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As traditional concrete sidewalks need replacing, many cities across the country are experimenting a new use for an old material: recycled tires. Rubber sidewalk pavers from recycled tires offer many advantages over traditional sidewalk materials.

Rubber pavers consist of chipped rubber tires, an environmentally conscience reuse of solid waste. They can generally be dyed to meet color requirements, such as grey for sidewalks, black for parking lots or driveways, or blue for handicapped parking. The pavers are durable, flexible, resistant to cracking, and can support the weight of vehicles, making them ideal for sidewalks and parking. Additionally, this material is permeable, meaning it will allow rainwater to seep through instead of running off into the storm drain system. This is advantageous for many reasons.

In many cases, sidewalks must be routed around tree root zones, due either to tree protection ordinances, or because tree roots will eventually crack or break concrete. Because of their permeability and resistance to cracking, rubber pavers can be laid directly over tree root zones. The permeable nature also reduces stormwater runoff, which construction sites and municipal areas must account for under federal regulations.

Because they are rubber, these pavers provide for user safety due to their slip-resistant nature, and reduce tripping accidents because of their resistance to cracking and breaking. Runners and walkers also appreciate the shock-absorbent nature of rubber sidewalks.

Although the initial cost for rubber pavers is slightly higher than that of traditional concrete, installation, maintenance and repair costs are minimal. If maintenance is necessary, or if a sidewalk needs to be moved, even temporarily, the pavers only need to be pulled up and reused. Since the pavers can be dyed to any color, including traditional concrete, they can be used to replace broken sections of concrete sidewalks, as well as for the original installation of new sidewalks.

Sixty cities in 15 states are trying out this new idea for old tires, including Washington, D.C., Seattle, Washington, and Santa Monica, California, who has been installing rubber sidewalks since 2001. In the cities using the pavers, city officials have found that they are good for the municipality, good for the citizens, and good for the environment.