

DOWNTOWN AKRON SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR



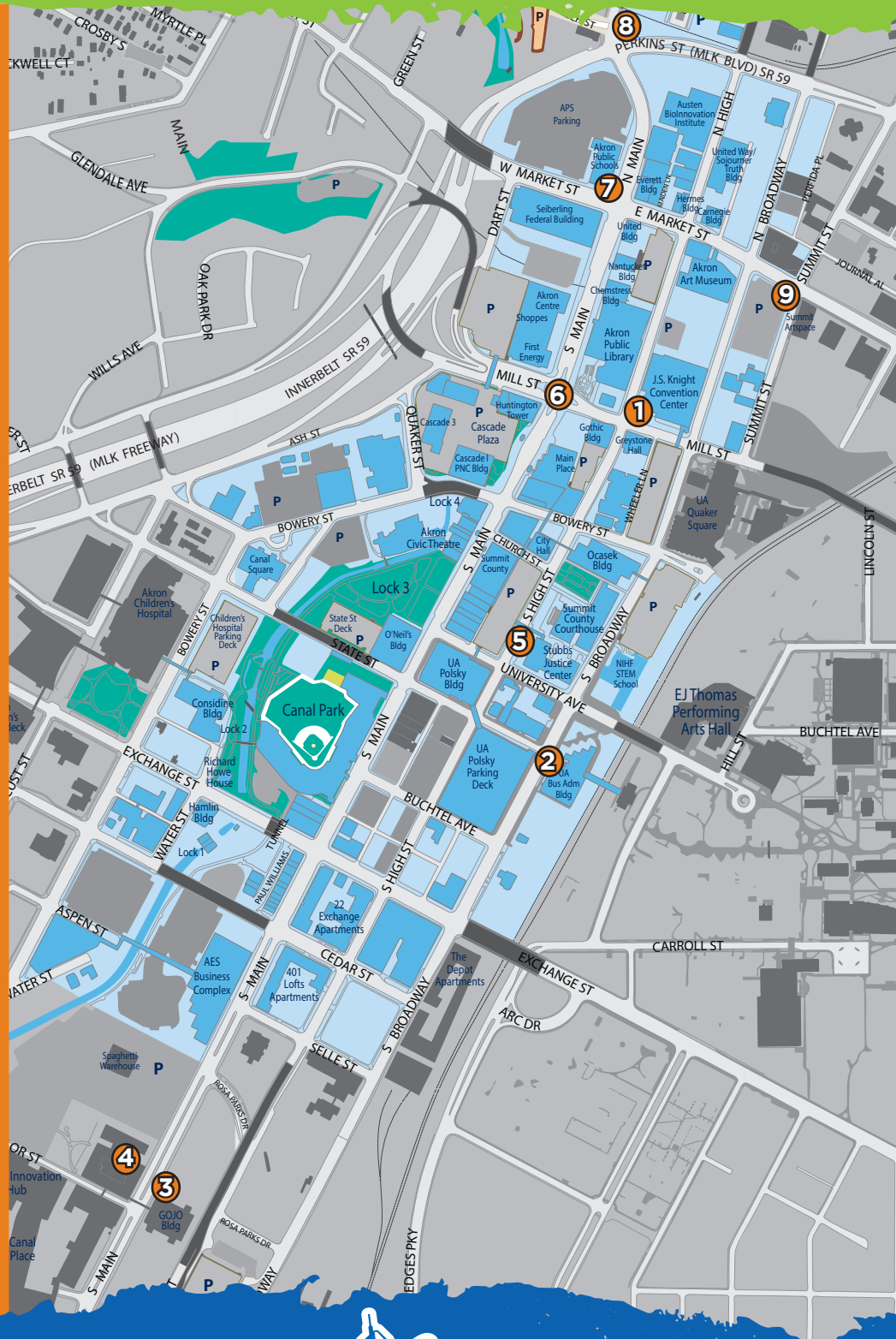
MAY 2021 TOUR: History of Labor

Explore downtown this month and learn about Akron's rich industrial history.

For information on where to park and ways to extend your experience in downtown through dining, shopping and events, visit DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM.

MAP KEY

-  **TOUR STOPS**
-  **PARKING**



THE
SUMMIT COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF AKRON, OHIO



1 John S. Knight Center

Location: 77 E Mill Street.

United Rubber Workers union hall location, an Ohio Historical Marker placed here shares a brief history of the “sit-down” strikes prior to and shortly after the formation of the URW.

2 The University of Akron College of Business

Location: 259 S Broadway.

The College of Business Administration holds the highest level of accreditation by the AACSB International, placing it among the top 3 percent worldwide. Inside the entrance, visitors are greeted by a variety of national flags representing the over 30 different countries from where their students hail. Akron has a history of welcoming workers from diverse places, from New England and Pennsylvania German settlers to English, Welsh, Scottish and northern Europeans to migrants from the nation's deep south, Hungarians, Austrians, Italians, Russians, Poles, Czechs, Greeks, Yugoslavians, and more recently Asians, Bhutanese and Congolese. Akron residents and workers have been recognized as a “salad bowl of people” by professor and author Dr. George Knepper.

