

Chevre,

If you've been to the building lately, you may have seen trash or needles in the Havurah courtyard, or encountered people charging their phones, resting on our benches, or worse. Last week, our staff wrote a piece in [Hinenu](#) about the challenges of being a shul in the downtown/metro area, where the citywide homelessness crisis impacts us all. In that article, staff wrote about striking a balance between our need for safety and cleanliness and our desire to practice *chesed*, lovingkindness, whenever possible. This article is to let you know that Havurah leadership is also working on this issue.

Havurah leadership has asked the [Courtyard Task Force](#) to meet, hear the concerns and experiences of our members and staff, understand what steps are being taken now, consider adjustments to current practices in order to address concerns, and make recommendations to Steering if policies or practices need to be updated. The Courtyard Task Force is a group of members from the Garden, Design, Safety, and Poverty & Homelessness committees, as well as staff. It was formed in early 2021 to explore the livability and safety issues in our courtyard. The Task Force is charged with studying problems in the courtyard and making recommendations to Steering. Vice President David Kertzner will now be a liaison from the Presidents Team to the Courtyard Task Force.

Ultimately, any policy decisions about the courtyard will be decided by Steering Committee. Steering will turn to the Courtyard Task Force for recommendations. We expect the Task Force to dig into the details and provide us with sound, thoughtful proposals as they have done in the past. But, any substantive policy decisions will be made by Steering, not the Task Force.

How can Havurahniks express concerns and make suggestions regarding the courtyard?

- For immediate, in-the-moment help with anything at the building, ask staff. Our staff are there for you and want to help you feel safe and comfortable at our shul.
- To communicate your courtyard suggestions, policy ideas, or specific courtyard concerns or incidents, please [email](#) the Courtyard Task Force, led by Steve Rudman. Steve will share your input with the other members of the Task Force.

Overall, it is important for all of us to recognize that the problems we experience in our courtyard have become endemic to American cities, and there is only so much we can do. It is also important to understand that there is only so much our staff can do. While our staff is most experienced with respect to regular contact with the courtyard, it is the Courtyard Task Force that will be taking the lead on addressing this issue and ultimately reporting to Steering.

Thank you for your understanding and patience as we work together to address this sensitive, complicated issue.

L'Shalom,  
Loree Devery, Havurah Co-President