

2017-2027 - A Decade of Renewal

Update on Lifting the Disconnection Moratorium

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DeKalb County CEO
Michael L. Thurmond

September 21, 2021

DeKalb County
Contractor
New Day Project

NEW DAY PROJECT
WATER METER
REPLACEMENTS IN
PROGRESS
Questions?
Call (404) 378-4475 or visit www.dekalbcountyga.gov/newdayproject



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CONTEXT

How did we get here?

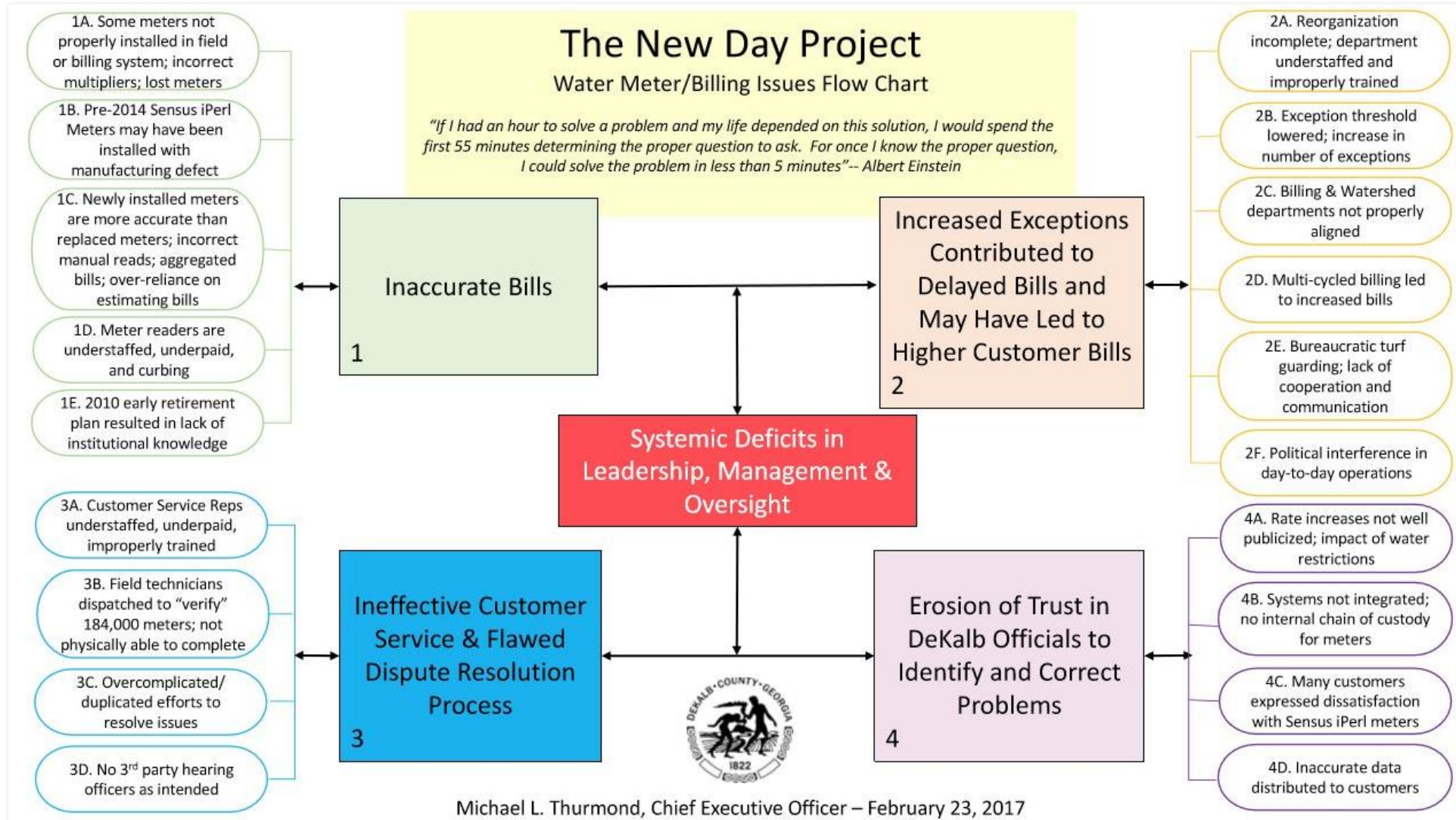
2016 - TRUST LOST



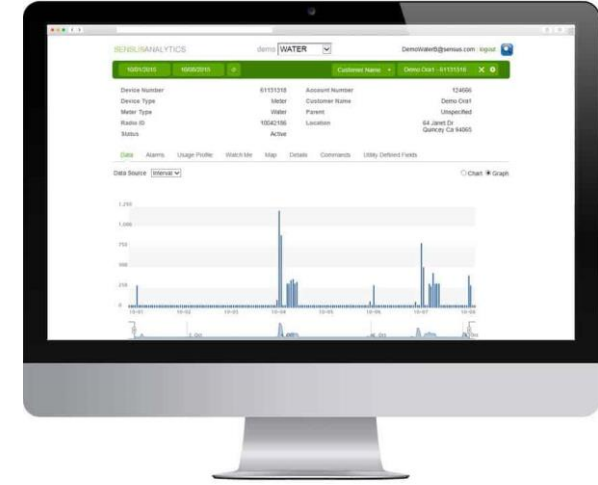
In 2016, metering and/or billing issues resulted in the creation of the Disconnection Moratorium.

*Image from AJC article October 7, 2016.

The NEW DAY PROJECT was created



NEW DAY PROJECT RESULTS



THE RIGHT METER

CORRECTLY INSTALLED AND
REPLACED TO SCHEDULE

PROVIDING TIMELY AND
ACCURATE DATA

FOR TRUSTED AND VERIFIABLE
BILLS

92,132 of 102,000 meters planned
replaced to date (92%)

75% of meters now on
Advanced Metering
