



 hayesvalleysf.com

 info@hvsafe.com

 Hayes Valley • San Francisco, California

A Community Should Never Come to This

A Statement on Civic Dialogue in Hayes Valley

For more than five years, we have participated in Hayes Valley through the ordinary channels of civic life. We attended meetings, submitted comments, met with City officials, documented conditions, proposed alternatives, and continued to engage because we believed that healthy neighborhoods are built through open dialogue, mutual respect, and the willingness to consider more than one point of view.

Over time, we have watched something else emerge.

Healthy communities do not require unanimous agreement. They require confidence that different viewpoints can be expressed openly, considered fairly, and debated respectfully. They depend on dialogue—not because everyone reaches the same conclusion, but because every resident, business, and community member knows they have a legitimate place in the conversation.

We believe that civic confidence has steadily eroded in Hayes Valley.

Communities do not become this divided overnight.

This past weekend, as part of a public information campaign, an informational poster was placed on the sidewalk along the 500 block of Hayes Street. Within hours, it was intentionally torn down. The incident was recorded. When asked why, the individual responsible reportedly answered simply:

"I don't agree."

This statement is not about one poster.

It is about what that moment revealed.

What concerns us is the condition of civic dialogue that such a response reflects.

This did not happen in isolation. It follows years of increasingly strained civic engagement around the Hayes Street closure. Residents and businesses seeking to restore the street as a functioning public thoroughfare have repeatedly encountered a pattern that goes well beyond

ordinary disagreement. Community communication has become one-sided. Opportunities for real dialogue have narrowed. Public processes have left many questioning whether differing viewpoints are genuinely valued. Community resources meant to serve everyone have too often become symbols of division rather than inclusion. At one point, the permit holder of the Hayes Street closure sought a civil harassment restraining order against a resident engaged in civic documentation of the operation of the street closure and its permit conditions—an effort to stop the recording and reporting of conditions on a public right-of-way. Now even public information intended to invite discussion is met with destruction rather than conversation.

Many residents and businesses now share their views privately rather than publicly—a clear sign of eroded confidence in the neighborhood’s civic climate. This environment did not appear overnight. It developed through years of missed opportunities to broaden dialogue and keep differing viewpoints at the table. Those who operate publicly permitted activities, administer public programs, and hold elected office all share responsibility for preserving civic trust. Too often that responsibility has not been met.

Leadership is measured not simply by advancing projects, but by ensuring that people with different perspectives continue to feel heard, respected, and welcome at the same table.

Too often, that has not been our experience.

Perhaps most troubling is that all of this surrounds a single block of one neighborhood street.

It never should have reached this point. That alone should give all of us pause.

No organization owns Hayes Valley.

No permit holder owns Hayes Valley.

No elected official owns Hayes Valley.

No single viewpoint owns Hayes Valley.

The neighborhood belongs equally to every resident, every business, and every member of the community who cares enough to participate in its future.

Healthy dialogue requires more than the opportunity to speak. It requires confidence that differing viewpoints will be heard with respect. Rebuilding that confidence is now one of Hayes Valley’s most urgent civic challenges.

We place this statement into the public record because communities rarely recognize these moments while they are still unfolding. Hayes Valley is at such a moment.

A community should never come to this.