



Cret Park

Overview

Cret Park is a landscaped triangular plaza near the city's cultural corridor. This urban green space combines public art, seasonal landscaping and planters, and a café with outdoor seating.

Size: Approximately 1 acre

Location: 110 N. 16th Street / 16th Street & the Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Completed: 2005 (café 2028)

Historical Background

Cret Park sits along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia's mile-long diagonal boulevard connecting the central business district with the city's premier cultural and educational institutions, culminating at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Development & Renovation

Renovation of Cret Park began in 2003 when the Center City District partnered with the City of Philadelphia and the former owner of the adjacent Three Parkway office building on landscape improvements. A \$2.3 million renovation completed in 2005 added new paving, a granite seating wall, benches, trees, seasonal plantings, underground irrigation, and pedestrian lighting. The park's café opened in 2008.

Key Elements

Design Concept

Cret Park's triangular configuration results from the parkway's diagonal intersection with Center City's street grid and provides natural gathering spots while maintaining circulation through the space. It was designed to provide a tranquil environment, with the landscaping and surrounding buildings together creating a sense of enclosure and a damper of traffic noise.

Features

Trees and Plantings: The park features mature shade trees that create a cooling canopy during summer, along with flowers and greenery that provide year-round visual interest and color.

Pathways: Thoughtfully designed pathways provide circulation through the park and comfortable gathering spaces.

Seating: Fixed benches positioned along the Parkway and throughout the park allow pedestrians to stop and rest, while the café provides additional seating options.

Lighting: Pedestrian-scale fixtures provide ambient lighting that enhances evening use while maintaining the park's intimate character.

Granite Wall: The sculptural wall at the park's western point serves as both a design element and functional seating, creating a distinctive focal point visible from the parkway.

Irrigation System: An underground irrigation system ensures plants are thoroughly watered throughout the growing season.

Food & Beverage

Cret Park's visual centerpiece and primary amenity, Capriccio Café & Bar, offers food and beverages inside and with additional seating outdoors, extending its presence into the park. The café draws office workers, residents, and visitors exploring the parkway's museums and institutions.

Public Art

Three Way Piece Number 1: Points (1964) by Henry Moore

Three Way Piece Number 1: Points is a 7-foot-tall bronze abstract sculpture on a granite base. Purchased by the Association for Public Art (formerly the Fairmount Park Art Association). Installed in John F. Kennedy Plaza (better known as LOVE Park) in 1967, it was relocated to Cret Park in 1990.

Three Discs, One Lacking (1968) by Alexander “Sandy” Calder

Three Discs, One Lacking is a painted sheet metal abstract sculpture. Other Calder stabiles and mobiles are nearby at Calder Gardens. Calder's grandfather, Alexander Milne Calder, created [William Penn](#) atop [City Hall](#); his father Alexander Stirling Calder's sculptures adorn the [Swann Memorial Fountain](#) on Logan Circle.

The Prophet (1965) by Jacob Lipkin

The Prophet depicts the Greek philosopher Socrates as a monumental figure carved from an 8-foot-tall, 13,000-pound block of marble. It was commissioned by Provident National Bank and originally installed at JFK Plaza in 1968 before being relocated to Cret Park in 1974.

Park Namesake

Paul Philippe Cret (1876-1945) was one of the early 20th century's most influential figures in Philadelphia architecture and urban design. Born in France, Cret arrived in the United States in

1903 to teach at the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture and eventually became a leader of the Beaux Arts tradition.

Cret served as the only architect on Philadelphia's Art Jury (now known as the Art Commission), giving him significant influence over the city's architectural development. His other major Philadelphia works include the Benjamin Franklin Parkway (1907), Rittenhouse Square renovation (1913), the original Barnes Foundation building in Lower Merion (1923), the Benjamin Franklin Bridge (1926), and the Rodin Museum (1928).

Recognition & Impact

Cret Park demonstrates how relatively modest urban spaces can become significant cultural amenities when they combine thoughtful landscape design, world-class public art, quality food options, and a strategic location along a major pedestrian corridor.

Ownership & Operations

Ownership: Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation (leased to Center City District)

Management, Programming & Maintenance: Center City District

Visitor Information

Address: 110 North 16th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Hours: Park, 24 hours | Café, weekdays 7 a.m.–7 p.m., weekends 8 a.m.–6 p.m.

Public Transit:

- Multiple SEPTA bus routes serve the Parkway and 16th Street
- Suburban Station (commuter rail and subway) is a 10-minute walk
- 15th Street Station (Broad Street Line) is a 10-minute walk
- Bicycle-friendly with bike lanes on the Parkway

Accessibility: ADA accessible with no stairs or barriers from street level.

Admission: Free and open to the public

For information about seasonal operations, special events and rentals, and park programming, visitors are encouraged to contact the Center City District or visit ccdparcs.org.