

KINGSTON

INTEGRATED DESTINATION STRATEGY

Solidifying Kingston's tourism momentum

August 7, 2025



CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

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The recommendations contained herein are provided on a confidential basis to the client. The client is responsible for further due diligence required to assess potential and use of recommendations in whatever manner it chooses, including but not limited to releasing them to their stakeholders, partners, and/or media.

Information and data found in this document are current as of June 2025 and subject to change.

August 7, 2025

WELCOME TO KINGSTON – KATAROKWI/ KEN'TARÓKWEN/GAADANOKWII

Kingston is located on the ancestral homelands of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Tourism Kingston acknowledges the everlasting presence of these Nations and other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who share this landscape today. We are grateful to reside in and remain visitors to this territory, while acknowledging our responsibility to honour the land, water, and skies with gentle respect and purifying preservation.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (AT A GLANCE)

Tourism Kingston’s 3rd Integrated Destination Strategy is the culmination of an extensive process consolidating research, insights, industry stakeholder engagement and Skift’s deep knowledge of Kingston as a destination, providing strategic direction to support both a vibrant tourism industry and local life in Kingston – and hence providing a guide to energize Kingston as a city where tourism enhances quality of life and celebrates a unique sense of place.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- PLACE RESIDENTS AT THE HEART OF TOURISM
- ENABLE STRATEGIC, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH
- CELEBRATE AND EMPOWER KINGSTON’S CREATIVE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **20 CHALLENGES** HINDERING TOURISM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN KINGSTON
- **19 OPPORTUNITIES** KINGSTON CAN LEVERAGE TO MEET AND SURPASS BOTH LOCAL AND TOURISM NEEDS

VISION

Kingston will be recognized as a **vibrant, inclusive, and creative year-round destination** - where tourism growth enhances **community well-being**, supports thriving **local businesses**, and celebrates the city’s **cultural and historical identity**. Guided by a **strong enabling environment**, Kingston will continue to evolve through strategic **infrastructure investment**, dynamic **partnerships**, and the full integration of its **creative industries**, delivering shared value for both **residents and visitors**.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

STRENGTHEN TOURISM RELATIONSHIPS	OPTIMIZE INFRASTRUCTURE	ELEVATE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
Position Kingston residents as the primary beneficiaries of tourism by fostering transparency, inclusive engagement, and alignment with community values.	Identify, prioritize, and champion critical tourism-related infrastructure projects that have clear evaluation frameworks and strategic partnerships.	Transform creative industries into a cohesive economic pillar within Kingston’s tourism strategy, while aligning with national and provincial partners.

STRATEGIC THEMES

FOSTER RESIDENT CONNECTION & SUPPORT	ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS & SEASONALITY	AMPLIFY CREATIVE & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP	POSITION TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER	BUILD COLLABORATION BEYOND TOURISM KINGSTON
Kingston must rebuild local trust and engagement by ensuring tourism delivers shared value and community relevance.	Tourism infrastructure must support peak and off-season demand to boost the visitor economy and quality of life.	Creative industries are central to Kingston’s identity and key to growing its tourism and cultural influence.	Tourism’s role in economic growth and resilience must be clearly demonstrated to earn city and council support.	Advancing Kingston’s tourism future requires shared leadership beyond Tourism Kingston’s mandate.

PILLARS & INITIATIVES

RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE	INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION	MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP	KEY TOURISM DEMAND GENERATORS	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT
Ensure tourism reflects local priorities.	Advance Kingston’s tourism infrastructure.	Position creative & cultural assets as pillars.	Diversify & enrich tourism offerings.	Expand Kingston’s reach.

TACTICAL PLAN





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PROJECT BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Kingston's Next Chapter: Advancing a Shared Vision for Tourism

Over the past decade, Kingston has made significant progress in shaping a clear, compelling tourism identity, positioning itself as one of Ontario's most distinctive small-city destinations. Through the development of heritage-driven experiences, vibrant cultural offerings, strong culinary assets, and a growing event calendar, Kingston has steadily increased its appeal to visitors, residents, and investors alike.

Recognizing the value of long-term destination planning, the city has invested in a series of Integrated Destination Strategies (IDS) to guide tourism development and partner collaboration. Each iteration of the IDS has reflected the evolution of Kingston's tourism maturity and the shifting needs of the community, industry, and visitor economy.

1. The **initial IDS** laid the foundation by articulating broad objectives aimed at expanding Kingston's tourism potential, improving foundational infrastructure, and building industry partnerships.
2. The **second IDS** refined these efforts by narrowing the focus to high-impact initiatives, establishing governance mechanisms, and advancing sector-specific strategies in areas such as music, culinary, and sport tourism.

3. This **third Integrated Destination Strategy (IDS 3.0)** builds on that momentum with a forward-looking framework designed to respond to today's dynamic environment. It focuses on the challenges and opportunities emerging from significant population growth, aging infrastructure, shifting community perceptions, and growing visitor expectations.

IDS 3.0 is not a starting point but an inflection point. It reflects Kingston's maturity as a destination and its readiness to move from individual project delivery to coordinated system-building. It aims to align tourism with city-wide goals, strengthen the relationship between tourism and residents, and integrate creative industries, Indigenous tourism, and partner networks into a shared vision for long-term prosperity.

The strategy is the result of extensive research, partner consultation, and strategic synthesis, ensuring that the roadmap it outlines is both ambitious and grounded in community realities. It is designed to guide Tourism Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners, the City of Kingston, and other partners in shaping the next phase of Kingston's visitor economy – one that is inclusive, resilient, and economically impactful for years to come.



APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The Kingston Integrated Destination Strategy 3.0 is built on comprehensive research as well as significant engagement with internal and external partners. This is crucial to provide a holistic strategy to not only support the growth of products and infrastructure that are important to Kingston’s tourism industry but also ensure sustainable benefits for the local life that makes up Kingston’s rich culture.

