



# Alcohol Impact Areas

In July of 1999, the Washington State Liquor Control Board adopted the Alcohol Impact Area rules. These rules were developed to provide a tool for communities who are experiencing significant alcohol related problems.

The rules allow the Liquor Control Board to recognize a geographic area within a city or town as an “Alcohol Impact Area” (AIA). A request to recognize an AIA must be brought to the Board by a local jurisdiction. The local jurisdiction would first be responsible to adopt an ordinance stating an area has experienced significant problems due to the presence of chronic public inebriation or illegal activity associated with alcohol sales or consumption.

In order to ensure that problems associated with chronic public inebriation are addressed at a grass roots level, the Board built a procedure into the rules that requires a local jurisdiction to conduct a public process before bringing a request for an AIA to the Board. At a minimum:

- ◆ The local jurisdiction would first be responsible to adopt an ordinance stating an area has experienced significant problems due to the presence of chronic public inebriation or illegal activity associated with alcohol sales or consumption.
- ◆ The local ordinance must include a findings of fact that documents the pervasive pattern of public intoxication or public consumption of alcohol in the community.

If the Liquor Control Board approved a request by a city or town to formally recognize an AIA, the Board would:

- ◆ Give local jurisdictions more time to review liquor license applications and renewals for businesses inside an AIA. The purpose of this expanded review is to allow local officials to gather input from citizens, neighborhood groups, and other governmental departments such as law enforcement and public health agencies. Local jurisdictions would have 60 days to comment on applications or assumptions that include sales to-go within the Alcohol Impact Area (currently 20 days), and 90 days to comment on renewals within the Alcohol Impact Area (currently 60 days).
- ◆ In specific circumstances outlined in the proposed rules, the local jurisdiction could also request that the Board restrict retailers in an AIA from selling certain types of alcohol products or alcohol product containers, or restrict the hours that these retailers can sell alcohol to go.



## History of Rule Making

In 1997, communities experiencing problems with high concentrations of chronic public inebriates approached the Liquor Control Board asking for the agency's assistance. These communities cited a variety of behaviors and criminal activities linked to alcohol sales and consumption that were contributing to the deterioration of the quality of life within the neighborhood, and were disproportionately taxing public resources. Specifically, the communities documented problems with criminal activities related to alcohol, such as the destruction of public and private property, assaults, the smashing of glass beverage containers on public streets and sidewalks, public urination, excessive noise, etc.

In response to these requests, the Board recognizes its statutory mandate to protect the public's welfare, health, peace, and safety and its responsibility to work with communities to help mitigate negative impacts associated with the sale of alcohol by the businesses it regulates. However, the Board does not believe that regulations alone can solve the problems associated with chronic public inebriation. Preventing and reducing the harm caused by alcohol consumption requires a comprehensive, multi-dimensional response by neighborhood residents, businesses, and government agencies; including coordinated treatment services, counseling and health care, housing services, and job training. In order for this comprehensive approach to be successful, both communities and the Board need to recognize their responsibilities. Therefore, the rules are framed to stimulate local dialogue and a partnership with the Board.

For more information on Alcohol Impact Areas call (360) 664-1600.