Infrastructure

Disputes down from
~4,000 to ~270 per month

A NEW DAY – the next step

- In April 2021, the CEO ended the disconnection moratorium effective September 1
- The County initiated a Communications Strategy to re-engaging customers that had disengaged.



A NEW DAY

Celebrating what has been accomplished

NEW DAY PROJECT
WATER METER
REPLACEMENTS IN
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DeKalb County
Contractor
New Day Project

Contractor working on New Day Project

PREPARATIONS PLAN (Jan-Aug 2021)

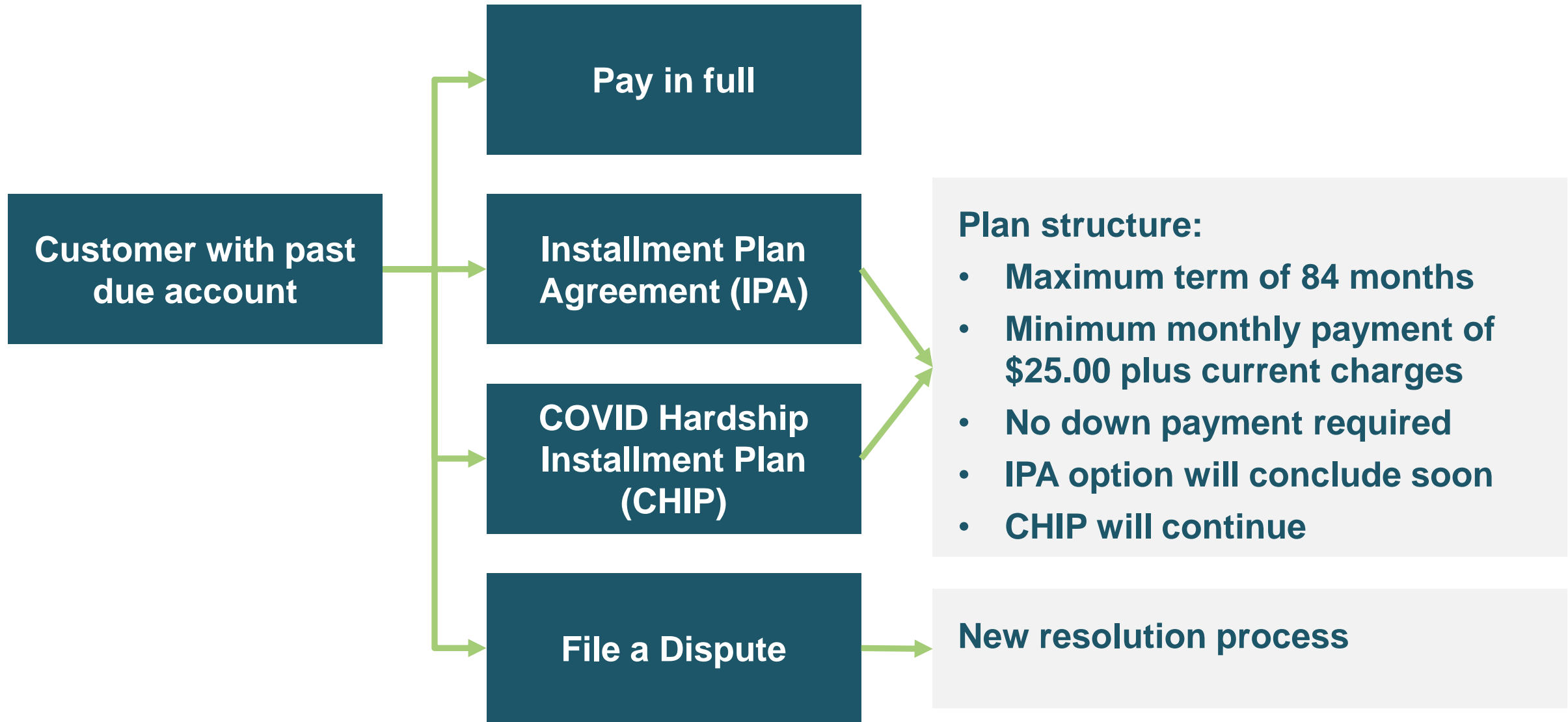
- **Established standard messaging protocols** (311, UCO and DWM dispatch)
- **Hired and trained additional customer service representatives**
- **Created on-line payment plan applications**
 - ✓ Installment Plan Agreement (IPA)
 - ✓ COVID Hardship Installment Plan (CHIP)
- **Hired/assigned project management roles**
- **Created new temporary call center**
- **Updated IT/Phone management systems**

