

San Francisco Music Venues Raise the Bar for Sustainability:

*Case study on a reusable cup pilot at
three San Francisco venues*



**ReThink
Disposable**
STOP WASTE BEFORE IT STARTS



SAN FRANCISCO
ENVIRONMENT
DEPARTMENT

Introduction

In a groundbreaking initiative to combat single-use plastic pollution, several iconic San Francisco music venues took the leap towards sustainability by switching to reusable cups. Supported by San Francisco Environment Department and Clean Water Fund's ReThink Disposable program, these venues teamed up with reusable cup providers r.World and TURN, leading the way in the entertainment industry. This effort, started in November 2022, is detailed in this case study covering results up to October 2023.

Cup Service Providers

r.World

Since launching in 2017, r.World has provided reuse services to thousands of events across over 100 venues, 70 cities, 30 U.S. states and 12 countries. For this collaboration, r.World provided their full-service, reusable cup service, called r.Cup, to one San Francisco music venue. This project seeded r.World's permanent wash hub in San Francisco's Mission District, providing essential reuse infrastructure for the broader San Francisco Bay Area.

r.Cups are made of plastic (polypropylene) that maintains durability for over 300 washes in a commercial dish machine.

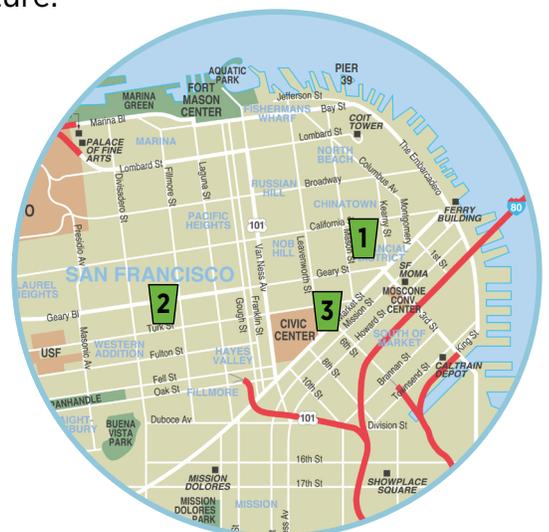
TURN

TURN offers a comprehensive capture-and-reuse system with more than a decade of experience eliminating single-use plastic cups from large-scale events in the US and Europe. TURN provided their full-service reusable cup system to two music venues in San Francisco. This project helped initiate TURN's permanent wash hub in Vacaville, addressing the region's crucial need for reuse infrastructure.

TURN cups are made of durable plastic (polypropylene) and average 120 uses per cup.

The Venues

Three legendary music venues in San Francisco, August Hall (1), The Fillmore (2) and The Warfield (3) have engaged in this forward-thinking endeavor. These historic establishments have hosted countless memorable concerts, and now they're making history of a different kind.



How It Works

r.World and TURN deliver reusable cups to each venue in stackable reusable bins. Trained venue staff distribute and stack cups at every point of sale location. Guests grab their drinks and once finished, return their cups into clearly marked return bins. After each show, venue staff aggregate used cups from front of house receptacles into larger bins for r.World or TURN to pick up. Pick up and drop off schedules are coordinated between the venue manager and the account manager of the reuse company. r.World and TURN transport used cups to a local wash hub. There, the cups are cleaned, sanitized, dried, and packed again for reuse.



CASE STUDY:

The Warfield

The Warfield, originally built in the 1920s, was a vaudeville and movie palace and became a 2,250-person capacity concert hall in 1979 when Bill Graham Presents booked a run of shows with Bob Dylan.



