TOP 10 DAWSON PARK FEATURES

1. Water feature/plaza
   Interactive misting jets create a central granite water play space.

2. Interpretive boulders & plates
   Key historic moments at Dawson Park are depicted through engraved boulders and etched metal plates.

3. Renovated playground
   New state-of-the-art play equipment and surfacing provide universal accessibility.

4. Decorative medallions COMING SOON
   Medallions created by artist Isaka Shamsud-Din are inspired by African Ndebele patterns, Albina history.

5. Entryways
   Broad new entries activate all four corners of the park and increase cross-circulation.

6. Gazebo improvements
   Wide stairs and ramps around the gazebo provide ADA access and extend the performance space.

7. Lighting
   Bright energy-efficient LED lamps create better illumination along pathways and at shelter.

8. Picnic tables/BBQ/benches
   Community-requested barbecue grills added to picnic area; new tables and benches throughout.

9. Tree canopy
   Specialized work to preserve Dawson Park's mature trees, and allow more sunlight and better lawn growth.

10. Central lawn
    Refurbished lawn with new underground drainage. Pruned trees create a sunny central gathering spot.

DID YOU KNOW?
The park was named for Rev. John Dawson, an advocate for child welfare and civic improvements in the 1920s.

The Dawson Park improvements project is a partnership between the Portland Development Commission and Portland Parks & Recreation, with support from Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, Portland Parks Foundation and the Regional Arts & Culture Council.
PROJECT BACKGROUND

Dawson Park was acquired by the City of Portland in 1921. The two-acre site had previously been used as a cow pasture, then a ball field and a touring stop for small traveling circuses. By the late 1940s, it functioned as an unofficial town square for the surrounding African American community. The park was the epicenter of many political and social movements in the following 30 years. Robert F. Kennedy spoke here. Civil rights marches began here.

By 2007, the park had fallen into some disrepair and a Dawson Master Plan, developed with the community, envisioned restoring it as a key community gathering space. The Plan prioritized a list of desired improvements, including the restoration of the Dawson Park Gazebo. In 2008, urban renewal funds were used to restore the 120-year-old cupola salvaged from the Hill Block Building—once a cornerstone of the old Albina commercial district.

When additional funding was secured in 2011, area residents, community organizations and area churches provided input to Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) and Portland Development Commission (PDC) on how park improvements could promote better use, create a more inviting feel for families, and highlight the park’s deep cultural and historical roots. The final park design by landscape architects 2.ink Studio reflected all of these elements. The newly-completed project added site improvements around the gazebo to make it a more functional performance space and provide ADA access.

Construction began in October 2013, managed by PDC to allow flexibility to optimize minority-certified contractor utilization on the project. Primary funding for Dawson Park’s redevelopment was provided from PDC’s Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area. Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, in partnership with the non-profit Portland Parks Foundation, donated generous funding toward the newly completed water feature. PP&R and Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz, with advocacy from the Northeast Coalition of Neighbors (NECN) and the non-profit Harper’s Playground, funded upgraded playground surfacing for universal accessibility.

$2.7M Total estimated project cost, with $2.3 million from tax-increment financing

89% Utilization of certified DMWESB (disadvantaged, minority-owned, woman-owned & emerging small business) contractors

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