

# ***Dollars & Sense:***

## ***How the City of St. Clair Spends Your Money***

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2018 Citizen's Guide to  
City of St. Clair Financial Health

Created by  
Michael E. Booth

## KEY TERMS

There are a few key terms that may be helpful when reading this report. They include:

- **Budget deficit/surplus.** If there is less money received than paid out in a given fiscal year, there is a budget **deficit** or shortfall. If there is more money received than paid during the fiscal year, a budget **surplus** exists.
  - **Debt.** Just like a homeowner takes out a mortgage, governments can borrow money to pay for certain types of projects. The City has both short-term debt (paid back within the fiscal year) and long-term debt. Debt can be either **general obligation** debt, meaning that the City pays back the debt with regular tax collections and other revenues, or **special revenue** debt, which is paid off over time with revenue from specified sources beyond the usual taxes and service fees.
  - **Fiscal year (FY).** The 12-month period of time during which budgets are allocated or finances are planned. Most households have a fiscal year that runs from January 1 to December 31 (that's the period for which we pay personal income taxes in April), while City government uses an October 1 - September 30 fiscal year. Some local units of government, including public schools, use a July 1 - June 30 fiscal year. The City follows an October 1 – September 30 fiscal year.
  - **Fund balance.** Once all the bills for the year have been paid out of a certain fund, whatever is left over is called the fund balance. When a fund balance is less than zero, you'll see the number shown with parentheses around it. Deficits cause fund balances to decrease, while surpluses cause them to increase.
  - **Public budget gap.** A novel measure, similar to the deficit, used to measure the extent to which a government is falling short of covering its current and long-term obligations in a fiscal period. The budget gap takes into account the budget deficit, as well as any new obligations that the government has failed to cover such as **employee pensions or retiree health care**.
  - **Reserved/Restricted funds.** Some funds are considered to be “reserved” or “restricted” for a specific purpose, and cannot be spent for anything else.
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## Welcome

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Greetings,

All St. Clair residents have a vested interest in the current and future economic status of the City. This report is intended to provide citizens with an assessment of the financial health of St. Clair. Taxpayers deserve to know what their tax dollars are buying which will then allow them to have a voice in making sure desired services are provided. This report provides information on:

- Sources of City Revenues
- Services provided across the City
- Future obligations for employee healthcare and pensions

For this report, data was used from the most recently audited financial statements as of September 30, 2017. What does the data show? Largely, we have found the following:

- St. Clair's property values have decreased leading to a decrease in tax revenues collected by the City from residents. Since fiscal year ended September 30, 2008 property tax revenues collected, for the General Fund, have decreased by \$806,011. 2017 tax revenues decreased by \$56,716, when compared to 2016.
- Service levels have been maintained even with the decreased property tax revenues.

Once you have read this report you are invited to make your voice heard. Bring your ideas to the City's management and/or council. Only by working together can we make the necessary changes to ensure St. Clair's future is bright.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Booth

