

Sand City West End Celebration 2011

Quite simply, waste reduction isn't all that attractive — particularly as seen in practice. If waste reduction were an outfit, it might be a baggy one-piece pajama suit with threadbare elbows, quite unlike its steamy cousin carbon benchmarking. But we've learned to wear it with pride; after all, it's essential to remedying environmental degradation. "Waste" represents:

- valuable and scarce resources
- social inequity
- ugly toxic pollution
- methane emissions with 23 times the warming potential of CO2
- plain inefficiency

The concept of — and the desire to implement — zero-waste practices is steadily unfolding across the Monterey Peninsula. Its newest recruit is the [Sand City West End Celebration](#), which welcomed [The Offset Project's](#) food waste and recycling collection as well as its educational component this past August.

Successes:

Nearly a dozen zero-waste stations — composed of several trash, recycling and compostables bins that were attended by knowledgeable volunteers — dotted the festival for use by event-goers and West End workers alike. As always, there were successes and challenges along the way.

- Volunteers, trained in materials sorting before their shift, tangled with sticky cups, soggy half-eaten brats, and bundles of greasy napkins and tattered tinfoil throughout the weekend.
- Volunteers explained to event-goers the zero-waste program as well as the items that can be recycled and composted at home and at the industrial level. For example, meat, bones and compostable food ware typically are not composted at home although they are accepted at the [Monterey Regional](#)



Volunteer training at West End

[Waste Management District](#) facility. Initial confusion gave way to illumination and appreciation. While some members of the public prefer to drop their “garbage” in the nearest hole and run, most are interested in learning how to do the right thing. For those unwilling to sort their own waste, volunteers offered to take leftovers and do it for them. Other West End attendees took the hands-on approach, reaching unabashedly into the dark abyss of a mysterious bin to recover something as small as a plastic straw from the compostables.

- Throughout each day, Offset Project workers sorted through festival bins, ensuring that all compostable and recyclable materials were separated from legitimate garbage.

Challenges:

The challenges were as clear as their solutions. Even for the most knowledgeable, separating trash from recycling and compostables can be laborious and befuddling in the face of an eclectic mishmash of materials.

- For example, some vendors used recyclable cups, others compostable cups, and still others sold cups that must be trashed. Among those categories, cups had a diversity of markings. The solution? Collaborating with vendors or creating a vendor policy to ensure that all materials are recyclable or compostable and are harmonious within groups.
- Additional, unattended recycling and trash cans set up throughout the event also hindered zero-waste goals. These encourage event-goers to pitch recoverable materials into the trash which may lead to recycling contamination. Due to the small size of West End, Offset volunteers were able to sort through these cans throughout the weekend.
- Hiring a second waste management service complicated matters further and called roles into question. While Hope Services was responsible for the event’s trash and recycling bins, those bags were often mixed with Offset Project bags at the close of the event. Dual services raised the question of which group would take materials dumped by vendors as well. On several occasions, recyclables were placed in the trash dumpster and vice versa due to lack of communication, knowledge and incorrect bagging (clear bags indicate recyclables and black bags indicate garbage).



Volunteers help event-goers with sorting

Ultimately, citywide zero-waste policies will be the solution. For instance, Sand City would mandate that all incoming events and their vendors must use entirely

coordinated recyclable or compostable materials; must hire one waste management team responsible for collection, sorting and education; and must not use additional, unattended waste stations for recycling and/or trash.

In addition to the environmental benefits realized by such practices, events can also use honest sustainability efforts for marketing and education purposes, and can cut their trash pickup costs.

Details

***The 10th annual West End Celebration of local art showcased exhibits, open galleries, business displays, local food and a slate of musical performances including Jackie Greene and MoonAlice. This year's "Green Scene" featured appearances and exhibits from Sun-Plugged renewable energy, Earthbound Farms, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and many more. The free Green Lecture Series lineup included Paul Kephart of Rana Creek on the Monterey Bay Shores Ecoresort, designed to achieve LEED Platinum certification; Cindy Walter, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Member and owner of Passionfish, on sustainable living guidelines; and Max Perelman of BuildingWise on ways to upgrade buildings, improve performance and reduce environmental impact.