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (Jan-present)

- **Routine billing:** Ongoing communications through billing process
- **Multiple channels:** Elected officials, PWI and BOC, News media, Nextdoor, GovDelivery, Twitter, County/DWM web sites
- **Meetings:** DeKalb NAACP, Legal Defense Fund, Citizens Advisory Group
- **Letters:**
 - May 14 - To all customers
 - June 18 - To ~20,000 with largest past due balances
 - August 27 - To ~9,800 customers who are “disengaged”

“Disengaged” = no payments in at least the past 6 billing cycles (6 months to several years)
- **Outreach Calls:** 964 calls to customers with past due balances greater than \$10,000
- **Active web page:** View meter replacement status real-time on-line

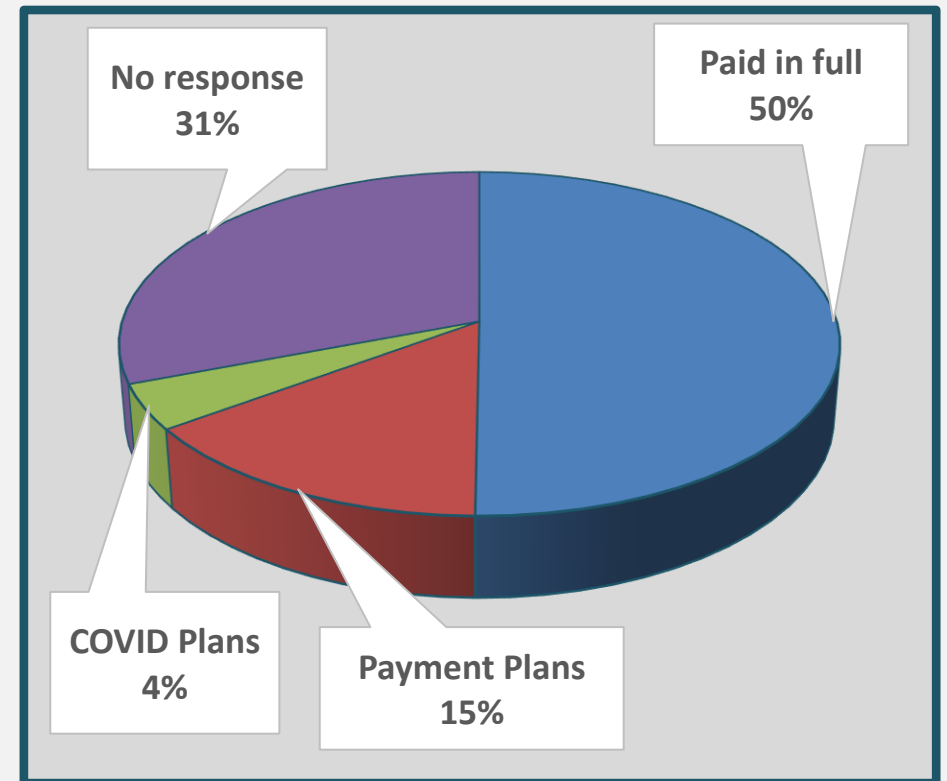
