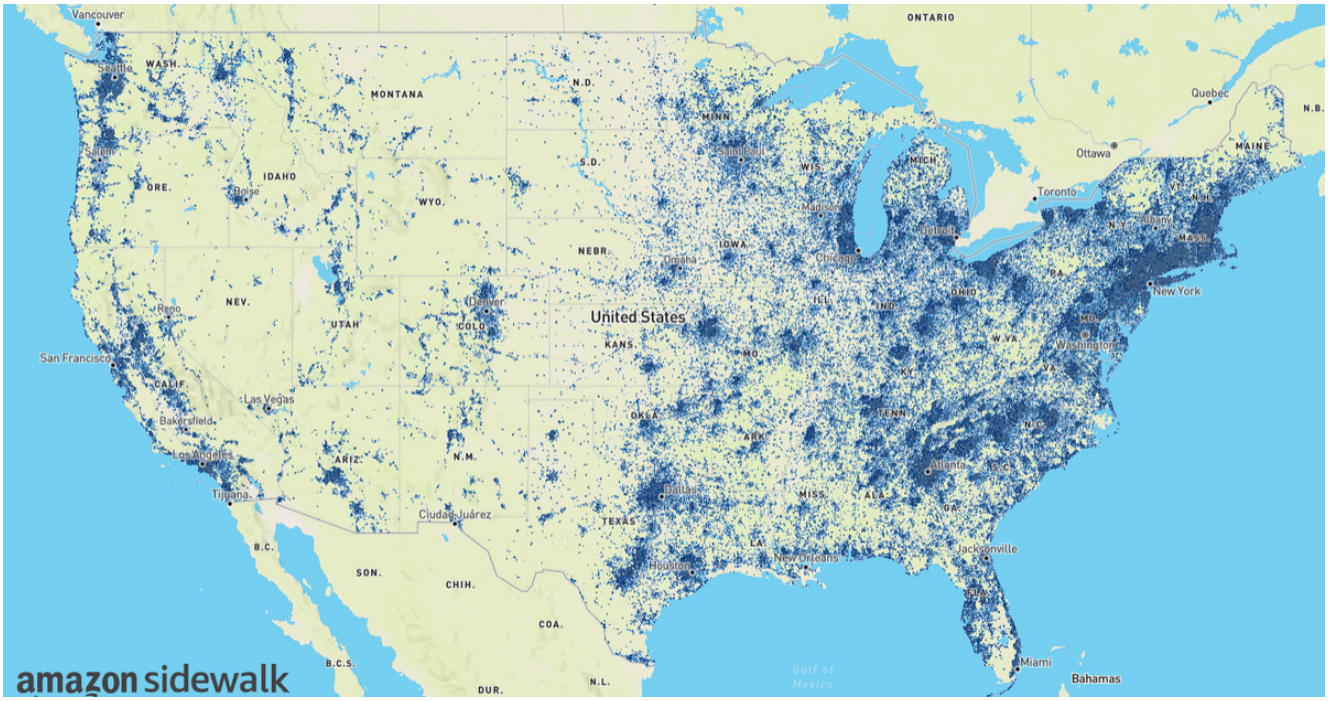
Amazon just opened up its Sidewalk network for anyone to build connected gadgets on



It turns out that I have a low-power, low-bandwidth, long-range IoT network all around me, ready and waiting for my smart gadgets to jump on. Today, Amazon revealed just how far its Sidewalk IoT network penetrates the average American neighborhood.

And it’s deep.

The company’s first Sidewalk coverage map claims that over 90 percent of the US population can access the now public network (it’s limited to the US only). Using a Sidewalk developer test kit supplied by Amazon, I drove around my town to confirm this data and, over three days of traveling more than 40 miles, found that the connectivity was surprisingly strong in my corner of South Carolina, even in the wilds of a national forest.

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dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Jennifer Pattison Tuohy / The Verge

Amazon has released this data in conjunction with the official opening of Sidewalk to developers. First announced in 2019, Amazon Sidewalk is a new low-power, wide-area network (LPWAN) that Amazon believes will help enable the next wave of connected devices. It’s not designed to replace cellular data for high-bandwidth devices but to be used instead of expensive LTE or 5G connectivity on gadgets that don’t need that much data and where paying $10 or more a month for data is excessive.

Currently, Sidewalk mainly exists to help Ring cameras send motion notifications even when they’re offline and allow Level smart locks to connect to the internet without the need for battery-sapping Wi-Fi radios. Amazon has also developed a few early partnerships, including with CareBand, which developed a wearable health tracker. Now, Amazon wants others to build devices that use the free network.

All you need to do is request a test kit — a small gray wireless device with Ring branding on it — gauge if the connectivity in the area you want to deploy your product is sufficient, and you can start building. Nordic, Silicon Labs, and other silicon companies have SDKs and HDKs available now, and AWS IoT Core for Sidewalk provides a one-stop shop for connecting devices. While only the AWS cloud service can directly receive the data transmitted via Amazon Sidewalk, Limp says developers aren’t required to use AWS cloud service for their device data.

“I want someone to build me a long-range connected meat thermometer.” — Dave Limp

What type of consumer IoT devices could benefit from Sidewalk? Think dog trackers, package trackers, soil moisture sensors,

weather stations, leak sensors, mailbox sensors, pill bottles, solar panel controllers, garage door controllers, and anything else that doesn’t always live somewhere Wi-Fi is a given.

“I want someone to build me a long-range connected meat thermometer,” Dave Limp, SVP of devices and services at Amazon, tells me. “I’ve had so many things fail. You know, you’re in South Carolina; overcooked pork butt is not what you want.”

As someone who has indeed tried to smoke pork on a connected cooker in my backyard, I can empathize with the frustrations of trying to cling to one bar of Wi-Fi while enjoying the outdoors. There are many use cases in the smart home where a network like this makes sense. But the biggest benefit will likely be from the dynamic coverage Sidewalk can offer.

As you can see from my map, I drove around while connected to Sidewalk, illustrating how moving devices, like dog trackers and package trackers, could be monitored through Sidewalk, helping bridge the gap between the smart home and the smart city. However, Amazon tells me there is no update on the Ring Fetch dog tracker announced when Sidewalk first debuted.

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a:hover]:text-black [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-e9 dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray-63 [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-13 dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63″>*The DeNova Detect is a wireless natural gas alarm that works over*

Sidewalk.