

Patricia's Green in Hayes Valley, San Francisco

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Narrative Statement

On a typical weekend, Patricia's Green is a quaint, convenient public space bustling with neighborhood residents, dogs, and visitors alike. Visitors range from those in the Bay Area to international ones who stumbled on the park. Yet, this nice neighborhood amenity was not always there. Patricia's Green is a quintessential story encompassing the city's controversies, resulting actions, and impacts. The area used to be penetrated by the Central Freeway ramp that snaked through the neighborhood, but the 1989 earthquake damaged the elevated segment. Eventually, citizens voted in favor of demolishing it, though it took several years of neighborhood activism and ballots to come to this decision. The subsequent Octavia Boulevard plan added the tree-lined, multilane boulevard in its place, with this new park as an endpoint of the boulevard as it reaches the residential area. Patricia's Green is serves the public better than the prostitution and drug dealing activities that used to be common under the freeway ramp, and now parents feel okay bringing their toddlers out to the playground – but with the decreased crime comes a few consequences. Looking at the park and its nearby retail, gentrification has clearly left its mark. Park users are often enjoying ice cream, but just a single scoop with a waffle cone already costs seven dollars. A nearby store marks its clearance sale as “as low as \$49”; the large, shiny windows of show off its nice interior and invites visitors in, at the same time symbolizing exclusivity. The demographics indicate that neighborhood residents are wealthier, younger, and more professional. The city is constantly changing, but with every addition includes exclusion of some form, even if unintentional.



The main concept of my artist book is to have two layers of boxes representing the park and its surrounding area, first in its past as a freeway ramp, and secondly in its current state as a gentrified area.



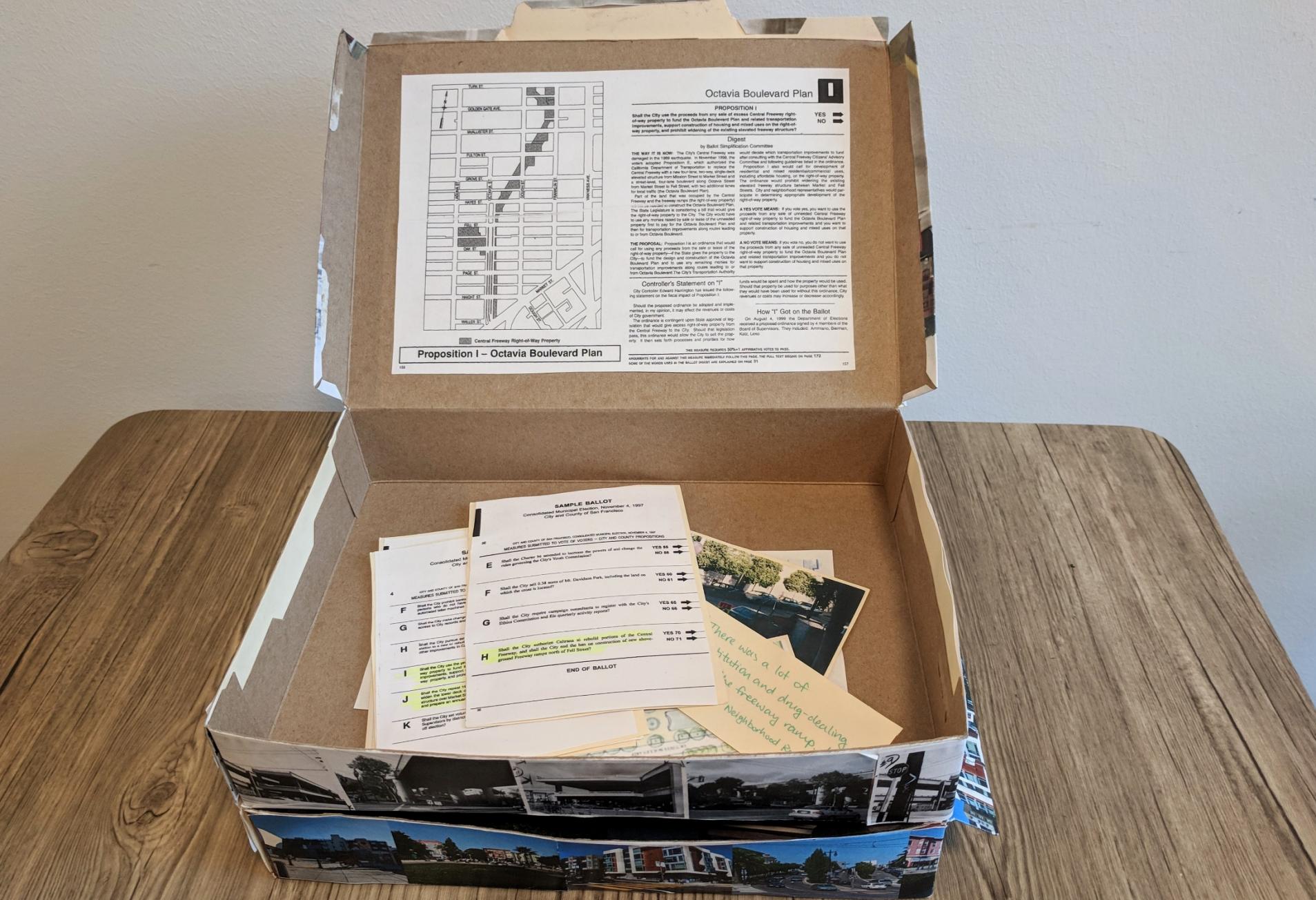
The top layer is grey and dull to show how the park used to be a freeway ramp.

