

COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

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

Willow Springs

2019 Grade: F

In 2003, Willow Springs’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$1.6 million**. That meant every Willow Springs household, on average, was on the hook for **\$790** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

Willow Springs 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	\$0.24 million	\$0.67 million	Up 2.8X
Share of city general budget for pensions	5.9%	13.4%	Up 2.3X

Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Willow Springs’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 5.6 times!

By 2019, the shortfall in Willow Springs’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$8.8 million**. That means each Willow Springs household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$3,958** in debt.

Everyone loses under Willow Springs’s pension crisis:



Taxpayers are tapped out

Willow Springs 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 5.6 times larger.



Pension costs are devouring the city’s budget

Willow Springs pension contributions have grown to consume 13.4% of the city’s budget, up from 5.9% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



Willow Springs worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Willow Springs’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 60.4% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 35.6%.



Willow Springs’s crisis will only get worse

Willow Springs has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 8.50 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.44 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE



2003 GRADE



Willow Springs receives an "F" 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).*

Willow Springs received an "F" grade in 2019. The city's total score dropped from 58 in 2003 to 50 in 2019, a decline of 8 points.

Willow Springs was one of 102 cities to receive an "F" grade in 2019.

Willow Springs Key Facts		
City demographics	2000	2019
Population	5,027	5,604
Households	1,979	2,211
Median household income	\$58,322	\$83,860
City budget	2003	2019
General revenues	\$4,145,900	\$4,952,877
Total revenues	\$6,339,831	\$9,705,382
Total property taxes	\$2,024,523	\$4,763,568
Pension health (police, fire & IMRF)	2003	2019
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$3,943,644	\$13,583,287
Total pension assets	\$2,380,780	\$4,832,341
Funded ratio	60.4%	35.6%
Total pension shortfall	\$1,562,864	\$8,750,946
Per household	\$790	\$3,958
Active public safety workers	17	7
Public safety pension beneficiaries	2	16
City pension contributions	2003	2019
City contributions	\$243,051	\$665,140
Per household	\$123	\$301
Percentage of city's general budget	5.9%	13.4%
Employees' contributions	\$92,775	\$75,254

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

Willow Springs Score				
Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	14.5%	23.5%	1	2
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	11.9%	41.0%	1	4
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	166.5%	121.9%	10	10
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	1.4%	4.7%	9	8
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.21%	0.36%	8	8
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	3.8%	6.9%	8	5
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	2.62	8.84	6	1
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	-36.6%	-10.3%	2	7
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	5.0	5.8	3	3
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	8.50	0.44	10	2
Total score			58	50
Grade			F	F

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

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