3 GOJO World Headquarters

Location: One GOJO Plaza.

Have you heard of carbon black? Rubber workers' hands were covered with it and graphite after the end of a shift. Its silty grit stubbornly stuck to any crack or crevice, so workers would use strong chemicals such as kerosene and benzene to clean their hands which was harsh to their skin. Goldie Lippman, a supervisor at one of the rubber plants, and her husband, Jerry, decided to come up with a solution. It started with Jerry visiting Kent State University chemist and professor Clarence Cook. Eventually, the two developed the first-ever one-step, rinse-off GOJO® Hand Cleaner and in 1946, GOJO was born. During the pandemic, the company has expanded to provide more of its current most popular product, Purell, which was invented in 1988 and made available to consumers in 1997.

4 B.F. Goodrich Museum

Location: 520 S Main Street inside Building 24 at Canal Place.

In March of 2012, Canal Place Ltd. placed a local ad requesting B.F. Goodrich memorabilia. The response was overwhelming and soon Denise Lundell, a local Akron resident and historian, was hired to curate an exhibit. The display plays homage to the original rubber company started in 1870 here in Akron. Artifacts on display include drawings, anniversary commemorative gifts to workers, rubber tire ash trays (of course), clothing and more inside renovated tire display cases. You'll see historic images and other artifacts along the excursion which will really whet your appetite for more Akron rubber history.

5 GALSA

Location: 209 S Main Street at Courthouse High Street entrance.

On the south wall entrance is a plaque dedicated to legal secretaries which reads, in part, “It is in recognition of this exemplary service that we dedicate this memorial to the many women who served. WE SERVE. March 20, 1950 - June 20, 2001.” If you visit the Akron-Summit County Public Library Special Collections department, you can find the Greater Akron Legal Secretaries Association (GALSA) archive. GALSA was founded on “March 20, 1950 to promote the better understanding of the legal profession by uniting its members educationally, socially and professionally.”

6 Rubber Worker Statue

Location: Roundabout at Mill and South Main Street.

Miriam Ray had a dream to place a rubber worker statue in Akron designed and made by Zanesville artist Alan Cottrill. Working with the City of Akron and Mac Love of Akron X Love who developed the Akron Stories component, her dream came true. Hundreds of bricks commemorating past rubber workers and their families can be seen at the corner of Mill and S Main Street. A new kiosk features interviews and vintage film clips commemorating Akron's role as the Rubber Capital of the World. Historical plaques also feature the role of women, minorities, and immigrants in the industry. Did you know that The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 signed by President Obama is named after a local female rubber company employee?

7 APS Administration Building

Location: 10 N Main Street.

Originally the Portage Hotel where the United Rubber Workers (URW) union was located here. In September of 2003, the City of Akron, SummaCare, Signet Development group, and rubber workers partnered with the Summit County Historical Society for the placement of a URW Garden in remembrance of the rubber workers throughout the nation and North American continent. A 1983 Ohio Historical Marker is at the site.

“United Rubber Workers International Union Since 1935”

In downtown Akron at the Portage Hotel, 12 September 1935, a national convention of rubber workers met and organized the United Rubber Workers of America. Convention delegates elected Sherman Dalrymple president and dedicated the URW International union to the betterment of working conditions for rubber workers and all working men and women.”

8 Matthews Hotel

Location: 77 North Howard Street.

To mark this history of the transformation of the Ohio Canal into Akron's Main street, there is a monument to the Hotel Matthews and an Ohio Historical Marker. It took local artist Miller Horns almost two decades for his design to come to life commemorating George Mathews, a barber who recognized the need Black musical entertainers performing in the area had for hotel accommodations. The center of African-American culture in Akron during the mid-20th century was the Howard Street District. Howard Street was home to many of the city's Black-owned business and entertainment establishments, and provided an atmosphere in which minority-owned businesses could thrive. Attracted to the vitality of the neighborhood, entrepreneur George Mathews (1887-1982) established a barbershop here in 1920 and in 1925 opened the adjoining Mathews Hotel. The hotel quickly became the anchor of the Howard Street District. Mathews' success allowed him to endow a scholarship fund at the University of Akron in 1964.

9 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

Location: Corner of E Market and Summit Street.

During World War I, rubber companies Goodyear and Firestone, started hiring deaf workers, many who had been denied their service in the military but wanted to assist in the war effort. By 1920, Akron was nicknamed “Crossroads of the Deaf” as workers anxious for jobs came to the city during the great migration period. According to Steve Love and David Giffel's book, *Wheels of Fortune*, by 1943, there were almost 1,000 deaf workers in the rubber industry. Individuals became community members here with athletic, civic, religious and social clubs established as Akron's deaf and hard of hearing community grew.

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