

Jeff Speck's Seven Rules for a Successful Downtown Tulsa

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A One-Page Zoning Overlay

All developments proposed abutting the Primary and Secondary Networks of Walkability shall be reviewed in light of the following criteria by City Planning staff, with exceptions to be granted only in the case of exemplary architectural merit, but not for “hardship.”

1. *Surface parking lots kill vitality.* No surface parking lots may be placed between a building edge and the sidewalk.
2. *Dead walls create dead sidewalks.* Parking structures shall be exposed to sidewalks on the ground floor only at the locations of their vehicular entrances. Entrance drives may be no wider than 11 feet for each lane of travel. The remainder of the parking deck’s ground floor (and other floors if desired) shall be shielded from the sidewalk by a habitable building edge at least 20 feet deep. That edge may be office, retail, residential, and/or vertical circulation, but retail use is not recommended where it is not adjacent to existing retail, and new retail space must have a minimum ceiling height of 12 feet.
3. *Sidewalks need buildings near them.* With the exception of hotel porte-cocheres (allowed only for hotels with more than 100 guest rooms), all buildings shall place their facades within 10 feet of the sidewalk edge. If retail, any setback shall be paved to match the sidewalk. If residential or office, any setback may include greenery, stoops, patios, and other construction, with the exception that no walls or fences shall exceed three feet in height. Exceptions may be granted for public or semi-public greens, plazas, or courtyards.
4. *Curb cuts endanger people walking.* Curb cuts are not allowed for any buildings other than parking structures and hotels with more than 100 guest rooms. Smaller hotels shall conduct loading against the curb in the parking lane, where several space shall be designated for this use. No set of curb cuts shall be more than two lanes in number.
5. *Front doors are essential.* Buildings with sidewalk facades and rear (or side) parking must place a primary entrance on the sidewalk frontage. Said entrance shall be unlocked whenever the parking-lot entrance is unlocked.
6. *Residences against sidewalks need height.* Residential facades placed within 5 feet of the sidewalk edge must have a ground floor elevation of at least 2 feet. (Live/work units may place their facades at or near grade.) Ground-floor residential units are encouraged to have front porches or stoops along the sidewalk, even where also hallway served.
7. *Urban Buildings need friendly faces.* Facades enfronting sidewalks shall average no less than 18 feet tall and shall have regularly-spaced door and window openings on every story, with at least one opening in every ten linear feet of wall, with rare exception granted for special architectural features. The wall-to window ratio for all facades shall not exceed 75 percent.