

# COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

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

**Alton**

**2019 Grade: F**

In 2003, Alton’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$49.9 million**. That meant every Alton household, on average, was on the hook for **\$3,985** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

*Alton 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	\$1.46 million	\$9.06 million	Up 6.2X
Share of city general budget for pensions	6.6%	26.5%	Up 4.0X

*Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Alton’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 2.4 times!*

By 2019, the shortfall in Alton’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$121.4 million**. That means each Alton household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$10,530** in debt.

## Everyone loses under Alton’s pension crisis:



### Taxpayers are tapped out

Alton residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 6.2 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 2.4 times larger.



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

Alton pension contributions have grown to consume 26.5% of the city’s budget, up from 6.6% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



### Alton worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Alton’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 48.0% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 33.0%.



### Alton’s crisis will only get worse

Alton has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 0.94 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.64 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE



2003 GRADE



# Alton 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).\*

Alton received an "F" grade in 2019. The city's total score dropped from 53 in 2003 to 31 in 2019, a decline of 22 points.

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

Alton Key Facts		
<b>City demographics</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2019</b>
Population	30,496	26,640
Households	12,520	11,532
Median household income	\$31,213	\$40,211
<b>City budget</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
General revenues	\$22,064,757	\$34,230,361
Total revenues	\$35,283,484	\$60,490,479
Total property taxes	\$5,037,351	\$9,562,274
<b>Pension health (police, fire &amp; IMRF)</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$96,036,018	\$181,356,557
Total pension assets	\$46,143,832	\$59,923,003
Funded ratio	48.0%	33.0%
Total pension shortfall	\$49,892,185	\$121,433,554
Per household	\$3,985	\$10,530
Active public safety workers	135	107
Public safety pension beneficiaries	144	167
<b>City pension contributions</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2019</b>
City contributions	\$1,463,385	\$9,057,182
Per household	\$117	\$785
Percentage of city's general budget	6.6%	26.5%
Employees' contributions	\$882,470	\$1,033,086

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

Alton Score				
Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	34.3%	28.6%	3	2
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	40.9%	28.5%	4	2
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	99.8%	79.9%	9	7
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	12.8%	26.2%	4	1
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.37%	1.95%	8	1
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	4.1%	15.0%	7	1
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	1.66	8.77	8	1
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	-65.0%	5.7%	1	10
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	8.0	5.8	5	3
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	0.94	0.64	4	3
<b>Total score</b>			<b>53</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Grade</b>			<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>

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

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