



CITY OF MERCER ISLAND | FINANCE DEPARTMENT

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ARPA UTILITY RELIEF GRANT PROGRAM

Background

On March 18, 2020, Governor Inslee called on public utilities in Washington State to ensure the health and safety of their employees and the public by suspending utility disconnections for nonpayment during the COVID-19 pandemic; waiving late fees and offering customer payment plans for customers who are economically impacted by the emergency.

The statewide moratorium on utility late fees and service disconnects due to non-payment expired on September 30, 2021. The City of Mercer Island elected to continue to waive late fees and service disconnects due to non-payment for an additional 180 days, after the end of the Statewide moratorium.

The American Rescue Plan Act is a Federal economic stimulus package signed into law on March 11, 2021, in response to the economic and public safety impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The \$1.9 trillion legislation includes \$19.53 billion to cities and towns with less than 50,000 residents to aid in their response and recovery from the Pandemic. A separate pool of \$45.6 billion was set aside for metropolitan cities with populations over 50,000.

On June 8, Washington's Office of Financial Management (OFM) announced ARPA allocation amounts for Non-entitlement Unit Cities (communities with under 50,000 residents), along with specific instructions to acknowledge the desire for and facilitate the transfer of ARPA funds. The OFM confirmed the City of Mercer Island will receive \$7.23 million in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF).

Federal guidance on allowable uses for ARPA funding includes the allowance for "assistance to households or populations facing negative economic impacts due to COVID-19. This includes food assistance; rent, mortgage, or utility assistance," among others. The ***Mercer Island ARPA Utility Relief Grant Program*** authorizes a one-time award to pay accrued Mercer Island Utility account balances resulting from the economic hardships caused by the pandemic. This policy applies to Water, Sewer, Stormwater, and Emergency Medical Service Utility fees invoiced by the City only¹.

Policy

The economic impact of the COVID 19 pandemic created a large number of past-due utility receivables. This program will address the Washington State utility reopening guidelines as well as providing a new assistance option for Mercer Island utility customers within the guidelines of the ARPA Final Rule. The federal guidelines allow ARPA funds to be used towards utility assistance for bills incurred after March 1, 2020 for those individuals, or class of individuals, who experienced negative economic impacts as a result of the pandemic. The City of Mercer Island is authorizing up to \$2,000 per household to assist the following residential Mercer Island utility customers:

¹ Policy does **not** apply to utility fees assessed by Puget Sound Energy, Recology, Comcast or any other public or private utility district not operated by the City.

1. Assistance is for residential water/sewer utility customers only.
2. Applicant's name must appear on utility account as the owner or tenant.
3. Customer will provide income verification documentation with completed application.
4. Applicants are eligible to receive assistance from the ARPA funds only one time.
5. Utility account balances accrued from 3/1/2020-9/30/2021 are eligible for relief.
6. Program award dollar amount will be determined based on past-due balance accrued during the eligibility period with a maximum cap of \$2,000 per household.

Additional Resources

- The Mercer Island Flexible Payment Plan.
- The City's Utility Bill Reduction Program is available to income-qualified households, providing access to discounted utility rates. More info available on the City's [website](#).
- The Mercer Island Youth and Family Services Family Assistance program serves Mercer Island resident who are experiencing financial hardship, including assistance with rent and utility services.
- Additional information regarding utility assistance through Puget Sound Energy can be found at www.pse.com/assistance.

King County Area Median Income Table

Household income between 0-100% of King County area median income (AMI) in the last 60 days.

FY 2021 King County Area Median Income Limits								
# Persons in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Low (40%) Income Limit	32,400	37,040	41,680	46,280	50,000	53,720	57,400	61,120
Moderate (65%) Income Limit	52,650	60,190	67,730	72,205	81,250	87,295	93,275	99,320
Eligible (100%) Income Limit	81,000	92,600	104,150	115,700	125,000	134,250	143,500	152,750
Eligible (115%) Income Limit	93,150	106,490	119,770	113,055	143,750	154,385	165,025	175,660