



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Leroy Comrie

Chase Chasing Away Springfield Gardens Customers?

TRONE DOWD October 2, 2015

| ISSUE: **BANKS, MWBE (DIVISION OF MINORITY AND WOMEN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT), JAMAICA COMMUNITY**

Senator Comrie and Springfield Gardens Community Rally to Save Local Bank

Residents young and old joined State Sen. Leroy Comrie (D-St. Albans) and other community leaders to rally against the removal of a Chase Bank at the Springfield Shopping Center.

The Chase Bank branch located at 134-40 Springfield Blvd., has been described by locals as a long time staple of the community. The bank serves not only residents, many of which are seniors, but local businesses as well.

“This bank has long been a fixture of this community’s life,” Comrie said. “It’s apart of this mall, it’s accessible to many people, it’s the branch that has had the least amount of our issues or problems as far as safety and security is concerned. There is a mega supermarket that’s continuing to be relocated here. It’s important that we hold on to this particular branch of Chase.”

According to Comrie, news of the proposed closing came just three weeks ago with little to no warning to the neighborhood. Chase told the senator that the reason for the closing is the lack of foot traffic in the area, a reason that Comrie strongly believes to be inaccurate.

“Right now they said some vague mumbo jumbo about numbers and foot traffic,” Comrie told the Press of Southeast Queens pointing out the several car jams and full parking lot at the time of the rally. “As you can see, this is a heavily trafficked area, a busy area that people are coming in and out of all the time.”

Comrie said that although it was a Friday afternoon, the shopping center is consistently busy regardless of the time or day of the week.

Although Chase has pointed out that the bank has two other local branches in the neighborhood, one located at 231-02 Merrick Blvd. and the other at 188-39 Linden Blvd., the issue of safety of those branches has become a heated point of contention. Both banks, which are located on the corners of their respective locations, have been hit by crime in the last two years. The Merrick Boulevard location was robbed twice this past summer. The Linden Boulevard location was the site of a robbery in 2013.

In addition to the questionable safety of the other two branches, the rally supporters also pointed out the convenience of the Springfield Boulevard bank’s location for local politicians and businesses as well. Its location next to the nearby credit union allows state and city workers to manage finances easily, and nearby businesses say that the banks location not only benefits their customer base, it expands it.

According to research conducted by Comrie’s Responsible Banking Act, which was overturned by a lawsuit by the Bankers Association, minority areas see less financial institution than the average community. While most other communities see at least two locations, minority communities on average will have one.

She mentioned that closing such a branch when Chase representatives worked with the Attorney General as recently as June to make sure that they would continually invest in

local businesses and urban communities, is disappointing.

Leroy Gadson, President of the Jamaica Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People said that banks like Chase in the neighborhood is a crucial pillar of any community.

“You look at a bank, that is one of the major stabilizing factors of a community,” Gadson said. “In the minority community, far too often we see banks abandon our community and leave us. We’re talking about loans, access to money, access to interest, etcetera, that happen at your local bank.”

Gadson, like Comrie, said that he couldn’t think of a single reason as to why that bank would be closed.

“This community is a working community,” he said. “We have disposable income. We need a bank in this community. And if we look and listen to this bank, we haven’t heard any complaints, or any reason why we close a bank that’s being utilized. Why close a bank that is free from harm, free from any of your customers being attacked, your employees being attacked?”

Dwight Johnson, of the Federated Blocks of Laurelton, said he was happy to know that he was not alone in the effort.

“If you look around this parking lot, you’ll see that it is filled,” Johnson told the Press of Southeast Queens. “With cars, with people, people are shopping and spending their good money. You have access-a-ride over here where many of our seniors come, and they will stop by the bank before they go to do a lot of their shopping. The closing of this bank is unacceptable not only to our seniors, but to our younger people who still come here for the convenience of having this bank here.”

He believed that Chase could afford to keep that bank in the location and should not be removing themselves from that part of the neighborhood.

Chase bank insisted that the proposed closure was the result of a nation wide branch strategy as customers start to move more towards technology based banking such as apps and online account management.

“This is part of our market-by-market branch strategy,” said Chase spokesperson Erich Timmerman. “We’re consolidating this branch into three branches that are all less than a mile away from this location.”

When asked why Chase was choosing to close the bank least associated with violent crimes in Springfield Gardens when it would affect both residents and business at the Chase locations alike, they said that security measures for all locations in the area were above industry standards.

Comrie told the Press of Southeast Queens that he would be organizing a letter and email campaign to express the community’s dismay with the decision.

Reach Trone Dowd at (718) 357-7400 x123, tdowd@queenspress.com or @theloniusly.

- See more at: <http://queenspress.com/20688/#sthash.24oBc78C.dpuf>