



May 30, 2023

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Re: Street fires in Hayes Valley

Dear City Leaders,

Hayes Valley has suffered a series of dangerous fires along Octavia Boulevard that started around tent encampments.

On March 31st a car was lit on fire near a tent encampment and construction site at Octavia Boulevard and Hickory Street.

On April 24th a construction site was set on fire near a tent encampment at Octavia Boulevard and Hickory Street.

On April 25th a tent encampment went up in flames in the median of Octavia Boulevard and Hickory Street. Cyclists passing by pulled a person out of the tent.

There is currently an encampment on Octavia at Hickory where many of these fires have started. They have been tapping into power at sidewalk utility access points and the light poles along Octavia Boulevard.

We don't know exactly how all of these fires started, but we do know how dangerous they are to our community. And we observe that they have all been concentrated around the same tent encampments that we have reported again and again. We have repeatedly alerted 311, 911, the non-emergency police line, Supervisor Preston's office and HSOC about camps illegally splicing into city power poles and completely blocking passage on sidewalks along the very busy Octavia Boulevard.

When we report these issues, every public servant tells us the same thing—they aren't allowed to do anything about encampments because of the injunction (issued by U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Ryu on December 23, 2022). The injunction however, doesn't bar the city from removing encampments that engage in illegal activity like splicing into city power or encampments that completely block passage on a sidewalk. The injunction does not bar the city from enforcing laws meant to keep all residents safe.

Our neighborhood and our city is literally being trashed and set on fire and you all are doing nothing about it. We are asking you to take these issues seriously and remove encampments that pose a danger to our community when we report them instead of throwing your hands up in the air.

Please clarify with enforcement agencies that you can still enforce the law. And please confirm with us, your constituents and tax-paying residents, that you will enforce the law.

Please treat this like the public safety and humanitarian crisis that it is. If the city doesn't have the resources to do this, then ask the state for help. Call in the national guard if needed. Build emergency temporary shelter and triage people's needs. Get people off the streets and into safer environments.

We expect a response from you within a week clarifying policies around removing encampments that are breaking safety laws and your commitment to keeping our neighborhood safe.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Laska
President, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association

CC:

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