

I would like to thank the Galewood residents who came to my community meeting on Tuesday, February 19, 2013, to express their concerns about the proposed opening of Easy Cash Solutions at 6434 W. North Avenue. Specifically, residents worried about the negative aesthetic impact of another pawn shop along North Avenue, and whether such a business could possibly attract a criminal element.

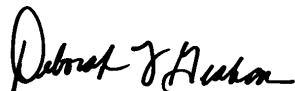
There were several factors I took into consideration when writing my letter in support of Austin Bank's efforts to secure this business as a tenant. First, the space at 6434 W. North Avenue had been vacant for five years. Second, I learned that Easy Cash Solutions is a publicly-traded company that would bring up to 17 jobs to the community, and provide employees health care benefits and 401K retirement plans. Third, after speaking to both the Chicago and Oak Park Police Departments, I learned that notwithstanding the existence of other pawn shops in the area, the Galewood community is one of their safest beats. This fact was corroborated publicly by the 25th District Commander at the February 2013 meeting. Fourth, Cash America, a business similar to Easy Cash Solutions, has been located in Oak Park for 15 years with no incident reported to me by the Oak Park Police, and has been fully compliant with Oak Park authorities.

Nevertheless, I do recognize and take to heart the concerns raised in February's meeting. As such, I have begun working with officials from Easy Cash Solutions to install specific safeguards before opening this business, in accordance with the exact concerns raised by residents. At the meeting, I made a commitment to assemble a compliance committee comprised of law enforcement, business and community members to oversee its opening. I will announce the members of this new committee shortly.

I am also in the process of developing a coalition of residents from Oak Park and Galewood to help develop the North Avenue corridor, as well as a broader group that will address the business corridors on Madison, Division, and Chicago Avenues. From these groups, I can elicit more ideas and suggestions for bringing in the kind of businesses we would all like to see.

In the meantime, I thank the concerned residents again for their candor, and pledge to work with residents across the 29th Ward to ensure their input with respect to future business development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah J. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Alderman Deborah Graham