

THE KINGSTON GUIDE

A practical introduction to Kingston's neighbourhoods, schools, transportation, lifestyle and everyday essentials.



MOVESMART
COLLECTIVE

A Smaller City with a Big Quality of Life

Set on the shores of Lake Ontario, where the lake meets the St. Lawrence River and the Rideau Canal, Kingston offers a rare combination: the amenities of a regional centre, the character of a historic waterfront community and a pace of life that feels far more manageable than a major metropolitan area.

Known as the Limestone City, Kingston is recognized for its heritage architecture, walkable downtown, active waterfront and strong education, healthcare and public-sector presence. The City of Kingston had a population of 132,485 in the 2021 Census and continues to be one of Ontario's faster-growing municipalities.

Centrally Located in Eastern Ontario

Kingston sits along the Highway 401 corridor between Toronto and Montreal, with Ottawa also within an easy regional drive. This location makes the city particularly attractive to remote and hybrid workers, military households, healthcare professionals and families who want access to larger urban centres without living in one.

Approximate driving times can vary with traffic and weather:

- Toronto: approximately 2½ to 3 hours
- Ottawa: approximately 2 hours
- Montreal: approximately 3 hours
- Prince Edward County: approximately 1 to 1½ hours
- Thousand Islands region: approximately 30 to 60 minutes

Want a Closer Look at Life in Kingston?

Get a feel for what it's really like to call Kingston home—from the lifestyle and community to the things that make the city such a unique place to live.

[Watch: Life In Kingston](#)

Kingston's Major Employment Hubs

Kingston's economy is supported by a mix of government, healthcare, education, military, tourism, research, manufacturing and private-sector employment. Queen's University, Kingston Health Sciences Centre, the Canadian Armed Forces and local school boards are among the city's significant public-sector employers.

Canadian Forces Base Kingston

Located east of the Cataraqui River, CFB Kingston is a major employment centre and an important driver of housing demand in the east end. Military families often prioritize Greenwood Park, Barriefield and surrounding communities because of their proximity to the base.

Kingston Health Sciences Centre

Kingston Health Sciences Centre operates the Kingston General Hospital and Hotel Dieu Hospital sites and is Southeastern Ontario's largest acute-care academic hospital. It provides complex, specialty, teaching and research services to patients from throughout the region.

Queen's University

Queen's brings a large community of students, faculty, researchers and support staff to central Kingston. The university has a major influence on employment, rental demand and housing activity in neighbourhoods surrounding the campus and downtown.

St. Lawrence College

Located in Kingston's central-west area near Portsmouth Avenue, St. Lawrence College contributes to the city's education, healthcare, skilled-trades and business workforce.

Royal Military College of Canada

Situated on Point Frederick, east of downtown, the Royal Military College is another important educational and military institution. Kingston's broader research and innovation economy is supported by Queen's, St. Lawrence College, RMC and more than 30 research laboratories.

Kingston: Lifestyle, Location & Community

1. Waterfront Living and Outdoor Access

Kingston's waterfront extends for more than eight kilometres, with sections of trail, parks, marinas, beaches and public gathering spaces. Residents can enjoy walking, cycling, boating, paddling and waterfront dining without leaving the city.

2. Shorter, More Manageable Trips

Compared with a major metropolitan area, Kingston offers relatively compact travel distances. Many residents can move between home, work, school, shopping and recreation without spending a significant portion of the day in traffic.

Actual commute times vary by neighbourhood and time of day, but most parts of urban Kingston are connected through a small number of major roads, including Princess Street, Bath Road, Gardiners Road, Division Street, Highway 15 and John Counter Boulevard.

3. Strong Healthcare and Education

For a city of its size, Kingston has an unusually strong concentration of hospitals, research institutions, colleges and universities. Kingston Health Sciences Centre serves as Southeastern Ontario's complex acute-care, specialty, research and teaching hospital.

4. History, Culture and Food

Downtown Kingston blends historic limestone buildings with restaurants, cafés, independent retailers, galleries, live music and performing arts. The city's cultural identity draws heavily from its waterfront, military heritage, university community and well-preserved architecture.

5. A Range of Housing Environments

Buyers can choose from historic downtown homes, established central neighbourhoods, family-oriented subdivisions, rural-edge properties, condominiums and newer construction.

Kingston Neighbourhood Guide

West End

Best Suited To

Families, commuters, buyers seeking newer construction and households that want convenient access to major retail.