The bottom layer is bright and colorful to show how the developments changed the area.

Since this was an elevated freeway ramp, I put the freeway ramp picture on top so it is literally elevated in my book.



The contents contained in the top layer represent the transition from the freeway ramp to demolishing the ramp and designing the new boulevard and park.

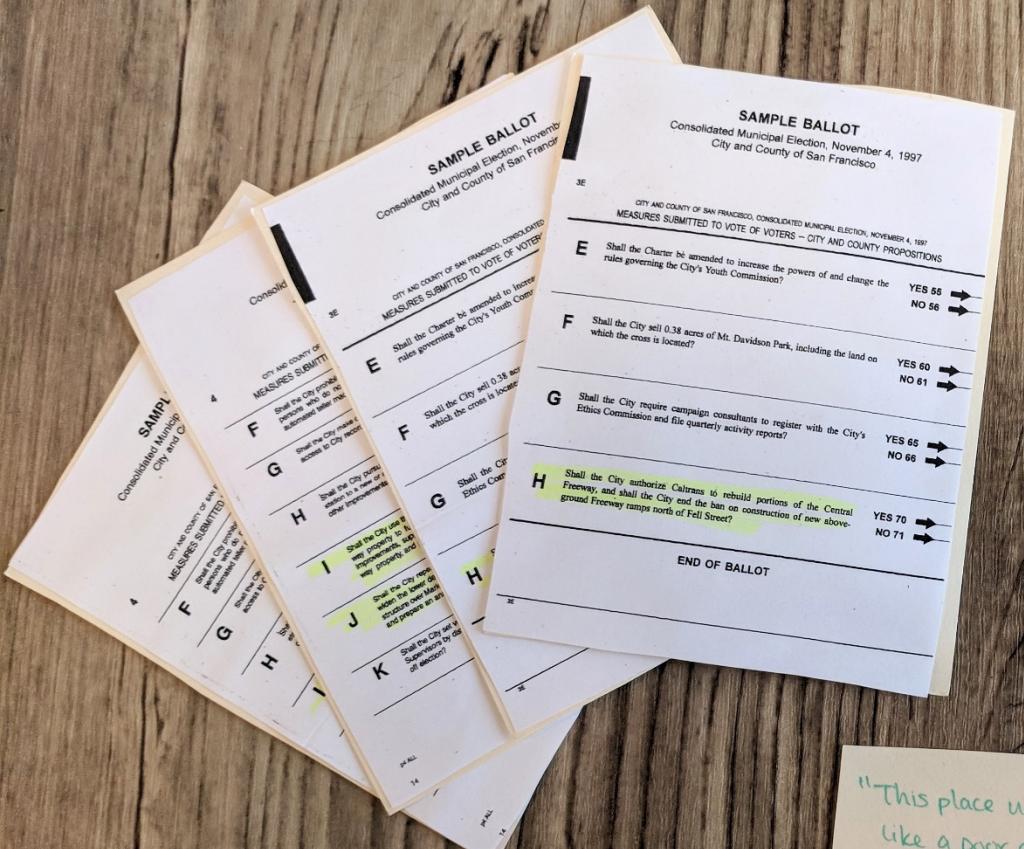