Phase 1 (Discovery) included an internal project kickoff, partner engagement, a site visit, and development of a situational analysis to best understand tourism in 2025 at a global, national, and local (Kingston) level.

In **Phase 2 (Assessment & Prioritization)**, the project team used information from partner engagement and the situational analysis to identify challenges and opportunities that exist in Kingston across all partner organizations and then identified and together with Tourism Kingston, its partners, and key partner groups prioritized possible initiatives to improve outcomes.

Phase 3 (Analysis & Recommendation) included planning for future actions to be undertaken by Tourism Kingston and collaborative support to ensure success.



PHASE 1: DISCOVERY & ALIGNMENT

- Project kickoff
- Partner engagement – interviews & focus groups
- Situational analysis
- Kingston site visit



PHASE 2: ASSESSMENT & PRIORITIZATION

- Uncover challenges and opportunities
- Validation and prioritization workshops
- Identify strategic themes
- Formulate strategies and tactics



PHASE 3: ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION

- Development of Integrated Destination Strategy 3.0
- Development of Implementation Roadmap
- Strategy finalization and presentation to key partners

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Tourism succeeds through collaboration. It relies on a broad and interconnected network of partners and supporters, both directly and indirectly involved, who shape the conditions that allow the industry to grow and evolve. This strategy reflects the insights, priorities, and perspectives gathered through extensive engagement with tourism partners from across the Kingston region.

IDS Steering Committee	
Name	Organization
Megan Knott	Tourism Kingston
Krista LeClair	Kingston Accommodation Partners
Alison Migneault	Tourism Kingston
Ryan Rowe	Residence Inn by Marriott Kingston Water's Edge
Brian Hope	Diamond Hotels Inc.
Eric Ferguson	Kingston Destination Group
Heather Ford	Green Acres Inn & Kingston Food Tours
Jeff Downie	Univerus
Peter Gillespie	Downtown Kingston
Stephen Burnett	Great Lakes Cruise Association
PJ Lee	ICON Media
Councillor Wendy Stephen	City of Kingston
Jai Bhatti	Hampton Inn by Hilton
Matthew Fry	Courtyard by Marriott Kingston

Tourism Kingston Staff	
Name	Role
Megan Knott	CEO
Alison Migneault	Chief Marketing Officer
Brittney Veley	Operations and Human Resources Manager
Joanne Loton	Film Commissioner
Matthew Ing	Film & Media Specialist
Angelica Mendieta-Sweet	Manager, Visitor Services
Andrea Gunn	Editor, Strategic Communications
Derek Rowcliffe	Senior Graphic Designer
Ashley Bradshaw	Destination Development Manager
Emily Steeves	Marketing & Communications Coordinator
Moira Demorest	Music Officer
Ella Wang	International Travel Trade Coordinator
Noelle Piche	Travel Trade Specialist
Ted Robinson	Business Events Specialist
Emma Lambert	Manager, Sport Partnerships, Wellness & Culture
Claire Matthews	People & Culture Coordinator

Tourism Kingston Board of Directors	
Name	Organization
PJ Lee	ICON Media
Jeff Downie	Univerus
Sivani Vinayaga	RE/MAX
Megan Howes	Events & Management Plus Inc
Scott Henderson	Communications Council & Strategist
Councillor Wendy Stephen	City of Kingston
Councillor Don Amos	City of Kingston
Mayor Bryan Paterson	City of Kingston
Donna Gillespie	Kingston Economic Development Corporation
CAO Lanie Hurdle	City of Kingston
Marijo Cuerrier	Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Area
Bonnie Ruddock	RTO 9
Michael Springer	Diamond Hotels Inc.
Ryan Rowe	Residence Inn by Marriott Kingston Water's Edge
Jai Bhatti	Hampton Inn by Hilton
Erin Finucan	Holiday Inn Waterfront
Peter Karkoulis	Strata Hotel

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY (CONT'D)

Kingston Accommodation Partners Staff	
Name	Role/Organization
Krista LeClair	Executive Director
Colleen Walas	Operations & Member Services Coordinator

City of Kingston Commissioners and Leadership Group	
Name	
Paige Agnew	
Jennifer Campbell	
Neil Carbone	
Desiree Kennedy	
Brad Joyce	
Ian Semple	
Danika Lochhead	
CAO Lanie Hurdle	

Kingston Accommodation Partners Board of Directors	
Name	Organization
Ryan Rowe	Residence Inn by Marriott Kingston Water's Edge
Matthew Fry	Courtyard by Marriott Kingston
Heather Ford	Green Acres Inn & Kingston Food Tours
Peter Karkoulis	Strata Hotel
Erin Finucan	Holiday Inn Waterfront
Michael Springer	Diamond Hotels Inc.
Scott Follwell	Diamond Hotels Inc.
Raj Patel	Seven Oakes Motel, Ramada by Wyndham Hotel, Super 8 Motel
Jai Bhatti	Hampton Inn by Hilton
Janet Chapman	Comfort Inn 401
John Owen	Best Western Fireside Inn
Liv Halliday	Benjamin Hotels
Lucy Liu	Rosemount Inn

Consultations	
Name/Organization	
Kingston & Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites	Black Dog Hospitality Group
Kingston Church Athletic League	Memorial Centre Farmers' Market
Tourism Kingston Sales Committee	Olivea
Tourism Kingston Music Advisory Committee	Daft Brewing
Tourism Kingston Attractions Committee	Miss Bao
Tourism Kingston Marketing Committee	Otter Creek Kitchen
St. Lawrence Parks Commission	Chez Piggy
Queen's University	The Everly
Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts	Kingston Destination Group
Ontario Motor Coach Canadian Association	Kingston Economic Development Corporation
Greater Kingston Hockey Association	Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Area
Kingston Ice Wolves Association	Great Lakes Cruise Association
Kingston Area Minor Hockey Association	Kingston Canadian Film Festival
Sean Connelly – Animation Studio	Vic Mendes – East End Soccer Project
J. Joly – Film Studio	Paul Barbeau – Soccer Stadium Project

HOW TO READ THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

This third iteration of Kingston’s Integrated Destination Strategy is grounded in data analysis, partner engagement, and sector-specific research. It applies a structured methodology to assess both persistent challenges and emerging opportunities – those requiring intervention and those warranting acceleration. The strategy reflects Kingston’s evolving visitor economy and is designed to be adaptable to the dual imperatives of community well-being and tourism growth.

