



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## City of Riverside Approves Plan to Help Businesses With Utility Costs

*New program allows businesses hurt by COVID-19 to apply their deposits to their account balance*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Qualifying small business customers of Riverside Public Utilities who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 closures can apply their deposits to their account balances through a program unanimously approved by the Riverside City Council.

The program could be available to about 3,300 businesses in Riverside with 50 or fewer employees. Businesses must apply by March 31. Deposits typically range from \$2,500 to \$3,000.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and it is incumbent upon us to provide assistance where possible,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “This common-sense program will help our small business owners make progress on their bills while maintaining the financial integrity of the utility.”

To be eligible for the program, a business must:

- employ 50 or fewer full-time employees as of December 31, 2019.
- certify in writing that their business has been adversely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, either by loss of revenue, reduced work hours or temporary closure of business.
- not be classified as an “essential critical infrastructure” business under California Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-33-20.
- have maintained a good payment history for at least three consecutive months from December 2019 to March 2020.

Small businesses employ 47% of the nation’s workforce, generate two-thirds of new jobs and serve as a critical path to economic mobility and self-sufficiency. But many such businesses are struggling from the impacts of shutdowns designed to slow the spread of COVID-19. Nearly a third of nearly 70,000 small business owners in a national survey said they would be forced to close permanently by mid-January without additional funding.

“This measure builds upon the extraordinary efforts of the Riverside community to come together and provide relief for those most impacted by the effects of COVID-19 – including our brick and mortar small businesses,” said City Councilmember Ronaldo Fierro, who proposed the program. “Local relief measures such as these have and will be instrumental towards a successful economic recovery and rebound from the pandemic in 2021 and beyond.”

Allowing businesses to use their deposits to pay their utility bills will help businesses stay afloat while not costing the City or Riverside Public Utilities additional money. Many businesses already could make this move after establishing a good payment record for 12 consecutive months.

More information is available at <https://riversideca.gov/SBDC> or by calling 311 or emailing [RPUSBA@RiversideCA.gov](mailto:RPUSBA@RiversideCA.gov).