- The contents include:
- sample ballots from the votes that took place to restore and then demolish the freeway
 - a picture of community activism (including Patricia Walkup, whom the park is named for) advocating the park
 - a plan of the park
 - quotes from neighborhood residents gathered from interviews

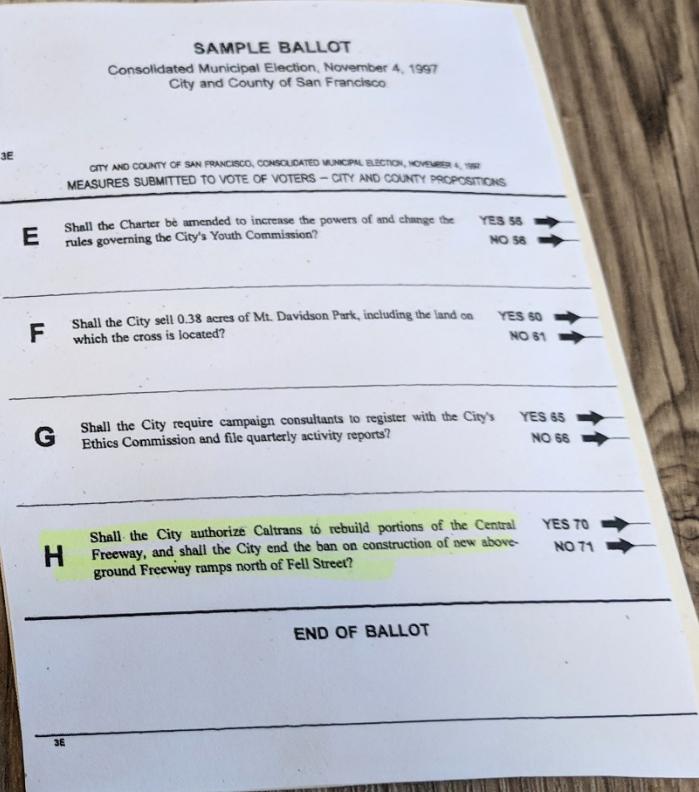
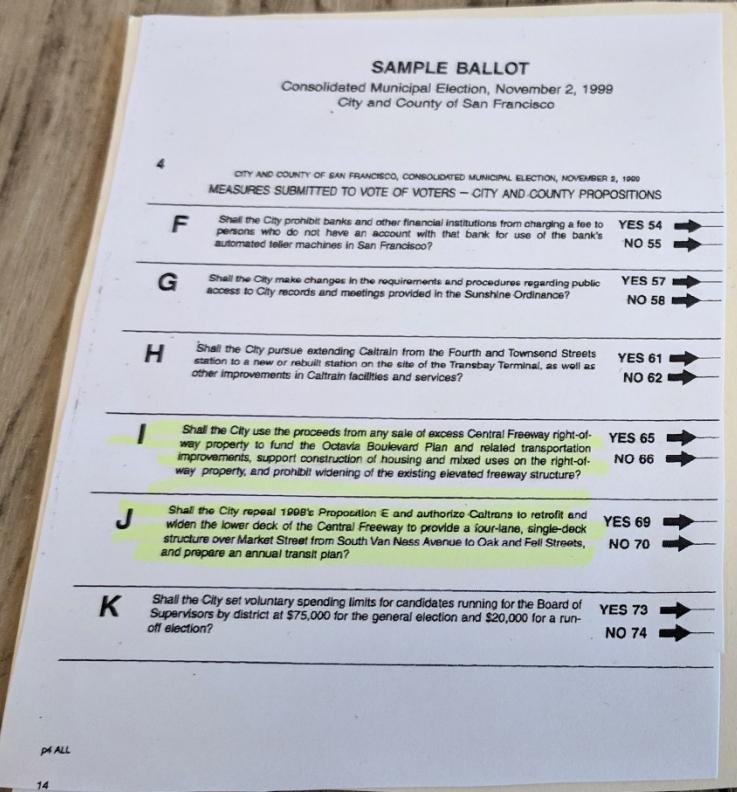


