



**Let's Get Serious About Fixing Sidewalks**

By Michael Pollack

They're a vital public resource, but cities don't manage or maintain them well. There is plenty they could be doing.

In the last few weeks, a number of cities—communities as diverse as Philadelphia; Atlanta; South Bend, Indiana; and Beaumont, College Station, and Georgetown, Texas—have announced meaningful changes in the management and provision of a crucial public resource.

These changes include hiring new officials, infusing additional capital, changing how that capital is raised, and committing to expanding availability. In doing so, these cities follow in the footsteps of Denver; Ithaca, New York; and others by taking significant steps toward improving public life.

This resource? The often overlooked sidewalk.

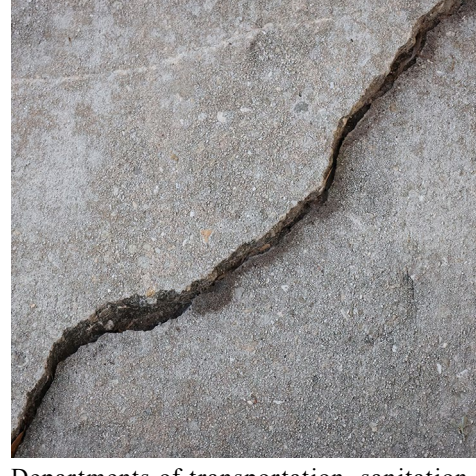
As I explain in my forthcoming book, *Sidewalk Nation*, public rights of way like sidewalks are essential for communities, businesses, residents, and governments alike. By essential, I don't mean

that *having them* is essential. Rather, effectively maintaining and regulating them is what is vital. Indeed, simply having sidewalks without this kind of oversight can be even worse than not having them at all.

Unique among all public spaces, sidewalks inherently entail a sprawling collision among uses. We travel on sidewalks—to work, to school, to recreation. We also engage in commerce on sidewalks—from outdoor dining to advertising, vendors, delivery robots, scooter rentals, and more. We socialize and protest there. It's where we put infrastructure that keeps the city running, such as utility poles and lighting. Some people even sit and sleep there.

Each of these uses competes for limited space, and the space each one takes leaves less for the others. But because none of these uses is necessarily "better" than the others, the goal must be to harmonize them.

That's where too many cities and towns have fallen short. First, in many cities, scattered parts of city government regulate these uses, and they don't always coordinate very well.



Departments of transportation, sanitation, buildings, consumer affairs, health, and more all overlap on the sidewalk. Without seeing the whole picture, regulators can leave gaps or create unintended clashes.

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The project construction duration is from Q1 2026 through Q4 2027.

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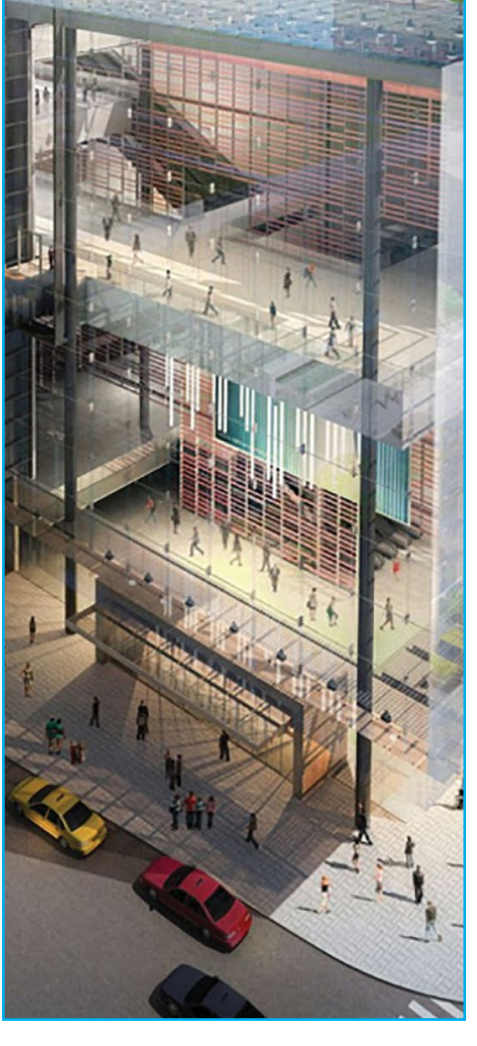
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**2026**

**SBA 101: Introduction to SBA Programs Webinar**  
 Monday, May 18, 2026, 9:00 am–10:00 am Online  
 Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration, Rhode Island District Office  
 Contact: Brian Hopkins, 401-528-4575, brian.hopkins@sba.gov  
 Fee: Free; registration required

This free workshop, presented by the Rhode Island District Office, is designed to help entrepreneurs understand the various SBA programs and services available to help them as they start, expand, grow, and recover their businesses. This overview presentation covers: Introduction to the SBA; SBA Resource Partner Network—Business Training and One-on-One Counseling; Selling to the Federal Government—SBA Contracting Certification Programs; Access to Capital—Loan and Surety Bond Programs; International Trade Assistance; Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Assistance Loans. Register online for the free Assistance Loans webinar at https://www.sba.gov/event/80669

**Federal Contracting for Small Businesses Webinar**  
 Tuesday, June 9, 2026, 12:00 pm–1:30 pm Online  
 Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration  
 Contact: Irene Gonzalez, 208-334-1673, irene.gonzalez@sba.gov  
 Fee: Free; registration required

Learn the essentials of federal contracting for small businesses. This event will cover the basics of navigating the federal contracting process, as well as the various certifications available to help your small business succeed in the government marketplace. Certifications include: 8(a) Business Development Program, HUBZone Certification, Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB/EDWOSB), and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB). Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable insights and resources to help your small business. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/federal-contracting-basics-and-certifications-for-small-businesses-tickets-1977729664666

**Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Program Webinar**  
 Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 2:00 pm–4:00 pm Online  
 Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration  
 Contact: Patrice Dozier, patrice.dozier@sba.gov  
 Fee: Free; registration required

SBA is creating a space for Woman-Owned Small Businesses, via WOSB certification! Are you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions include an overview of the self-certification process, and a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-1986913543896

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