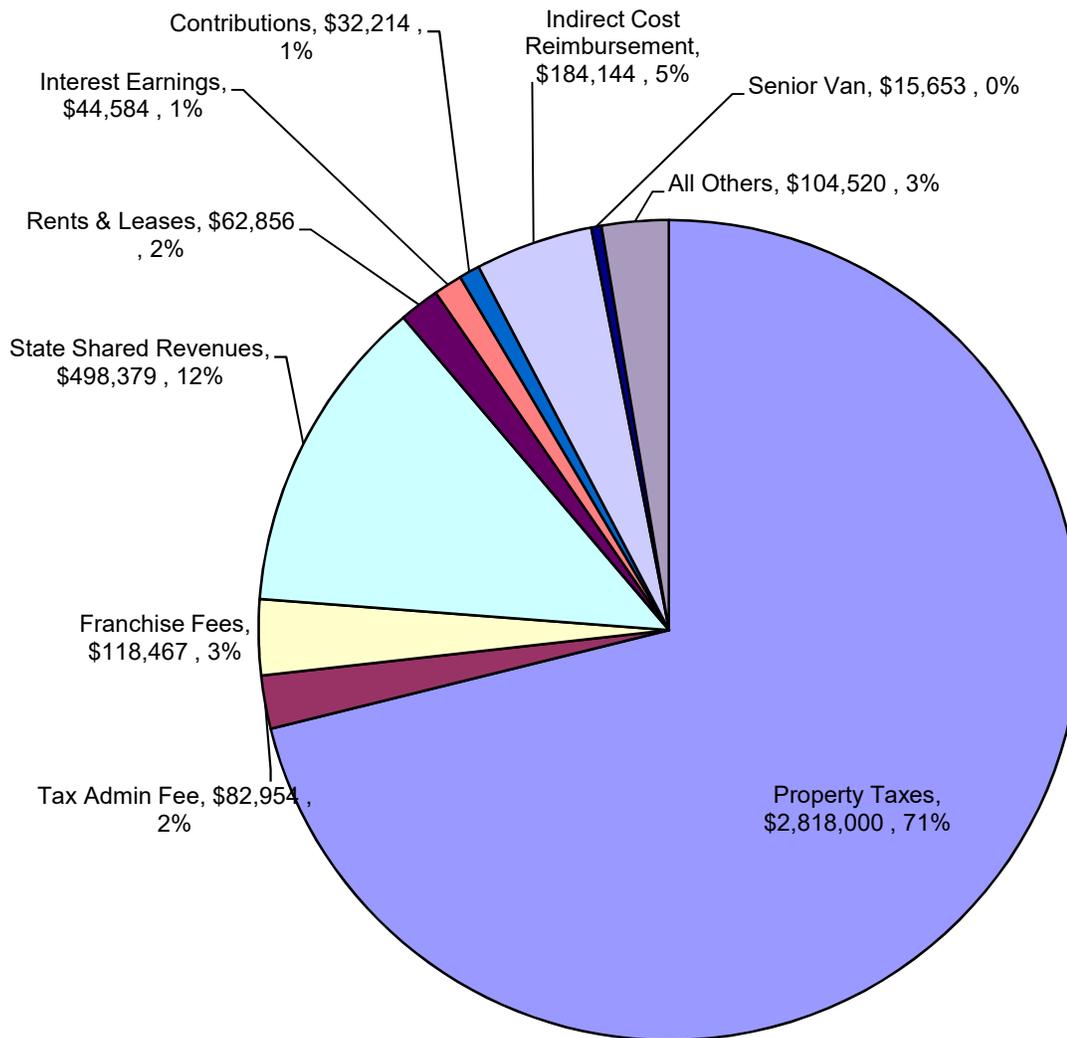
**WHERE CITIZEN DOLLARS GO**

What benefits do you receive in exchange for the tax dollars you pay? Figure 1 shows that in FY 2017, the City of St. Clair received revenue from the following sources:

- Property taxes (Residents)
- Revenue Sharing - State
- Interest & Rent
- Licenses & Permits
- Fines & Forfeits
- Service Charges