The strategic framework applied herein was shaped through qualitative and quantitative inputs, including a detailed review of tourism indicators, cross-sectoral interviews, and targeted consultations with key actors across the tourism ecosystem. In particular, the process involved close collaboration with Tourism Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners, and a range of local partners to ensure alignment with municipal and sectoral priorities.

The strategy opens by articulating the guiding principles that underpin Kingston’s tourism approach. This is followed by an analysis of the structural and contextual challenges alongside high-potential opportunity areas for both tourism supply and visitor demand. These foundations support the articulation of a renewed strategic vision alongside a hierarchy of strategic themes, goals, and supporting objectives that collectively define Kingston’s tourism ambitions over the coming years.

The operational core of the strategy comprises 17 integrated initiatives, each linked to one of five strategic pillars. For each initiative, the document outlines a rationale, tactical actions, implementation timeframe, roles and responsibilities, expected outputs, and targeted outcomes. This design enables clarity of execution and cross-organizational accountability.

To ensure implementation success, the strategy concludes with a monitoring framework that establishes the tools and indicators required to assess progress. This will enable ongoing evaluation, adaptive planning, and alignment with Kingston’s long-term tourism vision.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	Values that guide the Integrated Destination Strategy
CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES	Bottlenecks and barriers that impede tourism from developing or thriving that need to be addressed, as well as potential prospects or opportunities to consider
VISION	Direction for tourism development in Kingston that reflects key partner, resident, and visitor needs
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	Broad and longer-term outcomes along with shorter, more measurable ones to achieve the desired tourism ambition
STRATEGIC THEMES	Greater understanding of the common themes in challenges and opportunities and the work needed to meet goals and objectives
PILLARS & INITIATIVES	<p>Initiatives organized into pillars to prioritize local life, advance infrastructure, support the creative industries, enrich offerings, and expand reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be supply-driven to leverage a competitive opportunity • Can be demand-driven such as by an under-targeted group of visitors • Are prioritized based on impact and ease of implementation
TACTICAL PLAN	<p>Includes rationale, actions, responsible parties, timelines, and measures of success that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support implementation of vision, goals, and objectives • Ensure conditions for success are met and that there are sufficient resources to undertake actions • Support management of tourism, enabling environment and infrastructure support for destination development • Address and meet the needs of both visitors and residents



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles represent the shared values and beliefs of a destination's key partners and tourism industry. For Kingston, these encapsulate the city's commitment to meeting the needs of local Kingstonians both through and alongside the development of a vibrant tourism industry.

1 PLACE RESIDENTS AT THE HEART OF TOURISM

Tourism in Kingston must be developed for, with, and by the local community. Residents are not only hosts but primary beneficiaries of tourism. Enhancing quality of life, fostering inclusion, and listening to local perspectives are foundational to all tourism decisions.

2 ENABLE STRATEGIC, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Tourism infrastructure and experience development must serve both visitors and locals - prioritizing sustainability, accessibility, and long-term resilience. Infrastructure investments should reflect community values and support future growth.

3 CELEBRATE AND EMPOWER KINGSTON'S CREATIVE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Support Kingston's creative industries and cultural heritage as essential components of both tourism and community vitality. Build an enabling environment where arts, music, film, and history are valued, nurtured, and economically viable and help to position Kingston as a creative community.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON

Research conducted to inform the third Integrated Destination Strategy for Kingston delved deeply into understanding systemic challenges impacting tourism performance in Kingston and directly hindering its growth. The sources of this information were derived directly from tourism partner interviews and surveys and primary and secondary research.

While the list does not represent all tourism challenges, it identifies those deemed most critical.



KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

1. Challenges related to the enabling environment for tourism in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
1. Lack of resident understanding of the importance and value of tourism and complacency overall in supporting economic drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some residents in Kingston are unaware of the direct and indirect benefits that tourism brings to the local economy. Some residents may not appreciate the importance of economic development as they are either retired, working independently, or secure in their jobs. Residents don't make the link between investing in tourism assets and the opportunity to develop community amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without community support, tourism projects faced with opposition or apathy are likely to fail or even struggle to make it past investment or development stages. Low resident engagement could hinder the success of events (which play an important role as part of Kingston's position as a creative and vibrant destination) as well as the success of attractions and tourism marketing campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host a public engagement session to allow residents to ask questions, voice concerns, understand future tourism plans, and contribute to the planning process. Launch a campaign targeting residents to showcase the economic and cultural benefits of tourism in Kingston. Demonstrate how community activities can be supported by tourism.
2. Hesitancy around linking creative industries to tourism under the leadership of Tourism Kingston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some partners are uncertain about the role Tourism Kingston should play in the development or promotion of the city's creative industries, which currently exist under Tourism Kingston and are prioritized as a key theme of tourism in Kingston. Tourism Kingston is only supporting the Music Office and the Film and Media Office, while the city's creative scope spans further e.g., public art. Aside from Tourism Kingston, there is no clear "home" for Kingston's creative industries until it can exist on its own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacking clearly defined leadership, Kingston's creative industries could see apprehension around forming partnerships that tie the tourism and creative industries together. Kingston could miss opportunities to leverage and grow a vibrant music, film, and arts scene and, therefore, opportunities to attract new visitors and increase overnight stays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify Tourism Kingston's role as a connector and platform for collaboration, highlighting how it can best support the creative industries. Work with other supporting organizations to define partnership principles that promote shared goals. Coordinate a step-by-step roadmap to lead the creative industry to operate on its own in the future. Support co-created initiatives, such as music and film trails or festivals that highlight both sectors.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