BEFORE: The Warfield used single-use plastic and paper cups prior to r.World



AFTER: Cocktails served in reusable r.Cups at The Warfield

Partnering service

r.World

Launch date

May 2023

Net-earnings

\$33,000 (annually)

Single-use cups

eliminated

57,000 (May-October)

204,800 (annually)

Return rate

93% (May-October)

Pounds of refuse diverted

900 (May-October)

6,500 (annually)

Gallons of water saved

12,700 (May-October)

Pounds of CO₂ eliminated

18,700 (May-October)

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Revenue from a sustainability fee

The Warfield made the switch from single-use plastic and paper cups to exclusively using reusable r.Cups, available in various sizes (5, 9, 12, 16, and 24-ounce sizes). During a 6-month service period with r.Cup, spanning from May to October, The Warfield incurred a cost of \$25,800 for r.Cup services. To offset this cost, The Warfield implemented a 3 percent sustainability fee for each drink sold in an r.Cup, resulting in revenue of more than \$30,000 since the launch of r.Cup in May 2023. This revenue has the potential to turn r.Cup into a profit center for any venue.

Taking into account r.Cup services, income from the sustainability fee, and elimination of purchasing single-use disposable cups, The Warfield anticipates annual net-earnings of more than \$33,000 that will go towards sustaining the reusable cup service into the future.

Note: Data for May to October were provided by r.World and are based on the number of r.Cups used and collected over a 6-month service period. Annual statistics were derived from procurement data supplied by the venue manager.

CUP DATA:

The Warfield

		PACKAGING IMPACTS			COST IMPACTS	
Disposable product replaced or minimized	Recommendation implemented	% Disposable reduction	Estimated annual quantity of disposable product reduced	Estimated annual Waste reduction (Lbs.)	Payback period (Months)	Estimated annual net* cost savings after payback period (\$)
9 oz plastic cup	r.Cup	100	40,556	807	0	-\$4,541
12 oz plastic cup		100	32,444	790	0	-\$5,352
16 oz plastic cup		100	10,139	266	0	-\$7,380
20 oz plastic cup		100	54,750	1,314	0	-\$932
32 oz plastic cup		100	36,500	2,519	0	-\$3,122
16 oz paper Pepsi cup		100	30,417	776	0	-\$5555
*Net Cost Impact considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with reusable cup expenses and avoided disposable foodware purchases and revenue from a sustainability fee. Negative values indicate expenses, while positive values indicate savings and/or earnings.		Earnings from Sustainability Fee	-	-	-	\$60,000
		TOTALS:	204,806 pieces	6,471 lbs	0 (average)	\$33,118

“Things have gone wonderfully and we can’t be happier to be part of the initiative.”

BRIAN DOWNEY
 Director of Operations
 at The Warfield

“It’s really amazing how our garbage hasn’t filled up. Usually, they have to take out the trash two, three, four rounds [a show], but they haven’t touched our trash bins yet [tonight].”

BRIAN
 Bartender at The Warfield

CASE STUDY:

August Hall

August Hall, originally built in the 1890s, is now a multidisciplinary event space with a 951-person capacity music hall, cocktail room, full kitchen, and three lanes of bowling.



Concertgoers at August Hall enjoy beverages without all the single-use cup waste



Reusable cups work exactly the same way as single-use cups, the switch is practically unnoticeable by bartenders and other staff

Partnering service

TURN

Launch date

June 2023

Cost savings

\$29,700 (annually)

Single-use cups eliminated

25,400 (June-September)

232,000 (annually)

Return rate

91% (June-September)

Pounds of refuse diverted

900 lbs (June-September)

5,000 (annually)

Gallons of water saved

12,700 (June-September)

Pounds of CO₂ eliminated

1,000 (June-September)

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Reduced disposable cup inventory

August Hall replaced their 9 ounce, 12 ounce, and 20 ounce compostable plastic cups with reusable TURN cups with an estimated annual cost of \$13,000. Taking into account the expense of TURN cups and not having to purchase single-use disposable cups, August Hall expects to achieve an annual net cost savings of \$29,700, while reducing the annual use of 232,000 single-use plastic cups and 5,000 pounds of plastic trash. Additionally, these savings will be augmented by reductions in refuse hauling fees.

Note: Data for June to August was provided by TURN and are based on the number of TURN cups used and collected over a 3.5-month period. Annual statistics were derived from procurement data supplied by the venue manager.