**Figure 1 - Where City Receives Money (general fund) – St. Clair**

**General Fund Revenues 2016-17 Actual**

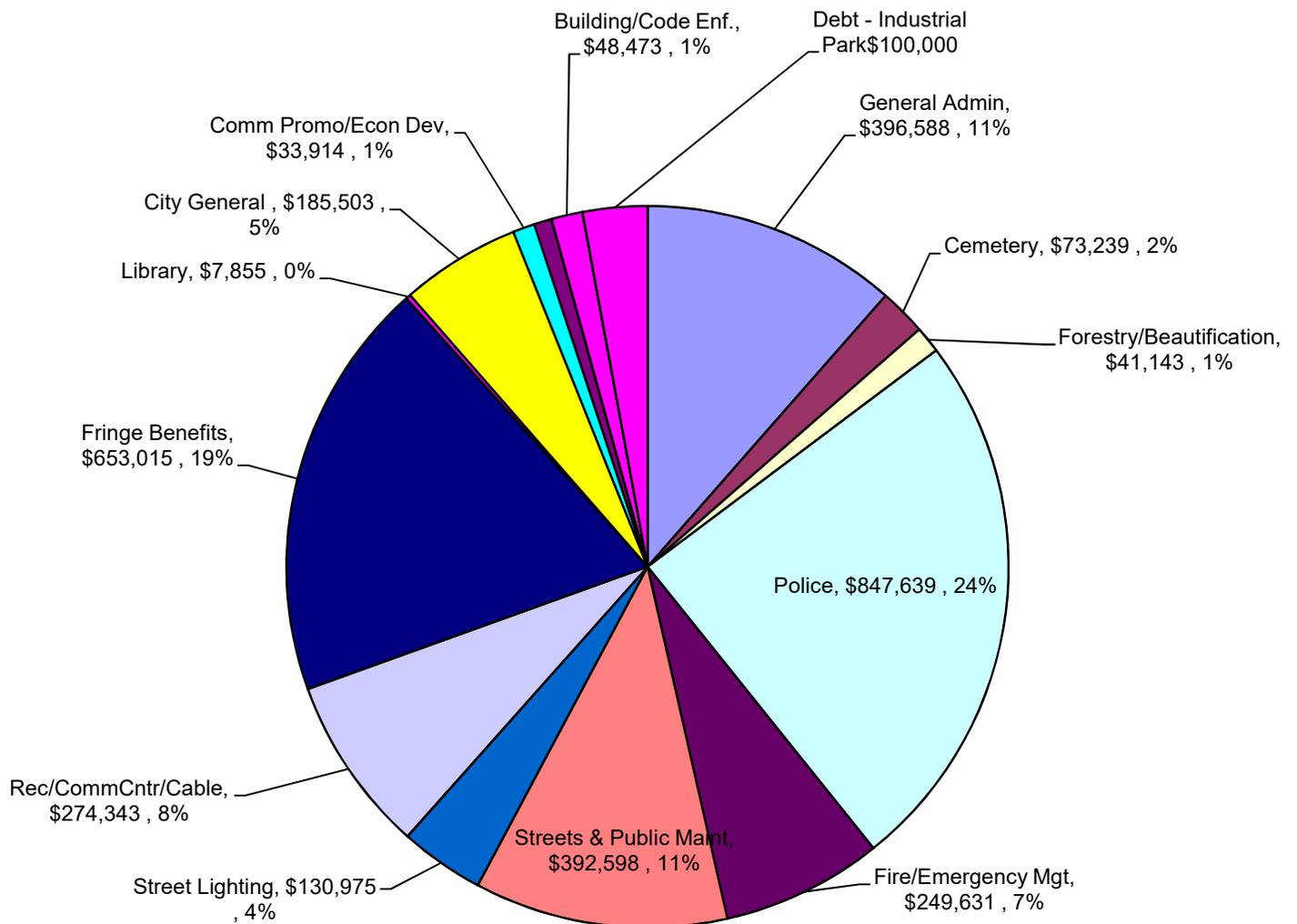


## SERVICES PROVIDED BY CITY

Where does your tax money go? Figure 2 highlights that, in general, the City collects money from property taxes, state revenue sharing, fees, etc. and uses these funds to deliver public services, including, but not limited to:

- General Government (Assessing, Council, Elections, Finance, Treasury, etc.)
- Police & Fire
- Public Works
- Parks
- Transfers to Roads (Major & Local streets) to assist with repairs
- Health & Welfare (Senior Van)
- Community & Economic Development (Planning & Zoning)

## General Fund Expenditures 2016-17 Actual



## Expenditures

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the dollars utilized by the City in providing services to residents. In particular, the chart provides details of changes that transpired between the 2016 and 2017 FY's. Capital outlay, which accounted for the largest increase in expenditures, increased by \$386,526 or 115%. This increase to expenditures was driven by a \$363,036 increase to road paving. The City has plans in place to continue road maintenance and repairs. For answers to changes within other categories please contact City administration.

