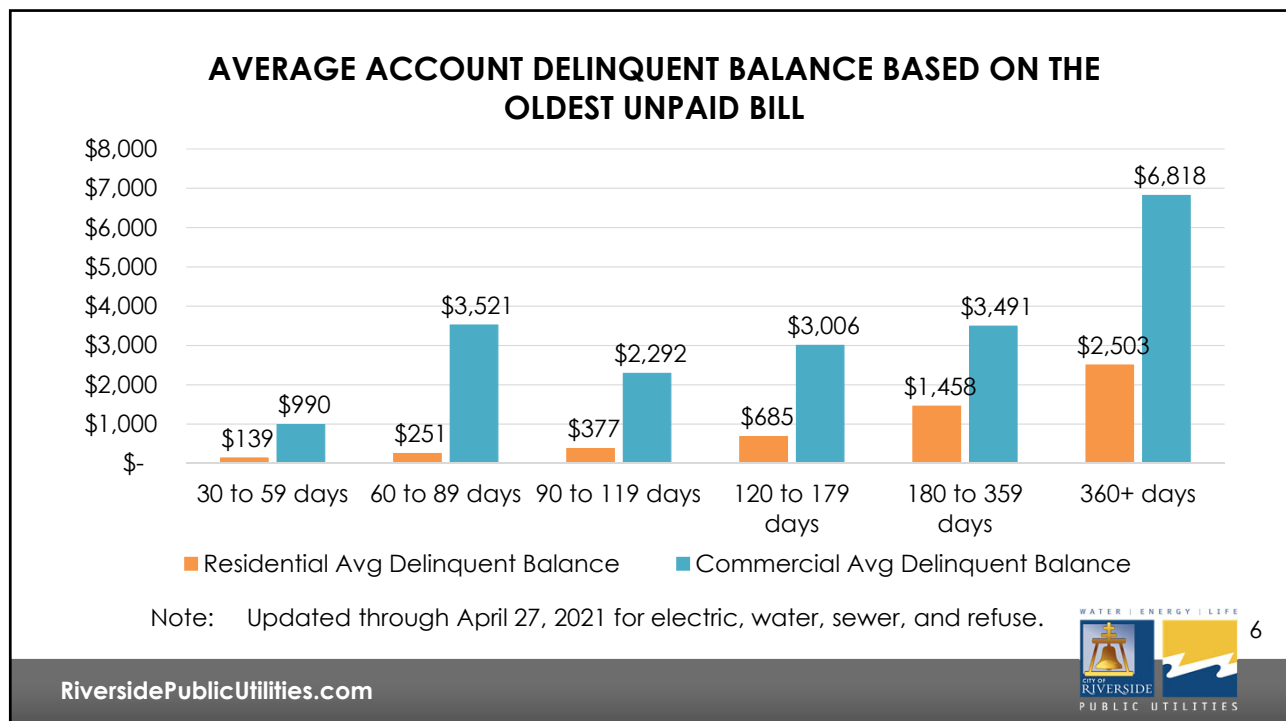
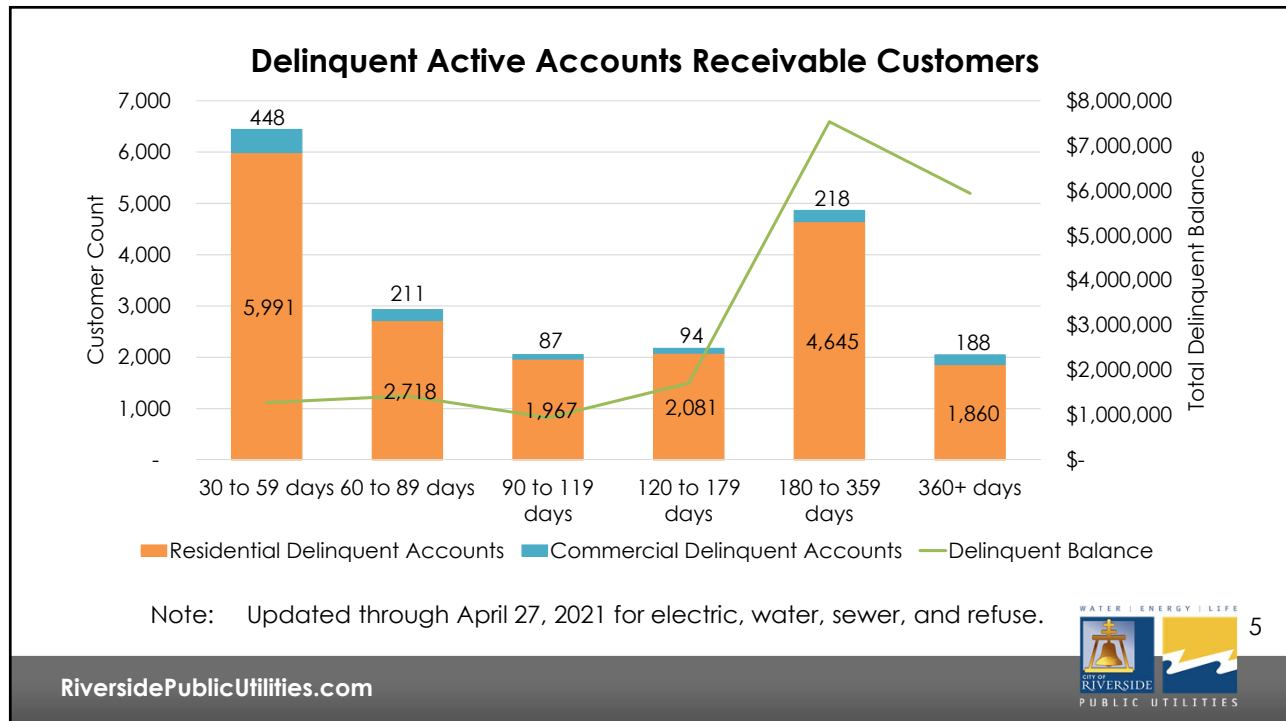
Total Accounts Receivable (A/R) Comparison