"This place used to be like a poor ghost town."
—Neighborhood Resident

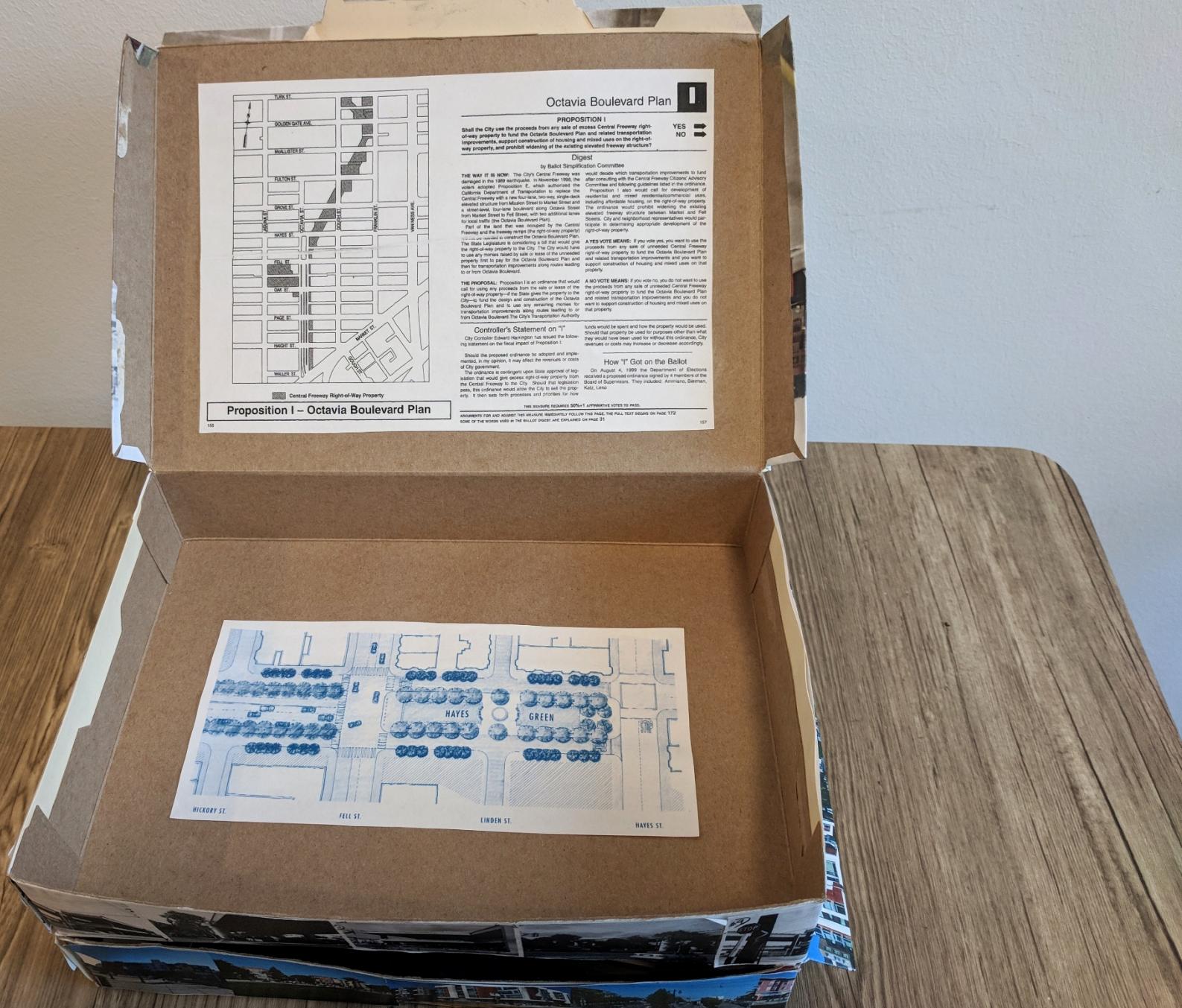
"There was a lot of prostitution and drug-dealing under the freeway ramp."
—Neighborhood Resident



The ballot cards are double-sided. On one side is the 1997 ballot, where the voters decided to restore the freeway ramp. The decision was reversed by the 1999 ballot, to fund the new boulevard, which I placed literally on the reverse of the card.