**Figure 4 – Comparative Expenditures 2016 vs. 2017 (all governmental funds) – St. Clair**

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>% change</u>
General government	\$ 691,985	\$726,847	5%
Police & fire	1,356,667	1,423,316	5%
Public works	982,129	1,010,744	1%
Health & welfare	23,729	23,326	(2%)
Community & Econ Dev	26,087	35,365	36%
Recreation & culture	604,430	556,693	(8%)
Capital outlay	335,771	722,297	115%
Debt service	570,368	588,790	3%
Fringe/insurance/Other	317,838	346,115	9%
Transfers Out	<u>644,000</u>	<u>649,367</u>	<u>1%</u>
Total expenditures	<u><b>5,553,004</b></u>	<u><b>6,086,860</b></u>	<u><b>10%</b></u>

## NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The City of St. Clair's total employee count has decreased 7.3% from 2008 to 2017. Further, the number of full-time employees has decreased 22.5% during the same period.

### Employment City of St. Clair

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Total Employees*	137	122	118	116	114	109	110	111	116	127
Full Time Employees	40	38	37	36	33	33	31	31	31	31

\*Includes Seasonal Employees

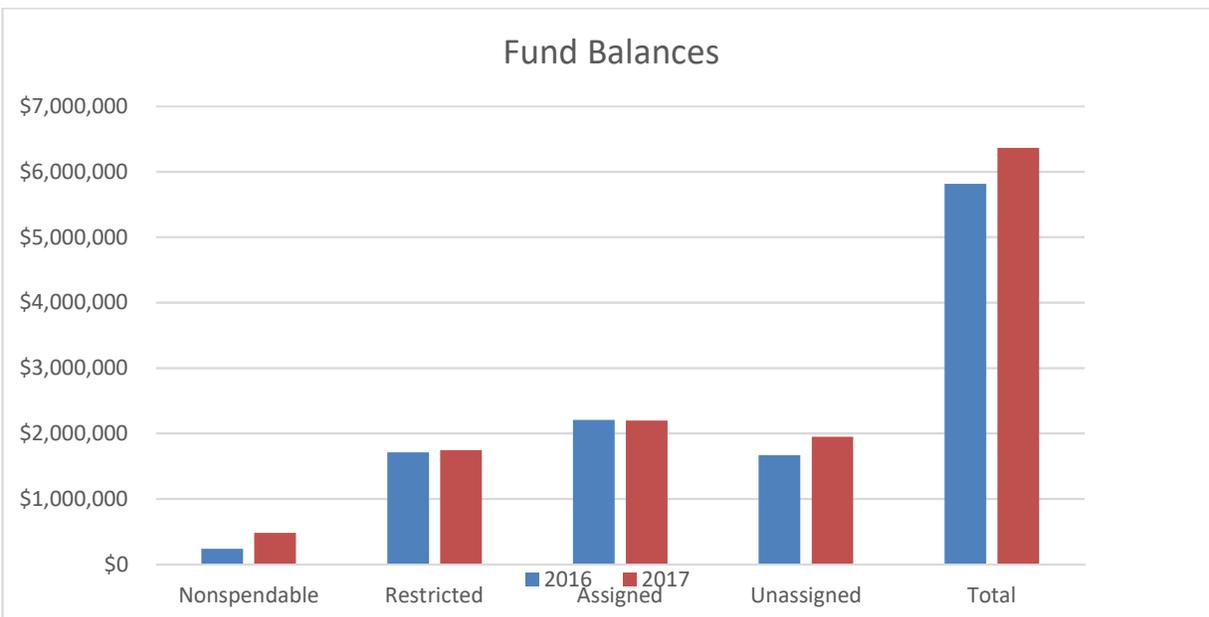
## St. Clair's Fiscal Health

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### RESERVES & MAJOR FUND BALANCES

