

# COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

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

**Zion**

**2019 Grade: F**

In 2003, Zion’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$13.3 million**. That meant every Zion household, on average, was on the hook for **\$1,753** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

*Zion 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	\$1.04 million	\$3.07 million	Up 3.0X
Share of city general budget for pensions	12.3%	19.0%	Up 1.5X

*Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Zion’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 4.0 times!*

By 2019, the shortfall in Zion’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$53.3 million**. That means each Zion household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$6,683** in debt.

## Everyone loses under Zion’s pension crisis:



### Taxpayers are tapped out

Zion residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 3.0 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 4.0 times larger.



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

Zion pension contributions have grown to consume 19.0% of the city’s budget, up from 12.3% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



### Zion worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Zion’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 50.7%.



### Zion’s crisis will only get worse

Zion has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 1.73 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.89 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE

**F**

2003 GRADE

**C**

# Zion 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).\*

Zion received an "F" grade in 2019. The city's total score dropped from 79 in 2003 to 50 in 2019, a decline of 29 points.

Zion was one of 102 cities to receive an "F" 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

Zion Key Facts		
<b>City demographics</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2019</b>
Population	22,866	23,858
Households	7,575	7,978
Median household income	\$45,723	\$51,702
<b>City budget</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
General revenues	\$8,459,795	\$16,171,198
Total revenues	\$21,099,385	\$39,263,650
Total property taxes	\$5,441,010	\$9,809,814
<b>Pension health (police, fire &amp; IMRF)</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$44,403,347	\$108,221,843
Total pension assets	\$31,123,643	\$54,903,443
Funded ratio	70.1%	50.7%
Total pension shortfall	\$13,279,705	\$53,318,400
Per household	\$1,753	\$6,683
Active public safety workers	69	70
Public safety pension beneficiaries	40	79
<b>City pension contributions</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
City contributions	\$1,044,381	\$3,066,730
Per household	\$138	\$384
Percentage of city's general budget	12.3%	19.0%
Employees' contributions	\$524,534	\$796,215

## Zion Score

Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	63.6%	50.2%	6	5
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	64.6%	48.2%	6	4
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	105.7%	63.5%	10	6
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	3.8%	12.9%	8	4
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.30%	0.74%	8	7
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	4.9%	7.8%	7	4
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	1.99	3.85	8	5
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	8.9%	-24.0%	10	5
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	18.0	11.0	8	6
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	1.73	0.89	8	4

<b>Total score</b>	79	50
<b>Grade</b>	C	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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