

Black Female Journalist and Civil Rights Advocate Honored



Pool signage will be updated for summer 2023 season (Photo courtesy of Portland Parks & Recreation)

Wilson Outdoor Pool to be renamed Ida B. Wells-Barnett Outdoor Pool

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) and Parks Commissioner Carmen Rubio are pleased to announce that the name of Wilson Outdoor Pool has been officially changed to Ida B. Wells-Barnett Outdoor Pool, honoring a Black female journalist and civil rights advocate. This is a historic first for PP&R — honoring a person of color with a facility name on the west side of Portland. Updated temporary signage reflecting the new name will be in place at the pool soon, with permanent materials and signage in place ahead of the summer 2023 season.

For years, community members have asked that both Woodrow Wilson High School and Wilson Outdoor Pool undergo name changes. Former President Wilson was known to be racist and held segregationist views. In January 2021, Portland Public Schools announced Ida B. Wells-Barnett High School as the new name for Woodrow Wilson High School after a community naming process. The pool, located at 1151 SW Vermont Street, is managed by PP&R separately from the school, so PP&R com-

mitted to conducting its own name change process.

Under the leadership of Director Adena Long, PP&R began a process for renaming Wilson Outdoor Pool earlier this year through. For guidance, the bureau looked to its Naming of Parks, Natural Areas, Recreational Facilities, and Regional Trails policy (Naming Policy).

While seeking public input, PP&R staff were able to speak with more than 500 community members at in-person events across the city. About 275 submitted ideas during the submission period of July 5 - August 22, 2022.

“It is a joy to have such a popular recreational facility now bear the name of a noted civil rights activist, Ida B. Wells-Barnett,” said Commissioner Rubio. “This is the first Portland Parks & Recreation facility or park on the west side to honor a woman of color, a historic and significant step. This has been a gratifying start to a process of renaming some sites and facilities to better reflect our community’s values and inclusiveness.”

Portland Parks Director Adena Long appointed a committee of community stakeholders to review naming suggestions from the community following the process outlined in the Naming Policy. The committee made the recommendation to rename the site Ida B. Wells-Barnett Outdoor Pool. Director Long and Commissioner Rubio accepted the committee’s recommendation.

“This is a key moment to reintroduce a popular community gathering place in a way that welcomes all Portlanders,” said Director Long. “The new name is a nod to the importance of Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s work and legacy, and it honors a trail blazer who, frankly, deserves greater recognition. Commissioner Rubio and I thank the community members who worked thoroughly and passionately on this renaming process.”

Community input and discussions resulted in support of Ida B. Wells-Barnett because of her significant legacy and service as an American journalist, civil rights activist, educator, and researcher. She was known for her leadership in speaking out against lynching and for fighting for women’s suffrage. She spoke and wrote to President Wilson in protest of segregation and discriminatory hiring practices. The committee recognized the significant engagement process undertaken by the students and staff of Ida B. Wells-Barnett High School in selecting their name.

It was very important to committee members that Ida B. Wells-Barnett be honored similarly to other PP&R facilities where the pool, park, and adjacent school all share the same name (such as Grant Pool, Park, and High School and the former Wilson High School and Pool). As a woman of color, the committee reasoned, Ms. Wells-Barnett should be given the same honor as white male leaders.

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