1. Challenges related to the enabling environment for tourism in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
3. Unrealized potential of tourism investment in economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism is often treated as an isolated sector rather than an important central pillar of Kingston's economic development strategy. Tourism-related business opportunities are not always captured in economic programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston risks losing competitive ground – and valuable tourism assets – to destinations that treat tourism as a serious economic engine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate across municipal departments to ensure tourism is considered in infrastructure, workforce, and innovation projects. Present data-driven business cases that demonstrate tourism's return on investment to local and regional decision-makers. Integrate tourism investment into Kingston's overall economic development priorities and strategic plans.
4. Disconnect between tourism and community leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At times, there is a lack of alignment between leaders at Tourism Kingston and municipal/civic decision-makers. Community leaders may not fully understand the potential of tourism to contribute to their broader goals. Tourism is not always considered when policies are developed that affect visitor experience, infrastructure, or mobility, as well as resident well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism initiatives for Kingston may be deprioritized in budgeting or planning discussions. This deprioritization creates a waterfall effect, which hurts the tourism industry, suffering from a lack of growth, as well as residents who see a smaller economic benefit from tourism and the lack of assets that would have benefited both tourists and residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct joint workshops to identify shared goals and co-develop strategies that benefit both visitors and residents. Establish a regular, solid alignment forum and mechanisms with the City of Kingston Corporate Management Team

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

1. Challenges related to the enabling environment for tourism in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
5. Struggle to get recognition and partnership support for small-city tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s potential as a small but dynamic destination is not fully recognized by major tourism associations or funders; its location between major hubs (Toronto, Ottawa) sometimes causes it to be viewed more as a stopover than a destination in its own right. Kingston often ends up overshadowed by larger cities in provincial and national tourism strategies and funding opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of representation on regional or national platforms can slow influence and reduce Kingston’s visibility. Kingston may miss out on promotional opportunities, investment support, and collaborative campaigns that could boost tourism in Kingston. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a compelling small-city tourism narrative that highlights Kingston’s unique blend of history, culture, and creativity. Build strategic alliances with other mid-sized cities to collectively advocate for recognition and funding. Pursue roles in national and/or provincial tourism working groups or advisory committees to ensure Kingston’s voice is heard.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

2. Challenges related to the tourism industry’s infrastructure in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
6. Community resistance to major private investment developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some residents are opposed to large-scale tourism-related developments, like hotels, waterfront projects, or sports complexes. While the reasons for resistance vary, some centre around fears of overdevelopment, overtourism, or the general community change that may come with further tourism development. Some residents, not dependent on the local economy, may be unaware of the impact that their opposition to tourism projects may have on Kingston’s economic viability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influential residents can disrupt the development of assets and infrastructure that could be beneficial to both the tourism industry and the community. General negative community sentiment may discourage future private-sector partners from considering Kingston. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase community benefits such as job creation, improved public spaces, and local business growth. Showcase how tourism assets can also support the business case for much-needed community amenities like shops, restaurants, and recreation facilities that are shared with tourism. Introduce and utilize transparent planning and engagement processes that involve residents early and meaningfully.
7. Aging sports & event facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several of Kingston’s sports and event venues, which are integral to both local and tourism life, are outdated or lack the amenities needed to compete for large-scale events. While these facilities often fall short in terms of accessibility, comfort, or adaptability to modern uses, maintenance and upgrade budgets are insufficient or not prioritized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without proper facilities, the city may lose bids for regional or national tournaments, concerts, or conferences. Local athletes, performers, and organizations may also be underserved by the existing infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an audit of existing facilities and create a phased modernization plan. Seek public-private partnerships to fund upgrades that benefit both the community and visitors. Prioritize improvements that are flexible and make facilities available for multiple uses.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

2. Challenges related to the tourism industry's infrastructure in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
8. Public transit & accessibility barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors or locals without cars may find it difficult to reach attractions, accommodations, or waterfront areas; a lack of parking facilities in downtown Kingston adds a challenge to accessing all the city has to offer. VIA Rail service is critical for Kingston, since air access is currently not an option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation barriers reduce the appeal of Kingston as a destination for diverse visitor groups, potentially leading visitors to choose other cities with more convenient mobility options. Residents may also feel a strain, particularly during high-traffic events and/or peak tourist seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the enhancement of transit routes and schedules during peak season. Expand VIA Rail service to increase the destination's appeal and ease of visitation. Advocate for seasonal shuttle routes or hop-on-hop-off services that connect key attractions. Work to improve signage, wayfinding, and accessibility infrastructure across high-tourism zones.
9. Airport not operating commercial flights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston's airport no longer provides regular commercial air service, limiting options for inbound travellers. This forces visitors to rely on rail or car travel, which may not be feasible for international or business travellers and ties into other transit and transportation-related challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced air access limits Kingston's potential to grow visitation from key domestic and international markets. Without direct air access, Kingston loses competitiveness for conferences, events, and high-yield travellers who prioritize convenience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support advocacy efforts to restore limited commercial air service with regional airlines. Promote the new Air Canada/Landline motorcoach service at Kingston Airport (launching September 2025)

