

COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

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

Lyons

2019 Grade: F

In 2003, Lyons’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of **\$5.1 million**. That meant every Lyons household, on average, was on the hook for **\$1,286** in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

Lyons 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	\$0.27 million	\$1.32 million	Up 4.9X
Share of city general budget for pensions	4.8%	12.2%	Up 2.5X

Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Lyons’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 5.0 times!

By 2019, the shortfall in Lyons’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled **\$25.6 million**. That means each Lyons household, on average, is now on the hook for **\$6,785** in debt.

Everyone loses under Lyons’s pension crisis:



Taxpayers are tapped out

Lyons residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 4.9 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 5.0 times larger.



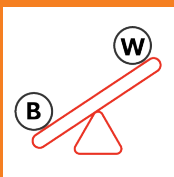
Pension costs are devouring the city’s budget

Lyons pension contributions have grown to consume 12.2% of the city’s budget, up from 4.8% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.



Lyons worker retirement security is collapsing

The health of Lyons’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 68.2% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 37.8%.



Lyons’s crisis will only get worse

Lyons has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 1.65 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.31 active workers per pensioner.

2019 GRADE



2003 GRADE



Lyons 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).*

Lyons received an “F” grade in 2019. The city’s total score dropped from 66 in 2003 to 45 in 2019, a decline of 21 points.

Lyons was one of 102 cities to receive an “F” grade in 2019.

Lyons Key Facts		
City demographics	2000	2019
Population	10,255	10,470
Households	4,002	3,777
Median household income	\$44,306	\$60,168
City budget	2003	2019
General revenues	\$5,573,108	\$10,806,586
Total revenues	\$11,034,846	\$20,135,745
Total property taxes	\$2,237,769	\$4,861,203
Pension health (police, fire & IMRF)	2003	2019
Total accrued liabilities (benefits owed)	\$16,191,842	\$41,175,089
Total pension assets	\$11,043,762	\$15,549,544
Funded ratio	68.2%	37.8%
Total pension shortfall	\$5,148,080	\$25,625,545
Per household	\$1,286	\$6,785
Active public safety workers	28	10
Public safety pension beneficiaries	17	32
City pension contributions	2003	2019
City contributions	\$267,138	\$1,319,608
Per household	\$67	\$349
Percentage of city’s general budget	4.8%	12.2%
Employees’ contributions	\$230,020	\$807,770

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

Lyons Score				
Metric	2003	2019	2003	2019
1. Police pension funded ratio	65.0%	28.8%	6	2
2. Firefighter pension funded ratio	8.3%	0.2%	1	1
3. Municipal (IMRF) pension funded ratio	88.1%	86.5%	8	8
4. City pension debts per household as a percentage of median household income	2.9%	11.3%	8	5
5. City contributions per household as a percentage of median household income	0.15%	0.58%	9	7
6. City contributions as a percentage of total budget	2.4%	6.6%	9	5
7. Ratio of city contributions to employee contributions	1.16	1.63	9	8
8. Percentage surplus/shortfall in actuarially-required city contribution (Police & Fire only)	-57.4%	-23.4%	1	5
9. Asset-to-payout ratio (Police & Fire only)	13.8	4.4	7	3
10. Worker-to-beneficiary ratio (Police & Fire only)	1.65	0.31	8	1
Total score			66	45
Grade			D	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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