

COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

More than half of Illinois cities get “F” grades for local pensions

Benton

2019 Grade: D

In 2003, Benton’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$2.6 million**. That meant every Benton household, on average, was on the hook for **\$894** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

Benton began contributing more money – taxpayer dollars – to pensions in an attempt to make the plans healthier. Over the next 16 years, city contributions increasingly crowded out spending for public safety, roads and other core services.

	2003	2019	Change
City (taxpayer) contributions to pensions	\$0.23 million	\$0.64 million	Up 2.8X
Share of city general budget for pensions	9.2%	16.4%	Up 1.8X

Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Benton’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 2.1 times!

By 2019, the shortfall in Benton’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$5.3 million**. That means each Benton household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$1,884** in debt.

Everyone loses under Benton’s pension crisis:



Taxpayers are tapped out

Benton residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 2.8 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 2.1 times larger.



Pension costs are devouring the city’s budget

Benton pension contributions have grown to consume 16.4% of the city’s budget, up from 9.2% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



Benton worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Benton’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 70.1% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 66.3%.



Benton’s crisis will only get worse

Benton has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 1.13 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.94 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE



2003 GRADE



Benton receives a "D" grade for its local pension crisis

Local officials handcuffed by state pension mandates.

Wirepoints quantified the negative impact of local pensions by examining the finances of Illinois' 175 largest cities from 2003 to 2019. The analysis was based on ten equally-weighted metrics. Cities were given an A through F grade based on a 100-point scale (10 points per metric).*

Benton received a "D" grade in 2019. The city's total score dropped from 69 in 2003 to 64 in 2019, a decline of 5 points.

Benton was one of 64 cities to receive a "D" grade in 2019.

Benton Key Facts		
City demographics	2000	2019
Population	6,880	6,971
Households	2,891	2,816
Median household income	\$27,177	\$41,149
City budget	2003	2019
General revenues	\$2,460,190	\$3,914,399
Total revenues	\$6,325,727	\$9,168,962
Total property taxes	\$530,815	\$1,231,380
Pension health (police, fire & IMRF)	2003	2019
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$8,653,352	\$15,752,941
Total pension assets	\$6,067,382	\$10,447,725
Funded ratio	70.1%	66.3%
Total pension shortfall	\$2,585,970	\$5,305,216
Per household	\$894	\$1,884
Active public safety workers	17	17
Public safety pension beneficiaries	15	18
City pension contributions	2003	2019
City contributions	\$226,507	\$641,881
Per household	\$78	\$228
Percentage of city's general budget	9.2%	16.4%
Employees' contributions	\$96,621	\$148,705

175 Cities - Summary Scores			
Grade	Score	Number of cities	
		2003	2019
A	≥90	4	0
B	80-89	35	1
C	70-79	81	8
D	60-69	48	64
F	≤59	7	102

Benton Score				
Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	48.3%	51.2%	4	5
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	78.9%	74.6%	7	7
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	87.8%	82.7%	8	8
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	3.3%	4.6%	8	8
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.29%	0.55%	8	7
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	3.6%	7.0%	8	4
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	2.34	4.32	7	4
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	-13.5%	23.8%	7	10
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	14.0	13.7	7	7
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	1.13	0.94	5	4
Total score			69	64
Grade			D	D

*Wirepoints analyzed 175 of Illinois' largest cities, excluding Chicago, that have a local police, firefighter and municipal (IMRF) pension fund.

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