

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

President
John Novosielski

FIRE FIGHTERS



LOCAL 974

Secretary
Robert Perko

Vice President
Brandon Hope

Treasurer
David Hollo

December 4, 2012

Mayor Susan K. Infeld
2300 Warrensville Center Road
University Heights, OH 44118

Dear Mayor Infeld:

This is an open letter to you, and other University Heights stakeholders, to explain why Local 974 opposes the merger with the Shaker Heights Fire Department at this time. After reviewing the Cooperative Services Feasibility Study conducted by ESCI, it is our opinion that a merger, as outlined by ESCI, would *not* be more efficient, would *not* reduce response time, would *not* increase service, and would ultimately hurt the residents of University Heights. In fact, the merger, as outlined, would *not* decrease or streamline the administration of our Fire Department. Instead, the merger would simply allow University Heights to save money by reducing the number of firefighters and by eliminating our ladder truck and the back-up ambulance – all to the detriment of our community.

Members of Local 974 have reviewed the Feasibility Study and have identified many areas in which the Study either contains inaccurate information or is misleading. We have highlighted (in yellow) those sections of the Study which are inaccurate and/or misleading, and have added comments (in red) to explain the problems. We ask you to review the highlighted sections and our comments carefully. One thing we have noted throughout the Study is that whenever there are inaccuracies and/or misleading information, they almost always favor Shaker Heights and place University Heights in a disadvantaged light. Why is that? We believe that this was done purposely to justify the fact that the primary losers of the merger, as outlined by ESCI, are the residents of University Heights.

For example, on page 57 of the Study (figure 33) is a geographical distribution of structure fires in both University Heights and Shaker Heights, along with the location of the three fire stations. Clearly, the most structure fires are in and around the University Heights fire station. Yet the Study recommends that University Heights lose its ladder truck. Why? We believe that the goal is to save money, rather than to increase efficiency, reduce response time or increase service. And we ask ourselves - why should the residents of University Heights be disproportionately harmed?

Another example is the fact that the Study references NFPA standards except with respect to staffing. With staffing, the NFPA standards are not adhered to. Otherwise, the Study would never have suggested the extensive staffing reductions which will inevitably increase response time and reduce service.

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We ask you to put the proposed merger on hold until a more thoughtful study can be conducted – one which relies on *accurate* data – and includes clear goals and objectives that benefit our residents. While ESCI claims to focus on costs, efficiency, and the delivery of service, their recommendations only cut costs. The recommendations, if implemented, would reduce efficiency and hurt the delivery of service. One does not need a merger to accomplish that.

Finally, we ask that, if and when a more thoughtful study is conducted, that Local 974 be an integral part of the discussions. We have been kept in the dark in this instance, and we believe that our exclusion from the process has resulted not only in the inaccurate and misleading information in the Study, but the failure of the Study to focus on our community.

We look forward to working with you in the future to insure that the residents of University Heights receive the high level of service that they deserve.

Sincerely,

University Heights Firefighters Association Local 974