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

2. Challenges related to the tourism industry's infrastructure in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
10. Lack of mid-scale meetings & convention space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston currently lacks the kind of flexible, mid-sized venues needed to host national or international conferences. Existing spaces are either too small, not purpose-built, or available through Queen's University, meaning they are typically fully booked during university semesters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston's MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (or sometimes Events) market suffers as it is unable to attract business events that bring year-round economic activity and overnight stays. Aside from the direct economic loss of an event not utilizing a conference centre, the secondary and tertiary losses also impact local hotels, restaurants, and businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the feasibility of a new mid-sized convention facility that can serve both community and tourism needs. Encourage multi-use models that incorporate meeting space into hotel or cultural developments. Create partnerships with Queen's University to access space during off-peak periods.
11. Limited waterfront infrastructure for cruise ships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Kingston has a strategic waterfront location, that appeals to the Great Lakes cruise ship market, its current infrastructure requires all but the smallest ships to tender into port. Docking limitations, especially related to dangerous weather and tumultuous waves, restrict the city's participation in Ontario and Great Lakes cruising circuits. The current bridge infrastructure at the LaSalle Causeway between Kingston's inner and outer harbours also severely impact cruise ships travelling in and out of the Inner harbour and the Rideau Canal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston misses out on high-spending cruise passengers who could boost spending in shops, restaurants, and cultural sites. Despite Kingston being on route for every major ship passing through the route, without infrastructure upgrades, the city may be passed over by cruise operators exploring expansion into the region. Adequate bridge infrastructure must accommodate both marine traffic and other traffic (vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct feasibility studies and business cases for expanding dock capacity and related amenities. Explore phased infrastructure solutions and determine the resources that would be required for the installation of a deep-water dock, as well as a dynamic bridge system that can lift and lower multiple times a day.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

3. Challenges related to tourism products and experiences in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
12. Seasonality/limited attractions in winter or lack of coordinated product in the shoulder season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s tourism calendar is heavily skewed toward the summer months, with limited draw during the off-season. The winter period lacks coordinated events, bundled experiences, or strong thematic offerings. Many of Kingston’s attractions are challenged by inclement weather during winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses that depend on tourism face revenue volatility and staffing challenges during quieter months. Kingston loses the opportunity to position itself as a year-round destination and increase annual overnight stays without assets to draw visitors in during lower seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop signature winter events focused on themes not reliant on the weather, such as food, music, or storytelling (with unpredictable winters with less snow than usual, snow-themed events <i>could</i> be an option, but may be less reliable). Bundle off-season accommodation and activity offers to attract regional visitors. Need to invest in products and experiences development.
13. Need to access Kingston Penitentiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston is rich in historic landmarks, museums, and cultural sites, but many of these remain underpromoted and inactive outside of peak seasons. Some of Kingston’s attractions, namely the Kingston Penitentiary, bring great pride to the community but are currently blocked by use restrictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuable cultural assets may remain overlooked by both visitors and locals, diminishing their educational and economic value, and contributing to a lack of year-round attractions for guests visiting Kingston. Without activation, these sites contribute less to Kingston’s tourism economy and may struggle to justify ongoing funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the government and other organizations to find a plan to activate the Kingston Penitentiary for use and maximize its benefits on local life and the tourism industry. Introduce year-round programming, including theatrical tours, themed events, and augmented reality experiences at heritage sites.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

3. Challenges related to tourism products and experiences in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
14. Insufficient focus on food & culinary tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives like Kingstonlicious contribute to the enhancement the city's culinary scene, but further advocacy efforts are requiring, such as supporting the establishment of a restaurant association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By missing the connection between art, music, and food, the culinary industry ends up excluded, and the creative and cultural storytelling of Kingston lacks the holistic addition of food. Visitors may overlook Kingston as a food-forward destination and choose more branded culinary regions. Local businesses may miss out on increased visibility and spending from food-focused travellers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a Kingston restaurant association that gives voice to Kingston's culinary artists and enhances their roles in the tourism industry. Develop a Kingston Culinary Trail or digital passport that links restaurants, markets, and producers. Tie food tourism more explicitly to key events, festivals, and regional heritage storytelling. Support food and beverage operators in bundling offers with accommodations or cultural experiences.
15. Limited Indigenous tourism experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous tourism products and experiences are in demand in destinations across Canada. While Kingston is home to a small number of Indigenous makers, artisans, and entrepreneurs, the city lacks differentiation from other Canadian communities as a destination for Indigenous tourism experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of Indigenous tourism limits the diversity of Kingston's tourism offerings and its competitiveness, especially as other destinations may be excelling in these areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support individual Indigenous tourism operators, makers, and entrepreneurs through promotion and connecting them with funding and capacity-building opportunities as needed. Work with regional and national Indigenous tourism organizations to create alignment and visibility.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

4. Challenges related to the source markets for tourism in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
16. Heavy reliance on domestic & regional visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston's tourism economy is primarily reliant on visitors from Canada, especially from Ontario and Quebec, as well as the U.S. International (non-U.S.) awareness of Kingston as a destination is relatively low. Given current political challenges, a decrease in visitation from the U.S. may be a threat, leaving a potential weakness in Kingston's visitation numbers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decrease in U.S. visitation due to political uncertainty between the U.S. and Canada could leave Kingston vulnerable to economic disruptions with no clear resolution timeline. International visitors spend is much higher than that of domestic and short-haul visitation, which may help increase total tourism revenue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a contingency plan in the event of a significant drop in U.S. visitors Expand targeted international marketing, especially in markets with cultural or educational connections to Kingston. Work with travel trade partners to position Kingston as part of multi-city Canadian itineraries.
17. Untapped business & corporate travel market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston lacks a robust business travel sector due to limited facilities, accessibility challenges, and competition from larger cities. Business travel infrastructure, specifically conference space, is limited, and the development of a new centre has been consistently challenged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels and restaurants lose out on increased occupancy and revenue, which would be beneficial to the industry and economy during weekdays or off-season periods. The city loses out on high-yield visitors, who often spend more per trip. The city loses out on shoulder season visitors who balance out spend outside of peak season. Corporate and government partners are likely to overlook Kingston when planning events or meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a roadmap to encourage the development of a conference centre in Kingston. Upgrade and promote existing facilities that can accommodate small to mid-sized corporate events. Develop a weekday marketing strategy targeted at business travellers and associations.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

