



COLUMBUS FINANCES STRUGGLING

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THE FINANCIAL STATE OF COLUMBUS

Truth in Accounting's (TIA) new city report ranks and grades the 75 most populous cities in the United States by their financial health. Columbus ranks No. 40, earning it a "D" on TIA's grading scale.

Repeated decisions by city officials have left the city with a debt burden of \$1.6 billion, according to TIA's analysis of its 2016 financial filings. That burden equates to \$5,400 for every Columbus taxpayer.

Columbus' financial problems are largely driven by entitlement obligations in two categories: pensions and retiree healthcare benefits. The city has \$1.4 billion in unfunded pension promises and \$816 million in unfunded retiree healthcare benefits. While Columbus has promised these benefits, little money has been set aside to fund them.

These statistics are jarring, but what's also alarming is that city government officials continue to hide significant amounts of retirement debt from their balance sheets, despite new rules to increase financial transparency. This skewed financial data gives residents a false impression of their city's overall financial health.

40

Rank

**\$1.6
billion**

Money needed
to pay bills

-\$5,400

Taxpayer
Burden™

D

Financial grade

COLUMBUS FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

FAST FACTS

- + Columbus has \$2 billion available in assets to pay \$3.6 billion worth of bills.
- + The outcome is a \$1.6 billion shortfall and a \$5,400 Taxpayer Burden™.
- + Despite reporting most of its pension debt, the city hides all of its retiree healthcare debt. The city's total hidden debt amounts to \$921.4 million.

THE CITY'S BILLS EXCEED ITS ASSETS

Assets	\$8,510,055,000
<i>Minus:</i> Capital assets	-\$6,360,941,000
Restricted assets	-\$162,859,000
Assets available to pay bills	\$1,986,255,000
<i>Minus:</i> Bills	-\$3,581,131,000
Money needed to pay bills	-\$1,594,876,000
Each taxpayer's share of this debt	-\$5,400

BILLS THE CITY HAS ACCUMULATED

Bonds	\$4,633,001,000
Other liabilities	\$458,367,000
<i>Minus:</i> Debt related to capital assets	-\$3,754,709,000
Unfunded pension benefits	\$1,428,503,000
Unfunded retiree healthcare	\$815,969,000
Bills	\$3,581,131,000

GRADE: D

Bottom line: Columbus does not have enough money to pay its bills, so it has received a "D" for its finances from Truth in Accounting. A "D" grade is given to cities with a Taxpayer Burden™ between \$5,000 and \$20,000.

Truth in Accounting is committed to educating and empowering citizens with understandable, reliable, and transparent government financial information. To be knowledgeable participants in their government and its budget process, citizens need truthful and transparent financial information.