



Syracuse City Auditor Alexander Marion, MPA

TOWN & GOWN

A Look at Syracuse University's PILOT Agreement with the City



Key Findings

Changing Business Model: Syracuse University is moving its business model away from classrooms, libraries, and laboratories to professional sports, real estate, and ancillary services like dining and parking.

Largest Private Landholder: Syracuse University owns \$2 billion of property in the City of Syracuse and pays taxes of less than .2%.

Global Portfolio: Besides Syracuse, SU maintains campuses in NYC, Tuscany, and France.

Uses City Services: 134 fire calls came in at Syracuse University-owned properties in 2025, costing at least \$133,000 for SFD to respond.

We're Not Alone: College Towns like Boston, MA; Ithaca, NY; New Haven, CT; and Providence, RI all have more generous agreements with their local universities.

Current PILOT Agreement: Gives the City about \$2 million per year in cash; the Syracuse City School District does not receive any funding.

Recommendations

Renegotiate the PILOT: The City should aggressively negotiate a new agreement reflecting what the University would actually pay if taxable – over \$16 million to the City and \$19 million to the School District

Bring in the School District: Any new agreement needs to share revenue with Syracuse City School District.

Tax Parking Like a Business: SU's parking lots and garages should lose their tax-exempt status since the University already runs them like a commercial operation.

Put a Price on Community Benefits: Every benefit included in the deal should come with a specific dollar value and a delivery deadline, not vague promises.

