



Oakland Coliseum Complex

Built in 1966, the Oakland Coliseum Complex hosts the Oakland Athletics, Oakland Raiders, Golden State Warriors, and concerts and other large events. The Complex includes the McAfee Coliseum, which holds 62,000 people, and the Oracle Arena, which holds 19,000 people. The facility sits on 132 acres and employs 50 full time staff and 1,500 part time staff.

Facts-at-a-Glance

Challenges

- High cost of hand-sorting recyclables from garbage
- Contamination in cardboard recycling
- High turnover in cleanup crews
- Tight schedule between events
- Lots of food packaging waste

Solutions

- Switch to compostable cups
- Expand collection to include food waste
- Provide training for cleanup crews
- Use \$10,000 grant funding to purchase recycling containers
- Accept \$10,000 incentive funding for new recycling efforts
- Establish recycling vendor partnership

Benefits

- Divert 200 tons of organics per year for composting
- StopWaste Recognition Award
- First major league team to switch from plastic to compostable cups
- Major press coverage

The Story

For years, StopWaste and the Oakland Coliseum Complex had worked together, making slow, steady progress. But it wasn't until champion George Valerga came onto the scene as the Maintenance Director that major gains were made to reduce waste and conserve natural resources. Valerga wanted the Complex to be the greenest sporting venue in the country—and StopWaste was more than happy to help. The Coliseum has since become the first major league sporting venue to use compostable cups instead of plastic. The partnership between StopWaste and the Complex has also led to several front-page articles in major newspapers.

Challenges

The Complex hoped to establish the best recycling program in the big leagues, but knew the challenges were many, starting with the resistance by thousands of fun-loving sports fans to learning where to put their empty beer cups. That makes the hand-sorting of recyclables from the garbage labor-intensive and time-consuming. The job becomes even more challenging when the facility needs to be cleaned out between tightly scheduled events. In addition, informal recyclers were cutting into revenues by taking high-value bottles and cans out of recycling, and the high turnover rate among the cleanup crews complicated training efforts. Finally, the cardboard bin was often so contaminated that the recycler would haul it away as trash and charge 10 times more.

Clean-up crews hand sort everything left in the stands into three streams: bottle and can recycling, compostables, and garbage.



“The A’s are extremely proud to work with StopWaste.”

JIM WILSON
President
Bay Area Sports Management



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Solutions

Expand recycling and composting, increase employee training, and switch to compostable cups to reduce waste and lower costs.

“The economics have caught up with the vision: The Coliseum is saving a significant amount of money by composting and recycling.”

“Training, training, training, we did not stop. Everyday we train on how to recycle. That is the success of our program.”

GEORGE VALERGA
Director of Maintenance
Oakland Coliseum Complex

Compostable Cups

At a game between the A's and the Yankees in May 2005, the McAfee Coliseum became the first major league sporting venue to sell drinks in cornstarch-based compostable cups. The staff separates the cups and other compostables from the trash, and then sends them to a composting facility. This keeps hundreds of thousands of cups a year from going into crowded landfills. When the cups are purchased in such large volumes, their cost can be comparable to that of their plastic counterparts. And using compostable cups saves money on waste disposal fees, while helping the environment by reducing the use of petroleum-based plastic products.

Post-game Efficiency

Once a game or concert is over, the Coliseum focuses on recycling the waste left by the fans in the stands. High levels of contamination make this waste very difficult to recycle. StopWaste Partnership and Norcal Waste Services of Alameda

County, the Complex's compost vendor, provide essential training to the cleanup crews. The crews hand-sort everything left in the stands into three streams: bottle and can recycling, compostables, and garbage. Post-consumer food waste, paper food packaging, and compostable cups are collected for composting. StopWaste also provided \$20,000 in grants for recycling start-up costs such as purchasing additional recycling bins. Beverage containers left in the parking lot after tailgate parties, and those cleaned out from the stands after the event, are recycled.

Behind the Scenes

The greening of the Complex doesn't stop there. Grass clippings, landscape trimmings, and food waste from caterers' kitchens are collected for composting. Switching to a lockable 30-cubic-yard storage container minimizes scavenging of high-value bottles and cans. Educating vendors and cleanup crews about cardboard recycling reduces contamination and increases participation.



The StopWaste Partnership

The StopWaste Partnership is a free technical assistance service dedicated to improving the environmental performance and reducing costs of Alameda County businesses and public agencies. The program provides expert support and funding to prevent waste, conserve water and energy, and use all resources more efficiently.

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The bottom line:

- \$40,000 a year disposal cost savings
- Diversion of 400 tons of recyclables
- \$20,000 in grant funding from StopWaste
- Prevents the purchase of 3 tons of plastic cups a year

Visit www.StopWaste.Org/Partnership or call 1-877-STOPWASTE.