



## FirstEnergy Akron Half Marathon Course Description

In our continuing effort to treat each of our participants like a world-class athlete, we wrote this course description from a runner's perspective to help you prepare for your successful race. Our description highlights the many different segments of the course – we think this variety makes our race an excellent choice for both first time and veteran half marathoners who like an interesting course and appreciate race-execution perfection. We know that our half marathon is not “fast and flat”, but we think that savvy veterans and thoughtful first timers who understand the changing elevations, and prepare for them, can enjoy a great run on our course, like we hope you will on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

### Elevation

Before we begin our tour of the course, let's first give a quick overview of the elevation you will encounter along the way. There is a total elevation gain of approximately 440 feet and 455 of elevation loss. Most of the elevation gain is in the first 7.5 miles. Leaving just 120 feet of elevation gain for the last 5.6 miles. Below is a list of climbs to help you in your training and mental preparation for this half marathon.

Location	Distance	Total Feet	Grade	Mile	
Elevation gains of 1.5% or higher					
Start on High	0.1	19	2.75%	.1-.2	
High St. bridge	0.3	24	1.70%	1-1.3	
Main St.	0.3	21	1.50%	2.5-2.8	
Wilbeth	0.1	36	5%	3.3-3.4	
N. Firestone	0.4	46	2.20%	3.8-4.2	
S. Firestone / Wilbeth	0.4	49	2.30%	4.5-4.9	
Spicer	0.5	45	1.60%	6.9-7.4	
High/Broadway	0.3	37	2.60%	12.4-12.7	half only

### The Start

The course begins with participants toeing the starting line in downtown Akron on High Street next to the Akron Art Museum. The course starts with an uphill section, so watch your initial pace as your breathing rate may increase right out of the gate. The initial hill is relatively quick

and is met with a downhill section so you can settle into pace over the first mile. You will continue through the heart of downtown on High Street which turns into Main Street once you cross over the High Street bridge near mile one. Over the next two miles, you will experience rolling terrain while passing many Akron businesses, ranging from restaurants to manufacturing plants, on this stretch of a mostly commercial Main Street.

After nearly three straight miles, you will approach the first turn on the course, making a right onto W. Firestone Boulevard. You will wrap around Firestone Stadium encountering your first challenging, but relatively short, uphill on Wilbeth Road. This hill is followed by a quick downhill after you make a left turn back onto Main Street and pass by Bridgestone Americas Technology Center. Near mile 3.5 you can do a quick check-in on your competition, who is at mile three, as you turn opposite them onto E. Firestone Boulevard. You will now head for Firestone Park.

### **Firestone Park**

Firestone Park is a gradual uphill, so don't be alarmed if your breathing rate increases through this section. From E. Firestone Boulevard, you will continue straight onto N. Firestone Boulevard passing mile four and the Harvey Firestone inspired Firestone Park that resembles a shield. From there, you will turn right onto Lindenwood Avenue followed by a quick right turn onto Aster Avenue. You will pass the Firestone Park Branch Library and then make a left onto S. Firestone Boulevard.

From S. Firestone Boulevard, you will make a left onto Wilbeth Road followed by a left onto Brown Street. On Brown Street, you will pass the new Kenmore-Garfield Community Learning Center just after mile five. You will continue on Brown Street for the next two miles and enjoy a nice downhill section of the course. Once you pass under the interstate, The University of Akron's InfoCision Stadium will start to emerge in the distance. As the stadium approaches, you will make a right onto Power Street followed by a quick left onto Spicer Street.

### **The University of Akron**

At this point, you will be near mile seven and approaching the first relay exchange zone located on Spicer Street just beyond Exchange Street. The Marathon and Half Marathon participants will stay to the right side of the road through the exchange zone. Relay participants will stay left and prepare to "pass the baton" to their teammates. On Spicer Street, you will have your final noticeable climb. From Spicer Street, you will turn left onto Buchtel Avenue followed by a quick right onto Fir Hill and pass by the Hower House which is listed on the National Historic Landmark Registry. You will notice the course shift from a slight uphill on Spicer Street to a slight downhill once you reach Fir Hill. The next several miles are mostly downhill or relatively flat compared to the first 7.5 miles. Next, turn left onto Forge, which turns into Mill Street, followed by a left onto College Street, near mile eight. As you run down College Street, you will see the Large "UA" sign which welcomes students to campus each semester. From College Street, make a right on Buchtel Avenue followed by a right on Hill Street. Take a quick right onto Forge Street and a left onto Lincoln Street. The next left will be onto Mill Street where you will pass Quaker Square. This is the home of the original Quaker Oats factory where oats were

processed through the silos that you see. Catch a glimpse of them before you turn right onto Broadway Street. On Broadway you will pass the familiar home of our Health and Fitness Expo, the John S. Knight Center.

### **North Hill**

Near mile nine you will step onto the All-America Bridge, a Y-shaped bridge that offers spectacular views of the Cuyahoga River Valley nearly 300 feet below. Participants deeper in the pack can see the race leaders returning on the west side of the bridge, adding to the excitement as you near the final miles. You will reach the 10-mile mark during your short jaunt into North Hill, Akron's International District. The course continues straight on North Main Street until Cuyahoga Falls Avenue where you will turn left. Just before mile 11 you will take a sharp left onto Tallmadge Avenue passing the Findley Community Learning Center. Once you hit Main Street, you will turn right and start your journey to the Finish Line.

### **Downtown**

On Main Street, you will pass back over the Y-bridge, this time at the 12-mile mark. Just after the bridge, Half Marathon participants will stay left while the Marathon and Relay participants will stay right. At Market Street, Half Marathon participants will turn left onto E. Market Street while the Full Marathon and Relay participants will turn right.

### **The Finish**

After the split, Half Marathon participants are on E. Market Street and will take a quick right on Broadway. From Broadway, you will turn right onto Mill Street and enjoy a downhill as you approach the final turn. At the Akron Rubber Worker sculpture, you will take a left turn onto Main Street at which point you have less than a quarter mile to the finish line, just past the historic Akron Civic Theatre, at the newly renovated Lock 3.

### **Our Review**

We know our course isn't the "flat and fast" track some runners look for, but we think it is a fair course with a lot of variety. The Half Marathon course covers historic neighborhoods such as North Hill and Firestone Park all while returning you downtown for a fast finish. Most of all, we think you will be surprised by, and enjoy, the scenic beauty of our course. We have tried to give you a personalized tour and a unique perspective of Akron, with side trips past natural beauty, local landmarks, and wonderful neighborhoods.

Along with all the race organizers, we are gratified each year by the consistently positive and enthusiastic comments from our participants. We hope this personal tour will help you have a great race day!

The Akron Marathon Board, Staff & Volunteers