

## The Sidewalk Problem

There is a sidewalk near my house that ends abruptly. It starts at the bus stop, runs past the pharmacy and the bakery, and then just... stops. No warning. No sign. Just cracked gravel and overgrown grass leading to nothing.

Most people walk past it, stepping into the street for a couple of feet only to return to the curb. I used to do that too. One day, I saw a woman in a wheelchair trying to make her way across that stretch. She rolled onto the grass, got stuck in the mud, and had to turn around. I stood from across the street, and felt so embarrassed, for the street, for the city, and if I am honest, for myself.

That sidewalk had always been broken, but I had never questioned it. I had never really seen it until someone else could not ignore it.

The next day, I went home and emailed the township office. It was short, polite, and probably too formal. I explained what I saw and asked if they were planning to repair the sidewalk. I did not expect a response, but two days later, someone replied.

They claimed it was on a list for future repairs, but funding was scarce, and projects were prioritized by traffic data, meaning it wasn't urgent enough.

I wondered how something so small could matter so much to someone else. I decided to do more. I took photos of the sidewalk. I asked a few local businesses if they had noticed the issue. Some had. I started a petition and collected signatures, which were nothing massive, but enough to show that people cared.

After three weeks, I sent everything back to the township office. This time, the reply was different. They said the concern would be brought up at the next council meeting. And eventually, it was.

By the end of the year, the sidewalk was extended, just a few feet of pavement, nothing flashy, but enough to make a difference.

I did not solve a major problem. I just noticed something and decided to follow through. But that experience changed how I see things. It made me realize that community challenges are not always loud or obvious. Sometimes there are quiet gaps we have learned to walk around.

Now, I pay attention to the spaces where people get left out, and ask what it would take to build something better, even if it is only a few feet of sidewalk.