5. Challenges related to tourism channels in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
18. Underdeveloped multi-stop itineraries with regional partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston is not yet effectively integrated into broader tourism routes or themed travel experiences within Eastern Ontario. Coordination and transportation to surrounding regions, such as Prince Edward County or the Rideau Corridor, remains minimal. Visitors are not being guided to explore beyond Kingston or extend their stays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The city loses potential overnight stays and visitor spending from those who otherwise pass through quickly. Regional assets remain underleveraged, and travel dispersal remains low, sometimes limited just to downtown Kingston. Kingston's tourism brand could be viewed as less competitive when it stands alone rather than as part of a network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop collaborative itineraries with nearby destinations focused on themes such as wine, heritage, or cycling. Advocate for expanded transportation options to Prince Edward Island and Gananoque. Build joint marketing campaigns and share data with regional tourism organizations. Work with tour operators and travel agents to bundle Kingston into multi-day Ontario packages.
19. Limited packaging & bundling of experiences for tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some tourism experiences in Kingston, such as stage performances, are not always bundled with hotel stays to draw visitors to Kingston. Businesses may not be collaborating to maximize mutual benefit. While Tourism Kingston does have a dedicated packaging resource, the suggestion is that there is more packaging opportunity, especially in the winter and shoulder season. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of bundling reduces the ease of trip planning and lowers total visitor spending. Visitors may miss out on key attractions or experiences simply because they are not visible or accessible as a package or sold out to local audiences. Local operators lose opportunities for referral business and cross-promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for improved Slush Puppie Place programming. Introduce flexible digital tourism passes that include attractions, events, and transit. Incentivize partnerships between accommodations, restaurants, and cultural sites. Promote curated experiences through destination storytelling and itinerary planning tools.

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM IN KINGSTON (CONT'D)

5. Challenges related to tourism channels in Kingston

Challenge	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
<p>20. Lack of a dedicated forum for Small and Medium Enterprises, SMEs, to attract funding and support from provincial and national tourism organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and mid-sized cultural and tourism organizations in Kingston lack a centralized forum to advocate, collaborate, or access funding, which is a recurring challenge faced when developing many assets in Kingston. • These groups often operate in isolation and struggle to gain visibility or traction at the provincial and federal levels. • Museums and historic sites have different ownership. Some are run by federal departments, others by the municipality, others by a community board of directors. Therefore, they cannot access the same funding sources. • There is also an overseeing body, KAM, or the Kingston & Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites, which does coordinate many opportunities, across its member sites, such as March of the Museums, and provides promotion for its members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination limits the city's overall cultural capacity and impact, especially as many cultural assets can be considered small- or medium-sized. • High-potential initiatives that could help build Kingston's brand may be underfunded or unsupported, creating a ripple effect for Kingston's tourism industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Kingston Tourism & Culture Collective to support peer collaboration and joint advocacy. • Continue to work with overseeing bodies like KAM and identify supports needed to promote smaller organizations. • Facilitate knowledge sharing and joint applications for regional, provincial, and federal support, which can in turn help strengthen Tourism Kingston's relationship with regional, provincial, and federal tourism organizations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Extensive partner engagement and a review of Kingston's tourism environment revealed opportunities that Tourism Kingston can leverage to achieve possible outcomes that meet both tourism and local needs.

While the list does not represent all tourism opportunities that are available to Kingston, it outlines opportunity themes that are most critical to the destination's future success.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

1. Opportunities to improve the enabling environment for tourism in Kingston

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
1. Leverage tourism to support objectives of key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston has influential partners that help determine the way the city (and its tourism industry) develops and grows. By aligning tourism strategies with the priorities of local businesses, educational institutions, and city planners, Tourism Kingston can have a greater and stronger support system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broader buy-in and investment from diverse community actors will strengthen tourism’s foundation and support. Tourism initiatives can help solve community challenges, such as better event spaces or underutilized infrastructure. A more integrated approach will increase the relevance of tourism across sectors and help Kingstonians better understand the role and impact of tourism in their community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map the priorities of major partners and identify where tourism can serve as a catalyst. Co-create initiatives that use tourism to deliver community-wide outcomes, such as event spaces or business incubators. Develop a cross-sector governance or consultation model to ensure tourism planning is inclusive and impactful.
2. Strengthen public-private partnerships for tourism investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-private partnerships can unlock new funding, reduce risk, and enable more ambitious tourism developments, especially in infrastructure, where some of Kingston’s greatest tourism barriers lie. Kingston currently lacks a coordinated strategy to attract and structure these kinds of investments, which has led to lost opportunities in the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic public-private partnerships can improve tourism infrastructure, such as sports and event venues and waterfront amenities, while ensuring long-term community access and benefits from these infrastructural improvements. A more attractive investment environment could lead to new private sector interest in Kingston, providing Tourism Kingston with greater opportunities to live out its brand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority investment areas that would benefit from shared public-private leadership. Develop a toolkit or framework to guide public-private partnerships, ensuring that community benefit remains central and that agile action can be taken when opportunities arise.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

