

**From:** [David Poklinkoski](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Cc:** [David Tipson](#); "[David Drapac](#)"; [annewalker@homelandgarden.com](mailto:annewalker@homelandgarden.com); "[Aileen Paguio](#)"; [David Poklinkoski](#); [ibew2304@att.net](mailto:ibew2304@att.net)  
**Subject:** Comments on Red Pine - Sunny Side CDBG - Dave Poklinkoski  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 29, 2024 3:06:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [Common Council Comments - Red Pine-Sunny Side.docx](#)

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Alders,

Please submit and include these comments for the record on the aforementioned issue before the Common Council.

Thank you very much,

DAVE

David Poklinkoski  
205 Ramsey Court  
[davip@ibew2304.com](mailto:davip@ibew2304.com)  
608-770-8896

All Alders,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the **Red Pine-Sunny Side** proposal for CDBG monies.

I will briefly restate some of the concerns I've raised earlier and add an additional one:

- (1) There was no conversation or communication with the neighbors before the proposal was made to the City. This is contrary to best practices for development projects and, unfortunately, creates contradictions and concerns between neighbors. I can't overemphasize how important that failure is.
- (2) The proposal indicates that Red Pine-Sunny Side intends to operate a wood-fired sauna on a year-round basis. This is contrary to an agreement worked out between Red Pine and the neighbors regarding the use of the sauna (which is located essentially in a "hollow" along the Yahara River). The sauna was being run on a year-round basis by 200 people, nearly every day, with a fire in it as much as 20 hours per day. Rick Wenta (now retired, Public Health MDC) advised correctly that this was a serious health hazard to the neighbors – and especially to those with children living right next to it – but that it was not illegal (something Mr. Wenta was trying to address before he retired). Fortunately, we all settled on an operations policy (basically one day a week in the winter months). This Red Pine-Sunny Side proposal negates that neighborhood agreement.
- (3) The proposal assumes permanent legal rights by Red Pine-Sunny Side to the use of Ramsey Court – rights which do not exist. In an effort to establish that right, Red Pine-Sunny Side (212 Merry Street) has hired an attorney to pressure the owner of the property on Ramsey Court (208 Merry Street) into agreeing to document an easement/ROW of Ramsey Court for the prospective owners of 212 Merry Street. Red Pine's use of Ramsey Court has always been permissive. The desire to secure over \$600,000 via a CDBG has launched an antagonistic litigious situation in what once was a warm and sharing community. This litigation could go on for years, costing each of the parties many 10's of thousands of dollars, if this proposal is approved by the Common Council.
- (4) Since Red Pine-Sunny Side does not have a permanent easement, the City would be approving monies which will likely be tied up for years and may never be used on this project (or any other projects over the authorized time line) and that is an unwise use of the people's resources.
- (5) I've lived on Ramsey Court for over 34 years and I'm fully in support of affordable workforce housing in our neighborhood and at Red Pine and would like to see the City step in and help in that regard. But this Sunny Side development is not the way to do it – it has been handled wrongly from the start and continues with the use of attorneys against their neighbors. Chris Burant, who owns 212 Merry Street, is a wonderful guy and has been a great neighbor; he should have many other options available to see that his property is put into the hands of persons who share his intentions for affordable "starving artists" workforce housing. He's not without options; and the City should not approve this proposal and thereby give Chris those options.

Thank you.

In Solidarity,

DAVE

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**From:** [annewalker@homelandgarden.com](mailto:annewalker@homelandgarden.com)  
**To:** [All Alders](#); [christopher burant](#); [Mayor](#)  
**Subject:** Item 4, Red Pine Cooperative on Merry and Ramsey Ct  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 29, 2024 10:03:26 AM  
**Attachments:** -  
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Dear Alders,

I am a long-time neighbor of Red Pine on Merry Street. I consider Christopher Burant, who owns Red Pine, to be a friend. I appreciate that, for decades, Red Pine has provided affordable housing in our neighborhood, in a cooperative fashion. In the past, under Christopher's management, household issues that arose have been handled by holding a household meeting, with immediate neighbors would have been invited. Food would have shared, and neighbors would have respectfully discussed the issue.

