



On-Site Recreation for Residential and Mixed-Use Developments

Zoning requirements for on-site recreation

Title 21A of the King County Code (KCC) requires that on-site recreation space and children’s play areas be dispersed within residential and mixed-use developments. These areas must be accessible and convenient to all residents and provide for leisure, play, and sports activities.

When more than four dwelling units are proposed in any residential development that lie within an Urban Residential and Residential Zone, or any proposed mixed-use development, the development proposal must provide recreational space. Such space might include an open grassy lawn area for informal activities like playing catch, throwing a Frisbee, or playing croquet, badminton, or volleyball.

The space should also be big enough to accommodate large numbers of people for picnics or other kinds of group gatherings. All play equipment must meet Consumer Products Safety Standards. See the [King County Code](#) Title 21A Zoning, Chapter 21A.14.180.200 for more details. The provisions of the King County Code (KCC) for On-Site Recreation for Residential and Mixed-Use Developments are administered by the Department of Local Services, Permitting Division (Permitting).

Requirements for on-site recreation, children’s play area/“tot-lots” and recreational features within residential and mixed use developments of greater than four units

The following is a code synopsis of the on-site recreational requirements. A careful and thorough review of the entire code text of KCC 21A 14.180-.200 is recommended as part of any site design.

Type	Requirement
Attached & detached units at eight or less per acre	390 Square Feet Per Unit
Attached units at nine or more per acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studio/One Bedroom - 90 Square Feet Per Unit • 2 or More Bedrooms - 170 Square Feet Per Unit

On-Site Recreation for Residential and Mixed-Use Developments, continued

<i>Children’s Play Area / “tot-lots”</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required for all residential developments, excluding age restricted senior citizen housing • Must be adjacent to main pedestrian paths or near building entrances • Equipment must meet consumer product safety standards for soft surfacing and spacing • Must meet the requirements of KCC 21A.14.180-.200 	<p>45 square feet per dwelling unit, with 400 square feet minimum area and 30 feet minimum dimension</p>
<i>Equipment/age appropriate recreational facilities</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Ground Equipment • Sport Court • Sport Field • Tennis Court or • Any other recreation facility approved by Permitting 	<p>For 5 or more residential dwelling units in a development, provide one <u>children’s play area</u> that contains age appropriate equipment and benches consistent with KCC 21A.14.190. PLUS one <u>recreation facility</u> for up to 25 units. Add a second recreation facility when between 26 and 75 dwelling units. Single incremental additions of recreation facilities are required for each new block of 25 units beginning with unit 76.</p>

Requirements for outdoor recreation

Requirements pertaining to outdoor recreation areas, including associated KCC and Washington Administrative Codes are listed below:

- Outdoor recreation areas must be accessible and convenient to all residents within the development and must provide trail or walkway access to any existing or planned municipal, county or regional park, public open space or trail system that is located on adjoining property.
- Outdoor recreational areas must be centrally located with good visibility of the site from roads and sidewalks, be located in an area where the topography, soils, hydrology and other physical characteristics are of such quality as to create a flat, dry, obstacle-free space in a configuration which allows for passive and active recreation.

On-Site Recreation for Residential and Mixed-Use Developments, continued

- For most apartments, townhouses, and mixed-use developments, the on-site recreation areas and facilities must be accessible (Chapter 11, accessibility, International building Code and subsequent Washington State Amendments).
- Outdoor recreational areas must be on the site of the proposed development, be of a grade and surface suitable for recreation improvements, have a maximum grade of five percent and have no dimensions less than thirty feet, except trail segments.
- Outdoor recreational areas must be located in one designated area, unless the director determines that residents of large subdivisions, townhouses and apartment developments would be better served by multiple areas developed with recreation or play facilities.
- When the required outdoor recreation space exceeds five thousand square feet in any single detached or townhouse subdivision, the recreational areas shall have a street roadway or parking area frontage along ten percent or more of the recreation space perimeter, with the exception of trail segments.
- Financial guarantees are required for construction of recreational facilities consistent with KCC Title 27A.
- A recreation space plan shall be submitted to the department and reviewed and approved with engineering plans. The recreation space plans shall address all portions of the site that will be used to meet recreation space requirements of this section, including drainage facility. The plans shall show dimensions, finished grade, equipment, landscaping and improvements to demonstrate that the requirements of the on-site recreation space in KCC 21A.14.180 and play areas in KCC 21A.14.190 have been met.

Requirements for indoor recreation and credit for on-site recreation

Indoor, on-site recreation areas may be credited towards the total recreation space requirement when the Permitting director determines that such areas are located, designed and improved in a manner that provides recreational opportunities functionally equivalent to those available outdoors. Examples of such space could include an indoor gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, and/or indoor recreation center.

For senior citizen assisted housing, indoor recreation areas need not be functionally equivalent but may include social areas, game and craft rooms, and other multipurpose entertainment and education areas.

What if the size of the site cannot support such recreational space?

The creation of on-site recreation space is the preferred method of providing new development with opportunities for leisure, play and sports activities. Applicants shall to the best of their ability endeavor to provide recreation space on the project site. However, if on-site recreation space is not provided in accordance with KCC 21A.14.180, the applicant shall pay a fee-in-lieu of actual recreation space if approved by King County.

On-Site Recreation for Residential and Mixed-Use Developments, continued

King County acceptance of a fee-in-lieu payment is discretionary. A fee-in-lieu of on-site recreation space may be permitted if the recreation space provided within a county park in the vicinity will be of greater benefit to the prospective residents of the development.

Fees in-lieu of on-site recreation space are determined by the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Parks and Recreation Division (DNRP/Parks) based on the projected market value of the required recreation space land area after development. Any recreational space provided by the applicant shall be credited toward the required fees.

If the County chooses to accept a fee-in-lieu, Chapter 21A.14.190 of the KCC minimally requires a tot-lot/children's play area of 400 square feet or 45 square feet per unit, whichever is greater. There is an exception to this minimal requirement when park facilities are available within ¼ mile of the development. Such facilities are developed as public parks or playgrounds and are accessible without having to cross arterials streets.

Dedication and /or maintenance of recreational space

Recreation space may be dedicated, at the discretion of the department of parks and recreation, as a public park in-lieu of providing the on-site recreational areas required under KCC 21A.14.180 when the following criteria are met:

- The dedicated area is at least ten acres in size, unless when adjacent to an existing or planned county park and is located within one-mile of the project site. In addition, the dedicated land must have one or more of the following features:
 - Shoreline access
 - Regional trail linkages
 - Habitat linkages
 - Recreation facilities or
 - Heritage sites.

Unless the recreation space is dedicated to King County, the owner or a separate entity such as homeowners association must provide maintenance of any recreation space retained in private ownership. This person or entity must be capable of long-term maintenance and operation in a manner that is acceptable to DNRP/Parks.

Additional Resources

King County [Department of Local Services, Permitting](http://www.kingcounty.gov/permitting) (www.kingcounty.gov/permitting)

[Permit Fees](#)

[Information Packets and Handouts](#)

[Contact and Office Location](#)