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## **'Sidewalk Nation' Review: Cracks in the Pavement**

**Sidewalks are a political conundrum. Residents want walkable cities yet oversight of pedestrian pathways is fragmented across different arms of government.**

In January 1851, Ulysses S. Grant, then an Army quartermaster, slipped on an icy sidewalk in Detroit and sprained his leg. He sued the owners of the adjacent properties, one of whom, Zachariah Chandler, happened to be the mayor. Whether Grant had been drunk is unknown, but at trial Chandler griped, "if you soldiers would keep sober, perhaps you would not fall on people's pavements and hurt your legs." The mayor lost. No hard feelings, though: Chandler was fined a mere 6 cents plus court costs, and two decades later, President Grant appointed him secretary of the interior.

This incident suggests that the only thing as venerably American as personal-injury claims, or political expedience, is the perverse regulation of public space. Specifically sidewalks, argues Michael Pollack, a professor at the Cardozo School of Law, in "Sidewalk Nation: The Life and Law of America's Most Overlooked Resource."

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### **The Wall Street Journal**

By Timothy Farrington

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