



## 2026 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 26<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 445 feet and 460 feet of elevation loss. Most of the elevation gain is in the first eight miles, leaving just 100 feet of elevation gain for the last five 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					
High St.	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	
N. Firestone BLVD.	0.7	50	1.45%	3-3.6	
Bellows St.	0.2	18	2.10%	4.1-4.2	
Main St.	0.2	28	1.60%	5-5.2	
Buchtel Ave.	0.3	54	3.10%	7.7-8.0	
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 left onto E. Firestone Boulevard and you will 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 veer right onto S. Firestone Boulevard passing Harvey Firestone inspired Firestone Park that resembles a shield. From there, you will turn left onto Aster Avenue followed by a left onto N. Firestone Boulevard which completes the shield around the park just past mile four.

From N. Firestone Boulevard, you will make a right onto Bellows Street, which will be an incline until you reach Archwood Avenue. At Archwood, you will make a left and enjoy a downhill section toward Main Street. At Main Street, make a right and you will travel northbound. Depending on your place in the race, you may see runners as they make their way southbound on Main Street headed to mile three. You will continue on Main Street for the next mile. Once you move under the interstate and pass mile six, you will turn right onto E. Thornton Street followed by a left onto Wolf Ledges Parkway.

### **The University of Akron**

At this point, near mile seven, you will be approaching the first relay exchange zone located on Wolf Ledges entering into the University of Akron's Campus. For Marathon and Half Marathon participants, you will stay to the left side of the road through the exchange zone. Relay participants will stay right and prepare to "pass the baton" to your teammates. From Wolf Ledges, you will turn right onto University Avenue as you get a glimpse of Dale Chihuly's rock candy sculpture. This piece of work is made from polymer materials locally sourced, stands out in the day, and shines in the nighttime sky. You will then take a quick left onto Hill Street and pass EJ Thomas Hall. From Hill Street, turn right onto S. Forge Street followed by a quick right onto College Street, and left onto E. Buchtel Avenue. Buchtel Avenue will be the most challenging hill on the course and as you cross the top of the hill, you will be at mile eight. From E. Buchtel Avenue you will make a left onto Fir Hill and notice the course shift to downhill as you recover from the Buchtel Ave Climb. On Fir Hill, you will pass by the Hower House which is listed in the National Historic Landmark Registry. The next several miles are mostly downhill or relatively flat compared to the first eight miles. Next, turn left onto Forge, which turns into 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 toward 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. You'll find yourself passing the Akron Rubber Worker sculpture, a 12-foot bronzed piece of art installed as a tribute to the rubber workers of Akron and their families. At the Akron Rubber Worker sculpture, you will take a left turn onto Main Street, passing the noteworthy Cascade Plaza, at which point you have less than a quarter mile to the finish line. The finish line stands just past the historic Akron Civic Theatre, at the newly renovated Lock 3.

## **Our Review**

The FirstEnergy Akron Half Marathon course offers a lot of visual and dynamic variety, all while covering historic neighborhoods such as North Hill, Firestone Park, and returning 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