

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Responsible GOVERNMENT

Colored asphalt: best surface for sidewalks

Sometimes we keep doing the same thing out of custom, even when better methods are available.

Consider Pottstown's sidewalks. Lifted sidewalks are a problem, and the main culprit is the surface we use: concrete blocks.

Concrete is rigid. When poured in blocks for sidewalks, it is prone to cracking, spalling, lifting, and sinking.

When concrete blocks become uneven, either because they are lifted by tree roots or because of freezing and thawing ground, lips are formed that create tripping hazards.

Asphalt has none of these drawbacks. Asphalt is poured in a continuous ribbon, which means it has no seams to pop up or drop down to create uneven surfaces. Because asphalt is flexible, it can bend with the ground. At worst, tree roots cause ripples in asphalt, not lips.

Trees Inc., a private, non-profit corporation dedicated to the planting and maintenance of street trees in Pottstown, recently replaced 14 lifted concrete sidewalks on the 200 block of Walnut Street with asphalt as a demonstration project.

The asphalt was then coated with a permanent epoxy solution colored to look like concrete. (The epoxy coating comes in all colors.)

On Monday, Council voted to seek \$200,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to replace lifted sidewalks in low- and moderate-income areas of Pottstown with epoxy-coated asphalt. The hope is that perhaps 250 to 350 sidewalks could be repaired if the funding is received.

This column expresses the personal views of Tom Hylton

and does not represent the views of any public or private organization with which he is affiliated.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton



Asphalt is used for the Schuylkill River Greenway, left, and the Hill School quad, below left. Trees Inc. recently replaced 14 lifted sidewalks on Walnut Street with asphalt, then covered it with a permanent concrete-colored epoxy solution.



Summary

- **Because asphalt is flexible and has no seams, it makes an ideal walking surface. It is used extensively for campus walkways and nature trails. It is frequently used for sidewalks in the New England states.**
- **Asphalt can now be coated with a special epoxy solution in any color. Colored asphalt makes an ideal sidewalk material. It is less expensive to install than concrete and easier and less expensive to repair.**