CUP DATA:

August Hall

		PACKAGING IMPACTS			COST IMPACTS	
Disposable product replaced or minimized	Recommendation implemented	% Disposable reduction	Estimate annual quantity of disposable product reduced	Estimated annual Waste reduction (Lbs.)	Payback period (Months)	Estimated annual net* cost savings after payback period (\$)
Greenware 9 oz water cup	Future switch to TURN	0	0	0	0	\$0.00
Greenware 9 oz mixed drink cup	TURN 9 oz cup	100	143,000	2,846	0	\$20,821
Greenware 12 oz cup	TURN 12 oz cup	100	31,000	753	0	\$832
Greenware 12 oz cup (non-alcoholic)	Future switch to TURN	0	0	0	0	\$0.00
Greenware 20 oz cup	TURN 20 oz cup	100	58,000	1,392	0	\$9,686
		TOTALS:	232,000 pieces	4,991 lbs	0 (average)	\$29,675

*Net Cost Impact considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with reusable cup expenses and avoided disposable foodware purchases. Annual Net Cost Savings is based on discounted introductory costs per case of reusable TURN cups. Positive values indicate savings and/or earnings.



The bin for used reusable cups gets picked up just like landfill, composting, and recycling bins

“We are thrilled with our partnership with TURN systems. Not only has the TURN system been easy to integrate, guests are sharing positive feedback and value the concept.

JOE POZ
Beverage Director at August Hall

CASE STUDY:

The Fillmore

The Fillmore is a 1,199-person capacity music venue located in the Western Addition of San Francisco, California and, fittingly, where Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable avant-garde multimedia show took place.



Partnering service
TURN

Launch date
August 2023

Cost savings
\$1,400 (annually)

Single-use cups eliminated
16,400 (August-September)
176,200 (annually)

Return rate
89% (August-September)

Pounds of refuse diverted
400 (August-September)
4,500 (annually)

Pounds of CO₂ eliminated
200 (August-September)

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Savings on refuse hauling

The Fillmore transitioned from using compostable plastic cups to using TURN reusable cups in various sizes (5, 9, 12, 16, and 24-ounce sizes). Due to the higher cost of TURN cups compared to compostable plastic cups, the venue will incur an additional expense of \$700 per year. However, The Fillmore may offset this cost by reducing their composting service by half after the introduction of TURN reusable cups.

Recology estimates that these changes in volume will result in an 8% reduction in service fees, which comes out to annual savings of \$2,100. Taking into account both the slight increase in cost for TURN cups and the anticipated refuse savings, The Fillmore is projected to achieve a net annual savings of \$1,400.

Note: Data for August to September was provided by TURN and are based on the number of TURN cups used and collected over a 2-month service period. Annual statistics were derived from procurement data supplied by the venue manager. Data table is not shown per request of The Fillmore.

Equity and Inclusion

Equity played a central role in the decision making process, particularly during the initial search for pilot venues and reuse services. Collaborating with the San Francisco Entertainment Commission, venues in environmental justice communities were prioritized. This deliberate approach aimed to address historical disparities in environmental impact and ensure that the benefits of this sustainability project would reach all segments of the community.

During the reuse company selection process, r.World was initially chosen as the sole reuse service partner because of the company's commitment to working closely with the community. As a company policy, r.World seeks to build washing facilities in economic development zones and since the launch of this pilot, they have built out a new wash hub in the Mission District of San Francisco. Creating job opportunities within these communities was a core equity goal, aligning environmental benefits with economic well-being. Additionally, this initiative aimed to make sustainability accessible to all, ensuring that diverse concertgoers can enjoy entertainment with a smaller environmental footprint.



Clear signage and designated bins guide cup returns. As reusable cup services gain popularity among venues, the practice of reuse will become the norm

Acknowledgments

The success of this project would not have been possible without the passionate commitment of The Warfield, The Fillmore, and August Hall. Special thanks to r.World and TURN for their innovative reusable cup services.



ReThink Disposable is a program of Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund conducted in partnership with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. Generous support is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: www.rethinkdisposable.org.