In recent years, many governmental units have drawn down their financial reserves or depleted their savings to maintain spending levels. As indicated earlier the City, other than in FY's 2006, & 2011 when money was used to fund the previous years' projects, has done a good job of keeping expenses in check (reference figure 5). During 2017 the unassigned fund balance increased by \$282,675 to a total of \$1,946,021. The unassigned balance is available to cover unexpected expenses. Additionally, these funds may be utilized to help fund the City's underfunded pension and/or retiree health-care obligations. A corrective action plan is required to be submitted to the State, based on our 2017 FY, for the City's underfunded pension plan.

**Figure 5 – Fund Balance Reserves (all governmental funds) – St. Clair**



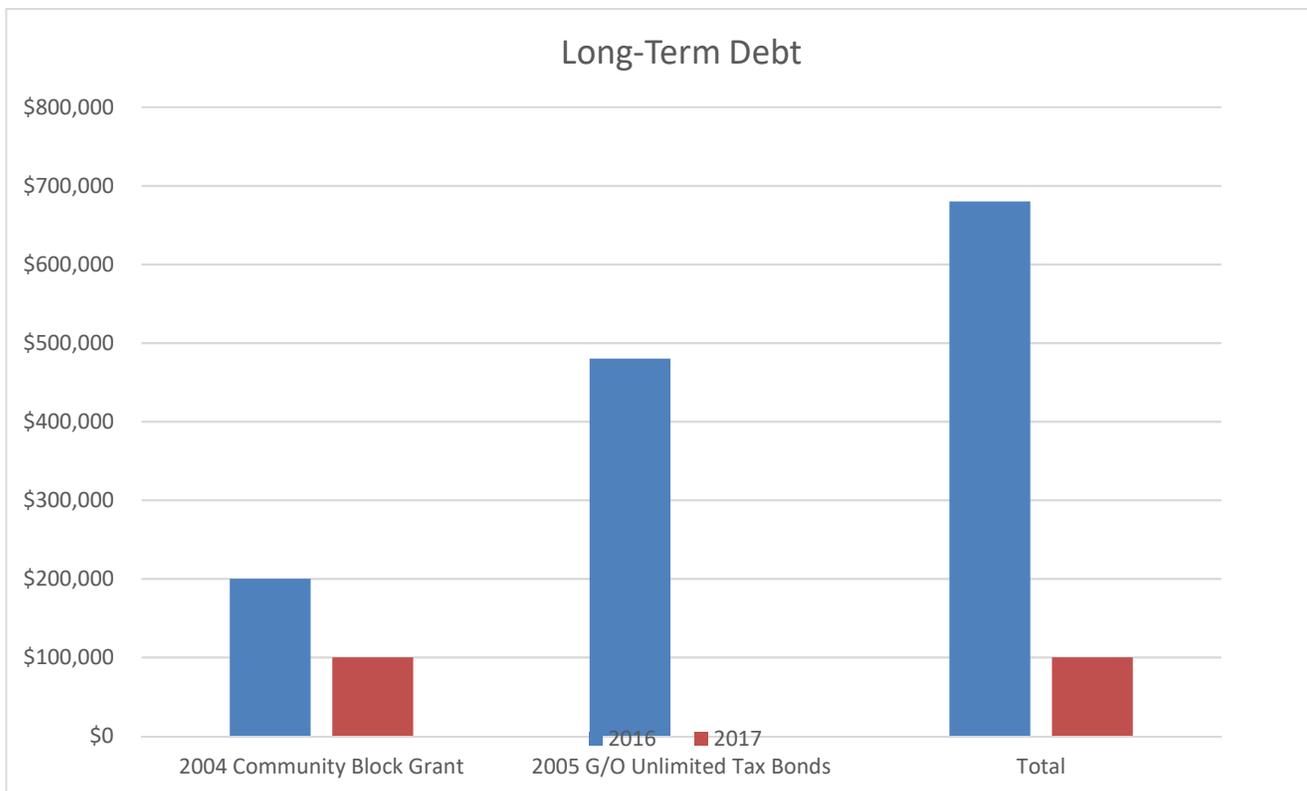
## DEBT LEVELS

Local Governments can take on short and long-term debt. Typically, they would take on short-term debt to cover cash-flow needs. As the City of St. Clair has fund reserves there is no need to secure short-term debt to cover operating activities.