1. Opportunities to improve the enabling environment for tourism in Kingston

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
3. Position Tourism Kingston as creative industries incubator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With music and film offices under management, Kingston has an opportunity to use Tourism Kingston as a facilitator for creative industries growth. Tourism Kingston can act as a safe, soft incubator and provide promotional support, collaborative infrastructure, and audience development to emerging creative entrepreneurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A stronger team behind the creative industries will offer increased visibility and sustainability for local artists, performers, and creative businesses. With Tourism Kingston’s brand expertise, there will be a stronger cultural identity and differentiated branding for Kingston as a destination. Cross-sector innovation benefits both tourism and the creative economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize Tourism Kingston’s well-established tourism channels to promote creative industries offerings, including markets, venues, and performances. Create a plan to incubate the creative strategy only as long as needed, providing it with a strong foundation to act on its own while supporting Kingston’s creative and cultural brand.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

2. Opportunities to improve the tourism infrastructure in Kingston

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
4. Develop multi-use spaces for community and visitors alike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many existing and future facilities in Kingston, such as sports venues, parks, and cultural centres, can be designed or reimagined for flexible, shared use. This approach ensures that tourism investment serves dual purposes and avoids perceptions of prioritization of residents or tourists over each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-use spaces create stronger public support for tourism-related development when residents also benefit from the infrastructure. Multi-use infrastructure and assets see higher usage rates and ROI as community spaces that serve year-round purposes. Visitors are more likely to have enhanced experiences in Kingston through access to vibrant, local spaces filled with everyday activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage residents in the planning and design of key tourism infrastructure to ensure community relevance. Consider possible tourism uses when existing community assets are updated. Highlight shared-use models in communications to promote inclusive messaging and help residents understand the ways tourism positively impacts their lives in Kingston.
5. Enhance transportation networks outside of the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Kingston’s city core is relatively walkable, transportation to and from peripheral areas, such as rural attractions or recreational assets, is more limited. Limited parking in Kingston’s city core creates an additional challenge for both tourists and Kingstonians. Improving transit options outside the core would unlock access to more of Kingston’s geography for visitors and residents alike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors will be able to explore a wider range of experiences, leading to longer stays and greater spending. Residents will benefit from improved access to jobs, events, and recreation, enhancing overall quality of life as well as their willingness to accept and support tourism Decentralizing tourism could reduce congestion and spread benefits more evenly across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for tourism-focused transit enhancements, including seasonal buses, bike routes, and improved signage. Collaborate with regional transportation providers to better connect Kingston with surrounding towns and parks. Incorporate transportation access considerations into the development of all new tourism products.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

2. Opportunities to improve the tourism infrastructure in Kingston

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
6. Enhance waterfront infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s waterfront has the potential to become a unique destination differentiator by improving the existing infrastructure. By enhancing docking facilities, visitor welcome areas, and waterfront amenities, Kingston would increase its appeal to both residents and visitors alike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing waterfront infrastructure enhances the public realm for residents, contributing to beautification, livability, and potentially resident sentiment towards tourism. Diversified products and experiences development would help expand the city’s tourism offering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the business case for waterfront upgrades to prioritize both functionality and aesthetic appeal, ensuring dual benefit for visitors and locals (and make these benefits clear to local Kingstonians).. Complete a business case and feasibility study for expanded waterfront infrastructure in partnership with port authorities and federal partners.
7. Optimize current venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston already has a network of sports arenas and outdoor spaces that are aging and underleveraged for tourism, and not as beneficial to locals as they could be. These venues could support more events, tournaments, and touring shows if optimized through better programming, promotion, and coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging venues reduce local pride and lower local well-being. Improved facilities under the name of tourism can improve resident sentiment towards tourism and expand opportunities for event-driven visitation. Increased event-driven visitation would help fill hotels and restaurants, especially during off-peak periods. A stronger sports and music calendar would enhance the city’s brand as a dynamic, culturally rich destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an audit of existing venues to identify opportunities for better usage and tourism alignment. Work with organizers and event promoters and touring agencies to bring more large-scale events to Kingston. Improve coordination between venue operators and Tourism Kingston aligned calendars and marketing.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

3. Opportunities to improve the tourism products & experiences in Kingston

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
8. Year-round programming for heritage & cultural sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of Kingston’s cultural and heritage attractions operate on a seasonal basis or have minimal winter engagement, reducing the number of cultural attractions for guests or prospective guests. Year-round programming, such as winter tours, themed installations, or indoor events, would unlock these assets’ full potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased winter and shoulder-season visitation would help stabilize revenues and reduce tourism seasonality. Residents would benefit from access to more cultural experiences throughout the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer funding and operational support to heritage sites willing to expand programming into colder months. Partner with artists and interpreters to create rotating or immersive indoor experiences. Bundle winter heritage programming with culinary and accommodation offers to encourage multi-day stays.
9. Expand culinary and agritourism via events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston has a selection of notable and unique restaurants and culinary experiences, and Kingston’s surrounding region offers access to local farms, vineyards, and artisanal producers that could be better connected to tourism through curated events. There is an opportunity to expand seasonal food festivals, farm-to-table experiences, and tours that showcase the region’s agricultural richness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culinary and agritourism can increase visitor spending and length of stay, especially among high-yield travellers. Agritourism, especially when tied in with sustainable and eco-tourism, also meets current tourism trends. These experiences promote regional pride and create deeper connections between visitors and local producers. Kingston could develop a distinct niche in Ontario’s growing culinary tourism landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support signature culinary or harvest events that positions Kingston as a foodie destination. Build partnerships with nearby farms, markets, and food businesses to create bookable agritourism experiences. Support storytelling and branding efforts that connect Kingston’s creative and culinary brands. Partner with culinary tourism experts to develop a culinary strategy for Kingston.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