The top lid has the Octavia Boulevard Plan, which was the proposition that eventually won. The bottom of the box has another picture of the park plan.





Flipping open the book reveals a collage of the park in the present day. Showing the park at the lower level of my book represents how the freeway ramp was demolished and taken down, so flipping open the book literally takes down the top level.

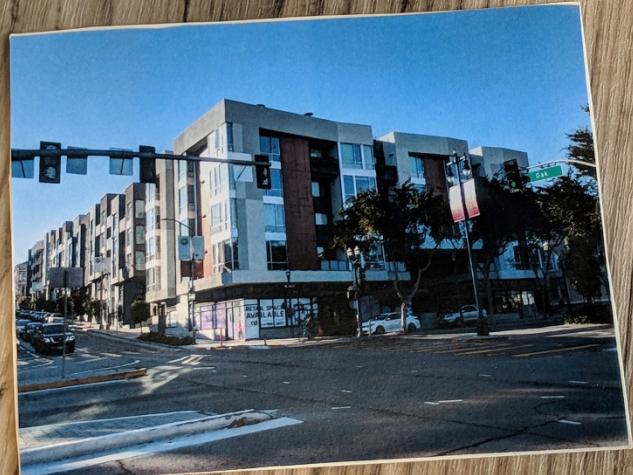
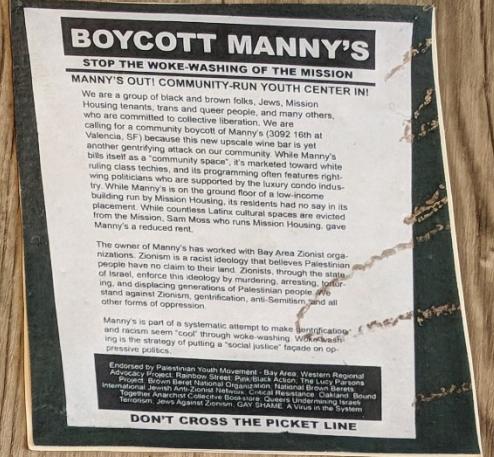


At the surface level, the park may seem really nice, but opening the box reveals the hidden exclusivities and gentrification that Hayes Valley currently embodies.



The pictures show:

- a nearby store with a “clearance as low as \$49” which shows the high end retail
- a car parked down the street with its window completely shattered
- a flyer posted at the park to boycott a new wine bar
- the menu at the adjacent ice cream shop where one scoop is \$5.50
- new condos everywhere
- the menu at the adjacent juice shop



I also included quotes from my interviews with neighborhood residents that describe how the area has changed, contrasting the quotes from the top layer of the book.

"I'm in the city to interview with some tech companies."

— Visitor from Singapore

"The demographics are different now — everyone is a professional, it's all homogenous. Artists and musicians couldn't afford to live here anymore."

— Neighborhood Resident

"I used to be able to afford shoes here, but not anymore."

— Neighborhood Resident

"Rent control allows me to stay."

— Neighborhood Resident

"The area became more expensive, catering to the opera and symphony-goers."

— Neighborhood Resident

"I used to have a million-dollar view, but it's been getting blocked by new high-rises."

— Neighborhood Resident

Image sources

- my own photos from site visits in November 2019, October 2019, and March 2019
- ACCESS 28, Spring 2006
- "City and County of San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet and Sample Ballot," Department of Elections, November 1999
- "The Market and Octavia Neighborhood Plan," San Francisco Planning Department, December 2002
- <http://www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysCentral.html>
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- <https://urbanland.uli.org/industry-sectors/infrastructure-transit/freeway-boulevard/>
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