



Research Brief Alcohol Common Consumption Areas

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LCB Research Program

The Research Program at the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) is a non-partisan, transparent resource focused on public health and safety outcomes related to the products, policy, and regulation of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and vapor products.

Purpose

After recent conversations with stakeholders, LCB's Licensing Division asked the Research Program to summarize state alcohol regulations on common consumption areas (CCAs). These areas are designated drinking spaces that allow the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages purchased from participating licensed stores and restaurants. This brief is based on a review of existing state regulations and policies, and other credible information sources.

This document does not represent an official position of LCB.

Contact

For more information about the Research Program and its work, please visit: lcb.wa.gov/research_program.

For specific questions about this brief, please email the Research Program at: lcbresearch@lcb.wa.gov.

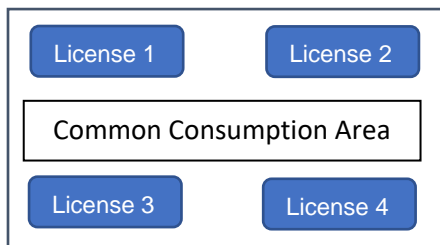
Acknowledgements

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Background

Alcohol common consumption areas (CCAs) are designated drinking spaces that allow for the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages purchased from participating stores and restaurants. The participating establishments are typically near each other (**Figure 1**). Consolidating alcohol consumption into a designated area aims to promote responsible drinking while supporting local businesses.¹⁻²

Figure 1. Example Setup of a Designated CCA.¹



CCAs and Open Container Laws

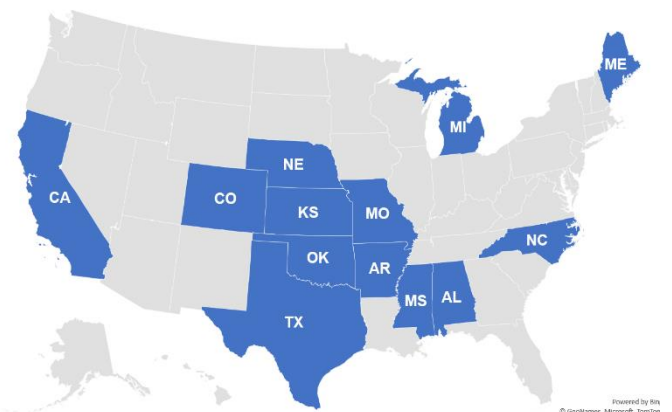
Both CCAs and “open container” laws are aimed at regulating alcohol consumption in public spaces to support businesses. However, there are key differences. For example, CCAs are much narrower in scope and have designated, permitted, or licensed zones for alcohol consumption. In contrast, open container laws allow for open drinks in broader public spaces such as sidewalks, streets, and parks (e.g., Bourbon Street/French Quarter in New Orleans; Power & Light District in Kansas City; Las Vegas Strip).³ Denver’s CCA planning materials specify that “Denver will NOT become Bourbon Street”.¹

U.S. State Regulations

Common Consumption Areas are relatively new in the U.S.⁴ The statutes authorizing CCAs are typically enacted by state government, and then approved and implemented by local governments (county or city).² In 2011, Colorado was the first state to pass a statute allowing the establishment of CCAs.⁴ Over the next decade, several cities in Colorado authorized CCAs in their local ordinances. Denver underwent an extensive planning, outreach, and rulemaking process related to the authorizing and permitting of CCAs – final rulemaking was completed in 2021.^{1,4}

As of today, 13 U.S. states have authorized CCAs (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. U.S. States that have authorized CCAs.⁵⁻¹⁸



Although state regulations vary, most CCAs are required to have:⁵⁻¹⁸

- A single, contiguous designated area;
- Signage (e.g., **Figure 3**) indicating the CCA;
- Physical barriers separating the CCA from vehicle traffic;

- Specific hours of operation;
- Safety and security plans, including compliance with any local ordinances (e.g., noise);
- Distinctly labeled beverage containers that clearly display vendor names;
- An approved application, permit, or license that are unique from other alcohol license types; and
- A requirement of at least two liquor-licensed businesses for the application process and management of the CCA (i.e., a managing entity).

In addition, CCAs generally prohibit:

- Consuming alcohol from anywhere other than licensed businesses participating in the CCA;
- Unmarked alcohol containers;
- Removal of any alcohol beverages from the CCA.⁵⁻¹⁸

Figure 3. CCA signage in Hays, Kansas.¹⁹



Most of the CCAs that have been authorized in the U.S. are required to be within larger “entertainment districts,” which are designated areas meant to foster community engagement and support local businesses.⁵⁻¹⁸ California and Oklahoma have authorized licensees to share a common on-site

consumption area without requiring them to be part of a designated entertainment district.^{7,16}

A few states have additional allowances or restrictions as part of their CCAs, such as restricting the size of alcohol beverages and allowing communal dining areas. For example, Colorado restricts beverage container size to 16 ounces.⁵⁻¹⁸

Limited Research

There is limited research to date on the impacts of CCAs. It appears CCAs are providing some economic benefits in some places indicated by the prevalence of CCA implementation in new jurisdictions. For example, Kansas has now licensed 32 CCAs and is planning to relax certain existing CCA requirements such as closing streets to motor vehicle traffic.²⁰

Conversely, Denver has not issued any permits for CCAs since its launch in 2021, despite its extensive planning process. Reasons for the lack of participation may include a limited ability for restaurants and bars to expand after the pandemic, new outdoor dining spaces created during the pandemic and allowed to become permanent, the option to apply for an outdoor communal dining permit, and a lengthy approval process.²¹ However, several other cities in Colorado have successfully authorized and implemented CCAs.¹

More research is needed to assess public health and safety risks associated with CCAs. Evaluation approaches could include longitudinal comparisons before and after CCA

implementation, as well as comparisons of CCA vs. non-CCA areas and businesses. Suggested data collection include:

- Violations/citations, including:
 - Alcohol access/consumption by minors (e.g., from drink handoffs);
 - Overservice to intoxicated patrons purchasing from multiple businesses in the CCA;
 - Removing alcohol from the CCA;
 - Consumption of alcohol from anywhere other than licensed businesses participating in the CCA;
 - Unmarked alcohol containers;
 - Complaints in/around the CCA; and
 - Warnings or citations issued to licensees/businesses participating in the CCA.
- Other public safety data including:
 - Police service calls;
 - Public intoxication;
 - Detoxification calls; and
 - Traffic safety including DUIs and vehicle vs. pedestrian collisions.
- Sales and other economic indicators for businesses participating in CCAs;
- Customer or pedestrian counts to assess public participation in CCAs; and
- Customer surveys to assess public perception of CCAs.

Suggested Citation

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<https://lcb.wa.gov/research/briefs>

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