I understand that Christopher is getting older, and needs to change gears. However, the "new" version of Red Pine feels very different to me. Neighbors were not made aware of Red Pine and Sunny Side Development's proposal. This is a departure from the Red Pine norm, and, I believe, lacks common sense, or a commitment to working cooperatively with neighbors. There were some basic issues that should have been ironed out, before the proposal got to this stage.

A City of Madison Common Council approved document comes to mind for me.. The document is "A Best Practices Guide for Developers, Neighborhoods and Policymakers" and was developed by the City of Madison Department of Planning and Development. The document, ***Participating in the Development Process*** states, on pg 12,

"Neighborhoods bring a local and historical context to a project, as well as an understanding of issues related to a specific site. Neighborhood involvement may improve a proposed project, especially if residents are able to articulate a coherent vision for the physical development of the neighborhood. Early neighborhood involvement in a project may also help reduce problems late in the review process."

Had early neighborhood discussion taken place, there would be a reduction in "problems late in the review process". Neighbors need the ability to meaningfully weigh in, because there are issues related to the site that need to be discussed. Common Council is not the right place to work this out.

One issue of concern that has been raised is the easement and use of a private lane, Ramsey Ct. Ramsey Ct sounds pretty grand. In fact, it is a narrow, one lane, mostly unimproved alley. Efficient use of the space depends on neighbors cooperating with

each. A good place to start would be talking to each other about the legal issues here, and that should have happened much sooner in the process.

One of the challenges additionally for neighbors in recent years has been the commercial composting operation at Red Pine and, essentially, the commercialization of the wood-fired sauna. In the recent past, the sauna had approximately 200 users, as estimated by Red Pine, and was in use, daily, fall through spring, often 10+ hours a day. It is a wood fired sauna, and the smoke stack is lower than surrounding homes. Neighbors were regularly breathing wood smoke. Also of concern, the sauna has partially burned down once, and twice, the stove was burning at such a high heat, that it broke the stove (welds). The sauna is a wooden structure, surrounded by stacks of dry wood. It is situated in a neighborhood full of wooden homes that are stacked right on top of each other. Concern regarding the wood fired sauna is, I believe, very reasonable. Neighbors had been working to navigate the issue with Christopher and the household.

Red Pine, in their response to the city regarding neighbors concerns and the sauna shared a neighborhood 'agreement' that is not accurate, or, amenable to immediate neighbors. Red Pine is once again proposing operating the sauna 7-days a week, and has additionally proposed summer hours.

Additionally, in their response to the city regarding neighbors concerns, Red Pine included a portion on affirmative marketing, and stated, "Recently, an African American member of Red Pine...moved out. This was not because of any issue with the cooperative-which he loved, but rather due to the litigious nature of the neighbors....(which)made him feel very uncomfortable."

I spoke with the neighbor. He was **very** upset that Mr Wenta, from Dane County, was on the property to discuss the sauna with neighbors, at a scheduled meeting, that he was unaware of. Christopher Burant and another member of the household, Elliot, were aware of the meeting, but it would seem, did not share that information with the entire household. While I feel terrible that a neighbor felt so unsafe due to Mr Wenta's visit that he moved from a home he loved, I do feel, strongly, that Red Pine bears some responsibility for not informing their household of the scheduled meeting .

In my experience, the "new" version of Red Pine seems to have a chronic issue with timely, effective and respectful communication. The accessory uses, the sauna and composting, cause parking issues in an area with a 1/2 block long, dead-end street with limited parking. The sauna causes nearby homes to often be polluted with unhealthy wood smoke. While I support the continuation of affordable and cooperative housing on Merry St, I cannot support the application at this time.

Respectfully, Anne Walker

(no attachments)

