

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Donation Program for Utility Rate Assistance

Lucy Liu, Deputy Director
Andy Baker, Fiscal Manager
Utilities

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Direction

Staff is seeking Council direction regarding an ordinance to establish the Neighbors Helping Neighbors donation-funded utility rate assistance program.



Agenda

1. Background
2. Proposed Program
3. Next Steps
4. Questions & Answers



Background

Council Request:

*consider
accepting
donations to
support rate
relief*

Today:

Presenting
proposed
program for
direction

Staff: research on
options, technical
feasibility,
benchmarking

Future Process:
Communication
& outreach,
policy & code
changes, and
implementation



Existing Utility Relief Programs

Emergency Assistance Program

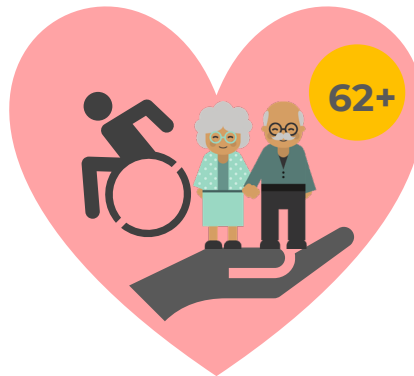
Experiencing Temporary Financial Shock



Waive up to **4** Months Utility Bills

Utility Rate Relief

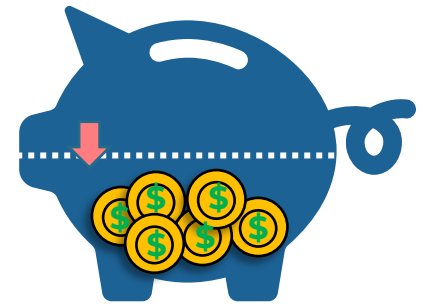
Low Income Seniors
Disabled Residents



70% Utility Bill Discount

Utility Tax Relief

Low Income Households



 Utility Tax Rebate

Why a New Program

- Potential new funding source
 - Possibility of accepting donations on the bill with new billing system
- Existing gap
 - Not all low-income customers qualify for existing programs

New Program: temporary relief for more households



Examples of Low-income Residents this would Help

- Senior/disabled residents disqualified based on prior year's income
- No disability proof
- Ongoing medical costs
- Families who've fallen behind



Best Practices of Donation Programs

Key Components:

- 1) *Unique branding to communicate purpose of the program*
- 2) *Accept recurring donations on the utility bill and one-time donations online*
- 3) *Dedicated for Temporary Relief*



Accepting Donations:

Recurring

- Current customers

One-Time

- Any residents or businesses

Utilities Contribution

- Seed with \$50K
- Match with \$ amount donated



Using Donations to Fill the Gap

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Preventing Water Shutoff



Waive up to **2** Months Utility Bills

- Available to low-income residents with an Urgent / Shutoff Notice
- 100% reduction on basic utility bill
 - Up to \$333 credit for two months if eligible for donation funds only
 - Up to \$1,000 credit for 6 months if eligible for both Emergency Assistance and donation funds



Outreach Plan

PROMOTE
New Program and
Donation Options

- City News Release
- It's Your City Newsletter
- Social Media Feeds
- Customer Bill Insert
- City Website
- Utilities Billing Website
- Business Partners

INFORM
Program Assistance is
Available

Direct Outreach

- Past-due Customers
- Door Tags
- Human Services Organizations and Agencies
- Customer Bill Insert
- Utilities Billing Website
- Signage at Service First and Mini City Hall



Environmental Services Commission Recommendation

The Environmental Services Commission has reviewed the proposed Donation Program for Rate Assistance and unanimously recommends that City Council adopt the program.



Next Steps

- Outreach & Communication
- Update City Donation Policy
- Council approval of enacting Ordinance
- Technical implementation with new billing system



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