Long-term debt is generally secured to pay for larger projects (new city hall, street reconstruction, etc.). The City of St. Clair has issued long-term debt to cover some larger projects. Governmental Fund debt obligations at September 30, 2017 were as follows (reference figure 6):

- 2004 Community Development Block Grant (Industrial Park – Balance \$100,000) Matures Aug-2018
- 2005 General Obligation Bonds (Street Bonds – Balance \$0) Debt Repaid Nov-2016

**Figure 6 – Long Term Debt (all governmental funds) – St. Clair**



## PENSION & OTHER RETIREE BENEFITS

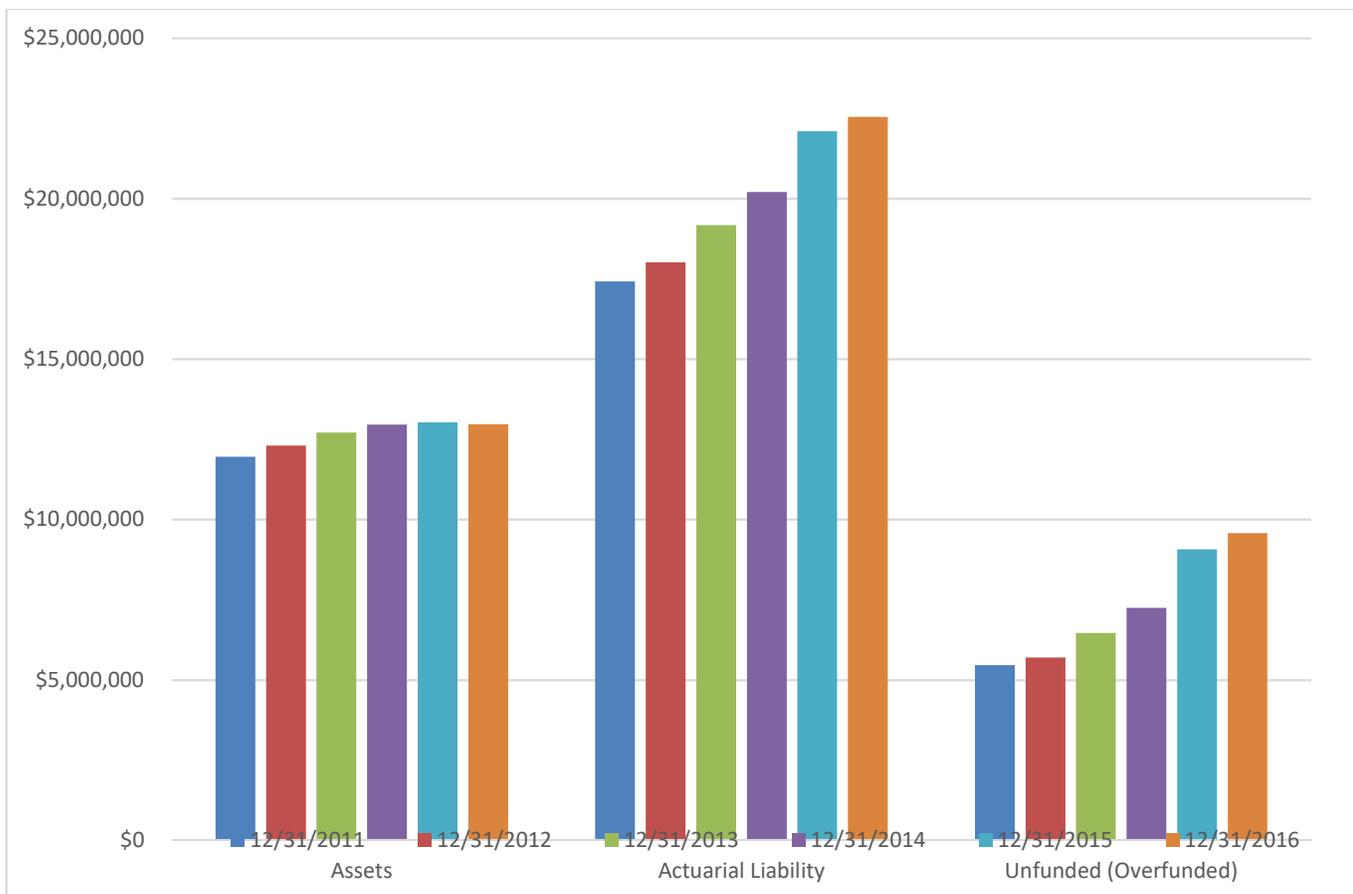
The City of St. Clair, by paying the required annual contributions, has a pension plan that is not fully funded. City employees who meet certain requirements, such as years of service and/or age, receive a pension upon retirement.

