

# COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

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

**Sycamore**

**2019 Grade: D**

In 2003, Sycamore’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$6.7 million**. That meant every Sycamore household, on average, was on the hook for **\$1,411** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

*Sycamore 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	\$0.56 million	\$1.60 million	Up 2.9X
Share of city general budget for pensions	6.9%	9.7%	Up 1.4X

*Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Sycamore’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 3.5 times!*

By 2019, the shortfall in Sycamore’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$23.4 million**. That means each Sycamore household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$3,445** in debt.

## Everyone loses under Sycamore’s pension crisis:



### Taxpayers are tapped out

Sycamore residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 2.9 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 3.5 times larger.



### Pension costs are devouring the city’s budget

Sycamore pension contributions have grown to consume 9.7% of the city’s budget, up from 6.9% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



### Sycamore worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Sycamore’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 67.6% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 61.4%.



### Sycamore’s crisis will only get worse

Sycamore has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 2.47 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 1.55 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE

**D**

2003 GRADE

**C**

# Sycamore 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).\*

Sycamore received a "D" grade in 2019. The city's total score dropped from 72 in 2003 to 67 in 2019, a decline of 5 points.

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

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

Sycamore Key Facts		
<b>City demographics</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2019</b>
Population	12,020	17,726
Households	4,717	6,798
Median household income	\$51,921	\$71,698
<b>City budget</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
General revenues	\$8,161,361	\$16,460,995
Total revenues	\$19,010,896	\$47,209,595
Total property taxes	\$2,697,977	\$4,218,913
<b>Pension health (police, fire &amp; IMRF)</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$20,557,032	\$60,713,196
Total pension assets	\$13,902,069	\$37,294,685
Funded ratio	67.6%	61.4%
Total pension shortfall	\$6,654,963	\$23,418,511
Per household	\$1,411	\$3,445
Active public safety workers	42	59
Public safety pension beneficiaries	17	38
<b>City pension contributions</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
City contributions	\$564,034	\$1,596,768
Per household	\$120	\$235
Percentage of city's general budget	6.9%	9.7%
Employees' contributions	\$270,385	\$662,941

Sycamore Score				
Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	61.0%	58.4%	6	5
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	57.7%	58.0%	5	5
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	102.4%	81.1%	10	8
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	2.7%	4.8%	8	8
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.23%	0.33%	8	8
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	3.0%	3.4%	8	8
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	2.09	2.41	7	7
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	-40.4%	-34.0%	1	3
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	22.9	17.5	9	8
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	2.47	1.55	10	7
<b>Total score</b>			<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Grade</b>			<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>

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

Communities in crisis: More than half of Illinois cities get "F" grades for local pensions