Notes: 1. Delinquent Account Balance includes active & inactive accounts.
 2. Updated through April 27, 2021 for electric, water, sewer, and refuse.

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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
2. Restart establishes the process to help customers repay their bills the economy recovers from the pandemic.



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RECOMMENDED PROGRAM UPDATES

DELAYED START TO REPAYMENT

provide customers with a ~~6-month~~ **sixty-day** delay before their first payment towards their outstanding balance is due. Customers may sign up for this program from the time that City Council approves the ~~agreement~~ **Restart program** through ~~two months~~ **sixty days** after RPU resumes utility disconnections **for nonpayment**.



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RECOMMENDED PROGRAM UPDATES

REPAYMENT AGREEMENTS

~~Customers will enter into agreements with RPU to repay unpaid balances on their accounts.~~ **All payment arrangements to be conducted via the current administrative process using a variety of letters and agreements already in practice with Utilities Customer Service teams**



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RECOMMENDED PROGRAM UPDATES

REPAYMENT TIMELINE

Customers will be provided ~~12 months~~ **up to 18 months from the day of the City Council authorizes RPU to resume service disconnections for non-payment** to repay their outstanding bill balance. ~~Twelve~~ **Equal monthly payments will be based on the payment arrangements as determined by the Restart Program guidelines**



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RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS TO THE PROGRAM

Down Payment Requirement

Requires a down payment of 10% for customers to initiate the program. If the down payment is not received within sixty (60) days of when the installment plan was created, the agreement will be considered terminated unless renegotiated.

Restart Eligibility

The program is designed for delinquent utility bills as of sixty (60) days after the City Council terminates the Local Emergency Declaration and reverses the March 17, 2020 direction to suspend discontinuance of service for nonpayment.



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AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

1. **SHARE** Sharing Households Assist Riverside Energy Program - an income-qualified program (200% Federal Poverty Guidelines) and provides emergency/ deposit and monthly bill credit assistance.
2. **ERAP** Emergency Recovery Assistance Program - established in response to COVID, provides \$400 bill credit assistance for residential customers whose incomes have been negatively impacted due to the pandemic.
3. **ERA** Emergency Rental Assistance Program - established through US Treasury funding to assist in paying past due rent and utilities to low-income residents (80% of area median income) whose incomes were negatively affected due to the pandemic. Program funds were exhausted April 16, 2021, now administered through United Lift.

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Customer Relations/Finance Committee forward a recommendation to the Board of Public Utilities to recommend that the City Council:

1. Implement the revised Restart Utility Bill Repayment Program for all customers that have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to be effective within 60 days of the City Council reversing the March 17, 2020, direction to suspend discontinuance of service for nonpayment of water, electric, sewer and refuse utility; and
2. 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 to be effective within 60 days of the City Council reversing the March 17, 2020, direction to suspend discontinuance of service for nonpayment of water, electric, sewer and refuse utility services.