What It Feels Like

Kingston's west end is primarily suburban, with a mix of established communities and newer residential subdivisions. Housing ranges from mature detached homes to townhouses, condominiums and recently built properties.

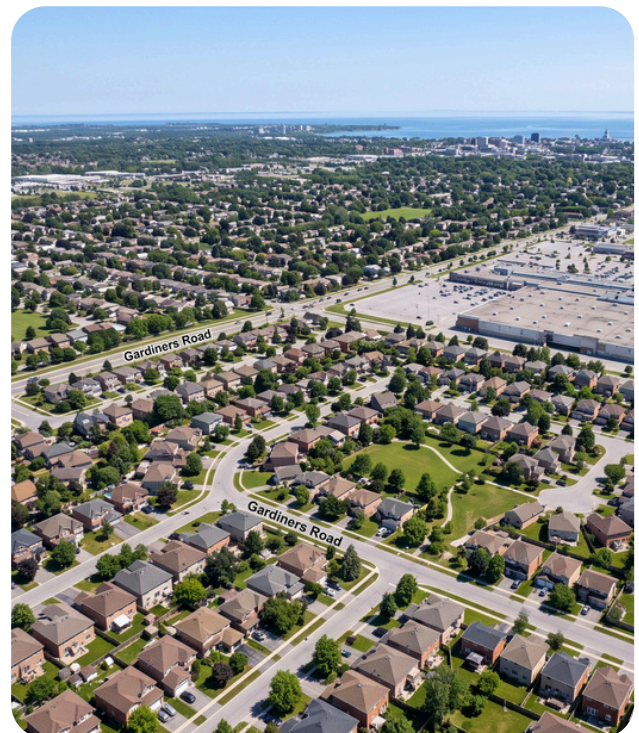
The area is home to many of Kingston's large-format retailers, grocery stores and everyday services. Cataraqui Centre serves as a major commercial and transit hub.

Key Advantages

- Broad selection of housing styles and price points
- Family-oriented streets and neighbourhood parks
- Convenient shopping and services
- Access to Highway 401 through Gardiners Road and Sydenham Road
- Public and Catholic school options
- Several French Immersion locations in the broader west and central areas

Consider Before Buying

Walkability varies considerably. Some neighbourhoods are close to schools and shopping, while others are most convenient with a vehicle.



Greenwood Park, Barriefield and Kingston East

Best Suited To

Military households, CFB Kingston employees, families and buyers looking for suburban communities east of the Cataraqui River.

What It Feels Like

Kingston East includes newer residential development, established subdivisions, historic Barriefield and communities extending toward Highway 15 and the city's rural edge. Greenwood Park is especially popular with households seeking family-oriented streets and convenient access to CFB Kingston. St. Martha Catholic School, for example, serves an area that includes Greenwood Park, CFB Kingston and nearby communities.

Key Advantages

- Close to CFB Kingston and Royal Military College
- Newer housing options in several subdivisions
- Parks, trails and family-oriented streets
- Improved connection to central and west Kingston through the Waaban Crossing
- Express transit service between Highway 15, Queen's University and the hospital district

Consider Before Buying

The east end has fewer large retail centres than the west end. Many residents travel across the river for certain shopping, services and activities.



Downtown and Sydenham Ward

Best Suited To

Professionals, healthcare employees, Queen's faculty and staff, downsizers, investors and buyers who prioritize walkability and historic character.

What It Feels Like

This is Kingston at its most recognizable: limestone buildings, mature trees, heritage streets, independent shops, restaurants and easy access to the waterfront. Housing includes historic detached and semi-detached homes, converted properties, condominiums and purpose-built apartments. Properties can differ significantly in condition, parking availability, renovation history and heritage restrictions.

Key Advantages

- Kingston's most walkable urban environment
- Close to Queen's, KGH, Hotel Dieu and downtown offices
- Restaurants, cafés, waterfront parks and cultural venues nearby
- Strong cycling and transit access
- Distinctive architecture and neighbourhood character

Consider Before Buying

Parking and private outdoor space may be limited. Buyers considering older homes should budget carefully for inspections, heating systems, masonry, electrical work and ongoing maintenance.



Midtown and Central Kingston

(Kingscourt, Polson Park and Surrounding Areas)

Best Suited To

Buyers seeking a central location, mature lots, practical commuting and potential long-term value.

