



**Lehman Walker, City Manager**

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March 25, 2014

Dear University City Resident:

I have been made aware that the Firefighters' union has distributed a flyer containing either misleading, or incomplete information about the state of public safety in University City. I would like to offer some important facts.

First and foremost, I want to assure you that protecting the lives and property of University City citizens, businesses and visitors is the City's top priority. The City has, in fact, been increasing funding for fire operations. At the end of 2013, a new 17,000 square-foot state-of-the art fire station was opened at 863 Westgate Avenue at a cost of \$3.4 million dollars. As a result of fiscal discipline and sound management, this year University City added two new positions. The City purchased a new fire pumper (\$550,000), a new ambulance (\$200,000), and technologically advanced equipment for the Department, and is proceeding with the purchase of another new ambulance (\$200,000). All this has been accomplished without increasing taxes. While three positions are currently vacant, they are in the process of being filled. University City has had over 100 applicants for each position.

The union states that the University City Fire Department is understaffed and that the City Administration is unsupportive of its operations. I think the details provided above show that this is not the case. The City is maintaining the highest level of public safety possible in our community, while protecting the fiscal health of University City and our residents' pocketbooks. The average annual salary of University City union firefighters is now \$70,000, plus benefits (an additional 30%). This year, the City's firefighters received a 2% pay increase, the same as all other University City employees. Our firefighters' compensation is in line with the regional average for cities. In fact, the City of St. Louis firefighters make on average \$55,000, compared to University City firefighter average salaries of \$70,000.

The City Administration believes it is important that you have these facts.

Respectfully yours,

Lehman Walker  
City Manager