OPTIONS PROVIDED



ACHIEVEMENTS (1)

Of the 62,374 active customers with past due balances on June 9, 2021:

- 31,341 - paid in full - \$6.6 million
- 9,447 - applied for IPAs
 - 7,774 processed - \$21.1 million
- 2,685 applied for CHIPs (Covid Plans)
 - 1,227 processed - \$4.4 million



FACT: 70% of past due accounts have been resolved!

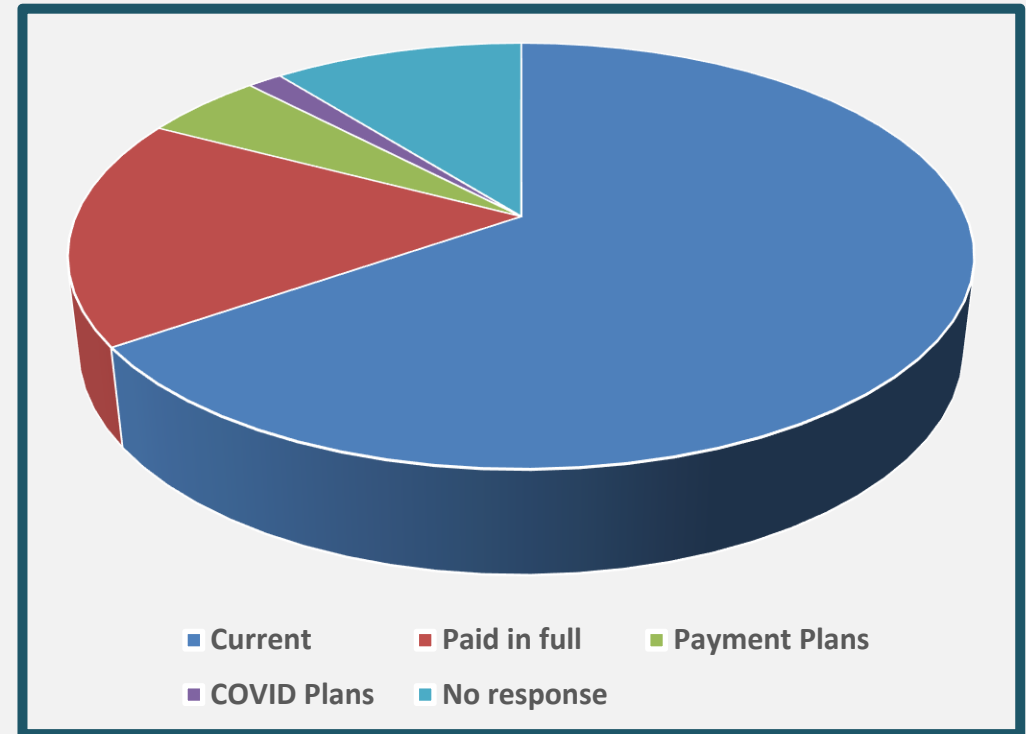
ACHIEVEMENTS (2)

- **Calls to the Call Center (regular and new) peaked at 2,355 on August 31, 2021**
- **Hold times increased briefly, but have dropped to <1 minute with added resources**
- **The number of disputed bills remain mostly unchanged at about 270**
- **We anticipate future peaks as more of the disengaged are reached.**

THE CHALLENGE (1)

- 7,619 remain past due and no payment in 6 cycles (4%)