What It Feels Like

Central Kingston includes a wide variety of communities rather than one uniform neighbourhood. Buyers will find post-war bungalows, two-storey homes, infill development, rental properties and pockets of newer construction. Its main advantage is location. Downtown, the hospitals, Queen's, St. Lawrence College, Highway 401 and west-end shopping are generally accessible without crossing the entire city.

Key Advantages

- Central access to employment and shopping
- Mature trees and established lots in many pockets
- Mix of housing types and renovation opportunities
- Transit access along major corridors
- Potential for secondary suites or multigenerational layouts, where zoning and property conditions permit

Consider Before Buying

Conditions can vary from street to street. Buyers should assess traffic, parking, surrounding land uses and future development plans at the individual-property level.



Schools and Childcare

Public Schools

Most English-language public schools in Kingston are operated by the Limestone District School Board. Families should use the board's current school-finder tool to confirm which elementary and secondary schools serve a specific address, as boundaries and program locations can change.

French Immersion

Limestone offers Early French Immersion with entry points in Kindergarten and Grade 1. French is the primary language of instruction in the early years, with English instruction introduced beginning in Grade 3.

Catholic Schools

English-language Catholic schools are operated by the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. The board operates elementary, secondary, French Immersion and continuing-education programs in Kingston and the wider region.

French-Language Education

Kingston-area families may also have access to French-language public and Catholic school systems, subject to admission eligibility and current school boundaries.

Childcare: Apply Early

The City of Kingston administers the Centralized Childcare Registry and Information Service (CCRIS) for Kingston and Frontenac County, where families can apply to multiple participating childcare providers through one online application. Private home daycares are also available throughout the Kingston area. Local Facebook groups can be a helpful place to find providers, ask for recommendations, and learn about available options.

→ [Visit Daycare Providers & Parents – Kingston Ontario and Surrounding Areas on Facebook.](#)

→ [Explore the Kingston School Guide](#)

Transit and Commuting

Kingston Transit

Kingston Transit operates regular, express and seasonal routes throughout the urban area. Routes and schedules can change, so buyers relying on transit should check the current system map using the property's exact address.

Key Express Connections

501/502 — Cataraqui Centre to Downtown: These routes provide an important east-west connection between west-end shopping and residential areas, central Kingston and downtown.

601/602 — Highway 15 and Innovation Drive to Queen's and KGH: These routes are particularly relevant to Kingston East residents commuting to Queen's University, the hospitals and central Kingston.

The current network also includes the 701/702 and 801/802 express services, which connect additional north, central and west-end destinations.

Rather than asking whether a neighbourhood “has transit,” check:

- How far the property is from the nearest stop
- Whether the route operates evenings and weekends
- Whether a transfer is required
- How frequently the route runs
- Whether service changes during summer or university breaks

Planning Your Kingston Commute?

See how a potential neighbourhood fits into your daily routine. Kingston Transit's online Trip Planner lets you enter your starting point and destination to explore bus routes, stops, transfers and travel options across the city.

[→ Plan Your Trip with Kingston Transit](#)

Before Choosing a Neighbourhood

Questions to Ask Before You Buy

Where will you commute most often?

A short distance on the map may feel very different during school dismissal, university events or peak travel periods.

Do you need to be within walking distance of daily amenities?

Downtown and portions of central Kingston offer stronger walkability. Many suburban neighbourhoods are more vehicle-oriented.

Is a specific school or program important?

Never assume that the closest school serves the property. Confirm boundaries and program eligibility before making an offer.

Will you rely on childcare?

Register early and select several acceptable providers rather than waiting for one preferred location.

Are you comfortable maintaining an older home?

Kingston's historic and central neighbourhoods contain beautiful properties, but buyers should understand the potential costs associated with masonry, insulation, wiring, plumbing and heritage features.

Do you need quick access to Highway 401?

North-central and west-end locations may be more convenient for frequent regional travel, while downtown locations provide stronger access to Queen's, the hospitals and waterfront amenities.

Let's Find Your Place in Kingston

Kingston is not one single housing market. Every area offers a different balance of commute, character, space, schools, services and lifestyle.

The best neighbourhood is not necessarily the one with the most recognizable name. It is the one that supports how you expect to live from Monday morning through Sunday evening.

Planning a move to Kingston?

We can help you compare neighbourhoods, understand local property styles and narrow your search based on the factors that matter most to your household.

→ Get Connected

This guide is intended as general introductory information. School boundaries, childcare availability, transit routes, municipal services and neighbourhood conditions may change. Buyers should independently confirm information relevant to a specific property.

