In 2003, Oak Lawn’s police, fire and municipal pension funds already faced a shortfall of $42.0 million. That meant every Oak Lawn household, on average, was on the hook for $1,883 in future taxes just to eliminate that shortfall.

Oak Lawn 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City (taxpayer) contributions to pensions</td>
<td>$2.63 million</td>
<td>$9.71 million</td>
<td>Up 3.7X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of city general budget for pensions</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>Up 2.3X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the ramp-up in city payments over those 16 years, Oak Lawn’s pension debts didn’t decrease. Instead, they jumped by 4.5 times!

By 2019, the shortfall in Oak Lawn’s police, fire and municipal pension funds totaled $188.5 million. That means each Oak Lawn household, on average, is now on the hook for $8,871 in debt.

Everyone loses under Oak Lawn’s pension crisis:

- **Taxpayers are tapped out**
  Oak Lawn residents are paying more and more into a broken system. City taxpayers in 2019 contributed 3.7 times more to pensions than in 2003, yet city debts are 4.5 times larger.

- **Pension costs are devouring the city’s budget**
  Oak Lawn pension contributions have grown to consume 18.3% of the city’s budget, up from 8.1% in 2003. That’s crowded out spending on public safety, roads and other core services.

- **Oak Lawn worker retirement security is collapsing**
  The health of Oak Lawn’s local pension plans have worsened despite those increased taxpayer contributions. In 2003, the plans had 75.9% of the money they needed. By 2019, that had dropped to just 50.5%.

- **Oak Lawn’s crisis will only get worse**
  Oak Lawn has fewer active government workers available to help pay for a growing number of retirees. In 2003, there were 1.31 active workers for every pensioner. By 2019, there were 0.75 active workers per pensioner.
Oak Lawn received an “F” grade for its local pension crisis.

Oak Lawn was one of 102 cities to receive an “F” grade in 2019. The city’s total score dropped from 70 in 2003 to 48 in 2019, a decline of 22 points.

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).*

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