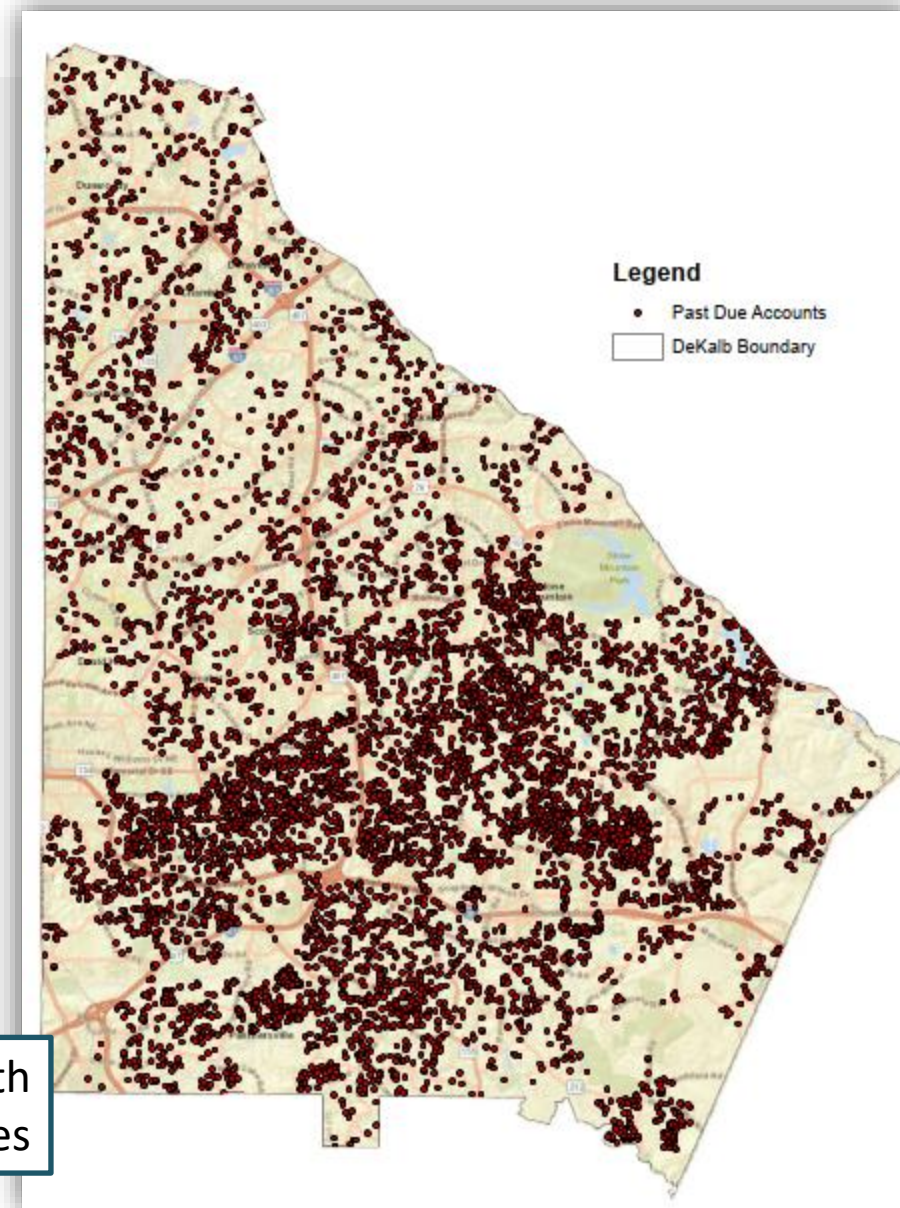
Additional efforts are required for the most disengaged



THE CHALLENGE (2)

Re-engaging our customers is a county-wide challenge

Locations of 7,619 accounts with no payment in last 6 billing cycles



A blue-tinted photograph of a construction site. In the foreground, a deep trench is lined with corrugated metal sheet piling. Several workers in hard hats and safety vests are visible throughout the scene. A large pipe is lying on the ground to the right. In the background, there are trees, a street sign, and a piece of heavy machinery with 'CAT' branding. The overall scene depicts an active infrastructure project.

Moving Forward

Next Steps

NEXT STEPS

Addressing the 4% (Residential):

- **More strongly worded letter**
- **Door hangers**
- **Out-bound calling**
- **Targeted disconnections**
- **Refer inactive accounts to collection agency**
- **Intensify communications around leaks – Care and Conserve**

QUESTIONS?

