

Punt Verd, Barcelona

Type

Neighborhood-scale recycling center in public realm

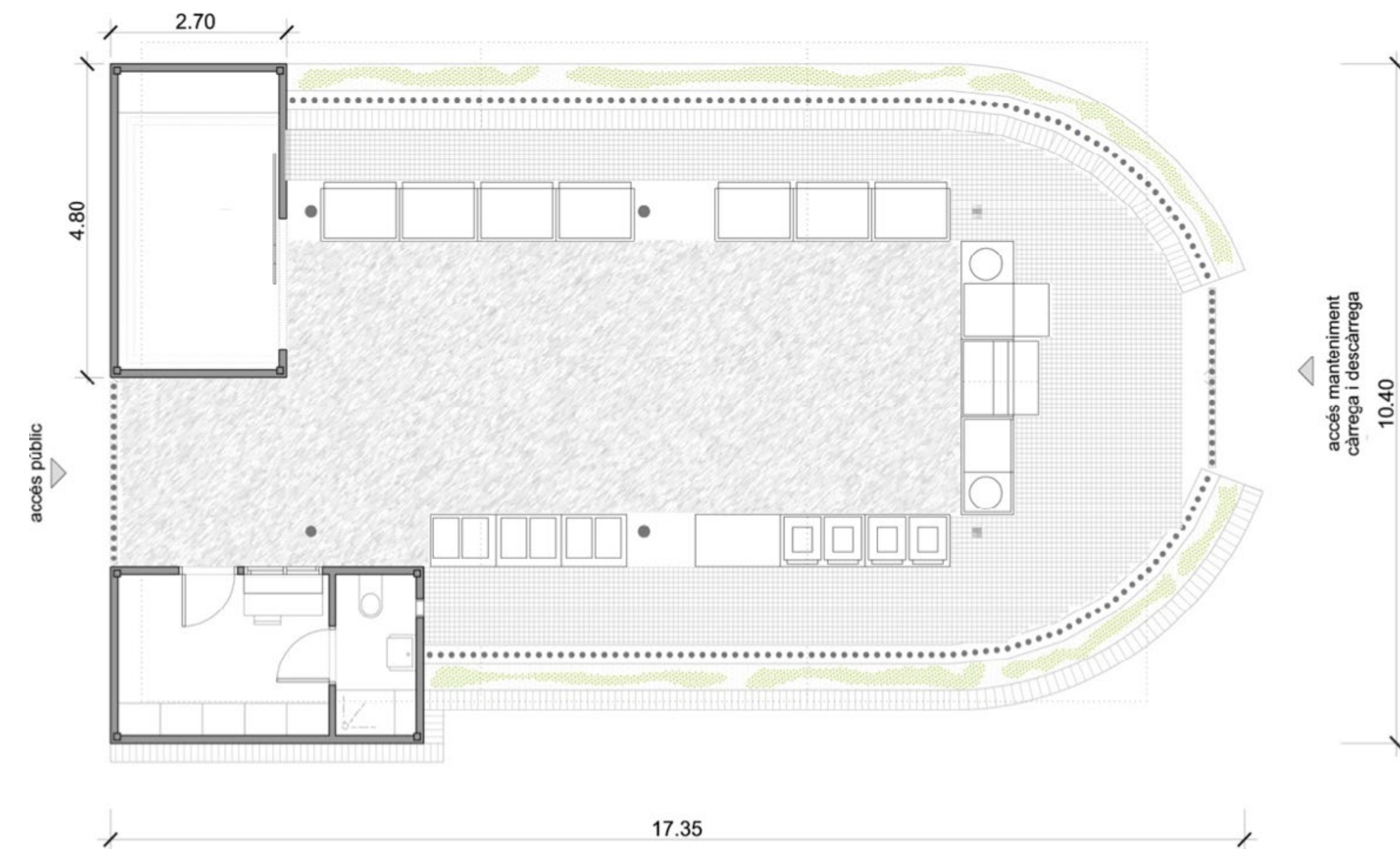
Best Practice Strategies

- 3.07 Staffed drop-off locations
- 3.09 Incorporate community into collection operations

Summary

Punts verds (Catalan for “green points”) are small recycling centers installed in plazas and parks. Barcelona developed the semi-permanent staffed facilities to provide residents with opportunities to drop off household hazardous waste, recyclables and smaller bulk items within walking distance of their homes. Punts verds complement larger recycling centers with vehicle access on the outskirts of the city. In 2016, the city’s 23 neighborhood-scale punts verds managed over 2,000 tons of material.⁴⁴

The facility design is simple: containers are arranged in such a way that they are accessible for deposits by the public on one side and for emptying by staff on the other. The center is protected from the elements and secured with fences. The only interior spaces are a small office with a restroom for staff and a tiny visitor’s center. Punt verds are designed to be eye-catching to encourage their use and to add visual interest to the surrounding public space. They also provide an opportunity to showcase sustainable design. The modular facility installed in Barceloneta Park in 2013,



View of pedestrian entrance; Plan showing containers arranged around a public drop off area with service access around the perimeter

by Picharchitects, features a planted enclosure and requires little energy for operations: Roofs protecting the drop-off area capture rainwater and fill cisterns used to irrigate planters; solar panels and passive systems generate electricity and hot water.⁴⁵

Challenges

Architect Felipe Pich-Aguilera Baurier explains: This is not a conventional project. Every aspect had to be invented from scratch to break with the conventional image of a waste plant. A waste project is always subject to “industrial” constraints, such as accommodating truck logistics and ensuring that the site is protected from contamination. For this project, very restrictive safety and hygiene measures were also necessary to ensure coexistence within the urban fabric. As a result, projects tend to be isolated like “bunkers” and would be intimidating to pedestrians and neighbors. Our project tries to achieve a domestic-scale result that can be a meeting place for the neighborhood, while addressing all of the program requirements.

Given that the installation is located at the edge of an urban park, we have tried to design the largest elements so that they assimilate directly with the natural landscape that surrounds them and ensure that no permanent mark is left on the ground. To do this, all the components have been manufactured offsite and assembled so that the facility can be dismantled and removed.⁴⁶

Applicability to NYC

New York City runs SAFE disposal events throughout the five boroughs, where the events are typically well attended and waiting lines can last for hours. Research elsewhere has shown a spike in trash disposal of hazardous waste on days following collection events. Permanent facilities providing predictable, ongoing access to collection could capture a larger portion of materials designated for diversion from regular disposal.



Interior view showing receptacles for various materials