### City of St. Clair Pension Benefits

Pension benefits are funded by contributions from the City and employees. The pension system provided by the City is offered by the Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS). MERS is an independent public corporation. The City, at December 31, 2016, had a pension plan with an unfunded liability of \$9,577,572 (58% funded, reference figure 7). Accrued liabilities for the period increased to \$22,545,832 while the plan assets were dropped slightly to \$12,968,260. Changes were made, in 2015, causing the assumed discount rate to be reduced from 8% down to 7.75%. This along with other changes caused a negative impact to our funding levels. Next year's funding levels will remain at less than 60%. Moving forward the City will need to continue to look for plan changes to improve our funding levels. Consequently, we are now required to create and report to the State a corrective action plan to address our underfunded retiree obligations.

**Figure 7 – Pension Funding Status – St. Clair**

Pension Funding (6-year view)



## Retiree Health Care Benefits

Retirees may also have the option to enroll in a health care program. Most retirees, who are eligible for health care benefits upon retirement, are required to pay twenty (20) percent of their monthly premium. Retiree Health Care benefits are pay-as-you-go to the City which means they are not pre-funded. Unlike pensions, these benefits are not guaranteed by the City by means of a trust fund. Further, once a retiree is eligible for Medi-care they no longer eligible to receive coverage from the City.

The City, within the General Fund, has reserved funds for retiree health coverage. However, the funds have not been set aside in a trust meaning they could be used to support other obligations. The City's obligation at December 31, 2015 was \$3,642,565 while the reserve, at September 30, 2016, was only \$994,346. A review will be for the 2017/18 financial statements. Favorable changes to retire insurance are expected that will reduce this underfunded obligation.

## PUBLIC BUDGET GAP

A deficit is the extent to which expenses exceed revenues in a given year. As established the City does not run operating deficits. However, the City has unfunded obligations that are not recognized in their surpluses. These partially funded pensions and retirement health benefits, that are not recognized as liabilities in the financial statements, would cause the surplus situation to fall into a deficit position. This situation is known as a public budget gap. At September 30, 2017, the City had \$13,220,137 of pension/retiree health benefits that were not funded. This was an increase of \$504,548.

## How This Report Was Developed

The goal of this report is to provide the public with as much information as possible on the revenues, expenditures, and other financial activities of the City government.

### **DATA SOURCES & NOTES**

This report can be found at [www.cityofstclair.com](http://www.cityofstclair.com). Click on Department/Finance/EVIP. Also, copies can be obtained from the City Clerk's office. For additional information about the City and/or the State governments please refer to [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury). To obtain audit data, for the City, click on local government services. Then click on local unit audit reports. Audit reports are available for the FY's 2003->2017.

- Data was obtained from the CAFRs of the MERS pension system
- U. S. Census information was used to supply population numbers
- For the City, our fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30