4. Opportunities to support Kingston’s tourism source markets

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
10. Broaden international reach past U.S. markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s international travel trade outreach is currently focused heavily on nearby U.S. regions, limiting exposure to other promising global markets, and relying heavily on a market that has seen increasingly unsteady travel patterns is risky. There is potential to diversify the visitor base by reaching out to European, Latin American, and Asia-Pacific travellers who are increasingly seeking heritage-rich and culturally distinctive destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding reach into international markets can help reduce dependency on the domestic and U.S. travel economy. Long-haul travellers tend to stay longer and spend more, bringing added economic value. Increased international presence can elevate Kingston’s global brand and drive broader awareness of its creative and cultural assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify target international markets that align with Kingston’s strengths, such as heritage, music, education, or cruises. Work with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada to access trade missions, media tours, and international travel trade platforms. Invest in multilingual and culturally adapted content that supports awareness and conversion from non-U.S. audiences.
11. Develop international education tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With institutions like Queen’s University and St. Lawrence College, Kingston attracts international students and has a built-in opportunity to leverage education tourism. The creative expertise, especially in music, art, and animation, could be used to attract international students for long or short-term periods. Friends and family of international students, as well as educational exchange programs and academic conferences, represent untapped tourism potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education tourism supports cross-cultural exchange and fosters long-term destination affinity. Kingston could grow its global reputation and brand as a hub for creative experts and eventually serve as a world-class educational attraction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the impact of Canadian policy on international students; if favourable, consider partnering with educational institutions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Co-market to international student families, particularly during graduation and orientation seasons. Develop targeted itineraries and welcome materials tailored to international student networks. Promote Kingston as a safe, walkable, and enriching city for academic and cultural engagement. Amplify the voices of Kingstonian experts, emphasizing their ability to provide education, training, or apprenticeships.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

4. Opportunities to support Kingston’s tourism source markets

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
12. Expand corporate & business travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s central location between Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal makes it a convenient option for meetings, retreats, and corporate training, yet the city is underutilized in this segment. With some improvements to facilities and services or the development of a new conference centre, Kingston could attract more mid-sized business events and weekday travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business travel can drive consistent, year-round hotel occupancy and increase weekday revenues for restaurants and services, relieving some of the pressures of seasonality. Corporate events also offer opportunities for sponsorship, local employment, and business-to-business promotion. The presence of professional visitors supports a more balanced and diversified tourism economy and elevates Kingston’s profile in the events industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize the development of a multi-use conference centre, emphasizing the benefits the centre would offer to local life in Kingston. Continue to target business associations, event planners, and HR teams with tailored marketing about Kingston’s strengths as a meeting destination.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

5. Opportunities to support Kingston’s tourism channels

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
13. Partnerships with rail and motorcoach operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston is well-connected by VIA Rail and major highway routes, making it an ideal stop for motorcoach tours and independent rail travellers. Strengthening ties with transportation providers could improve access, increase overnight stays, and attract new visitor markets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better transportation partnerships can support tourism growth without additional strain on infrastructure or parking. Bundled transportation and experience packages make Kingston more accessible and attractive to non-driving travellers (and non-driving travellers, too, avoid adding additional transportation strain). Kingston could become a hub for themed rail or coach itineraries, such as historical tours or culinary circuits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with rail and bus companies to co-create ticket packages that include attraction entry or hotel discounts. Develop content and campaigns that emphasize Kingston’s accessibility and connectivity. Improve signage, pickup/drop-off zones, and visitor services at terminals to ensure a seamless experience.
14. Partner with provincial and national sports associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite work Kingston has done over the years to attract events, such as Little League Canadian Championships and CORK, there may be more opportunity to invest resources to increase attention to this market. Kingston has existing sports infrastructure and a strong community sports culture, but it is not yet a primary destination for major tournaments or training events, partially because of a lack of infrastructure for hosting. Developing formal partnerships with sports associations could help bring provincial or national events to the city and better utilize its facilities or gain support to develop new facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting sanctioned tournaments or training camps would increase overnight visitation, especially during shoulder seasons. These events would support local businesses and provide youth with opportunities to watch or participate in high-level sport. Improved recognition as a sports destination could attract further investment in facilities and athlete development programs, which could be the first in a chain of important investments for Kingston locals and tourists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sport disciplines where Kingston’s existing infrastructure aligns with the needs of provincial and national associations, like hockey, baseball, and soccer. Continue to submit proposals to host sanctioned events and offer support services such as accommodations, transportation, and marketing. Collaborate with schools and local sports groups to integrate legacy programming that supports community benefit, and make sure community benefits are well understood by the local population.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

5. Opportunities to support Kingston’s tourism channels

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
15. Increase visibility of music and creative venues to event planners and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston’s thriving music scene and unique creative venues may not be widely known among event bookers, talent agencies, or touring artists, who could consider Kingston as a stop between larger entertainment hubs like Toronto or Montreal.. Raising visibility could increase bookings, draw new visitors, and elevate Kingston’s position as a cultural destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More events and performances would drive visitation and raise the profile of Kingston’s creative economy. Artists and producers could find Kingston to be an appealing and supportive stop on regional tours, which would help to keep a constant and fresh flow of talent into Kingston. Local audiences would gain access to more diverse and frequent cultural programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a promotional package that highlights Kingston’s performance venues, artist networks, and technical capabilities. Continue to attend music and live event industry conferences to position Kingston as a tour-ready destination. Continue to offer incentives or marketing support to agencies that book multiple acts or events in the city. Prioritize securing recurring events or an artist residency, which can secure sustainable and long-term creative attention and economic support for Kingston and the creative industries.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

6. Opportunities to grow Kingston’s tourism marketing and communications

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
16. Improve Kingston’s position as a music & arts hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingston has a deep musical legacy, a vibrant creative community, and an emerging arts infrastructure that could form the foundation of a powerful destination brand. With focused effort, the city can further elevate its reputation as a place where music, arts, and culture are integral to the visitor experience, potentially becoming a primary attraction for visitors to Kingston. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong arts and music identity would differentiate Kingston from other mid-sized destinations in Ontario, tackling a recurring problem Kingston faces. This positioning could attract creative entrepreneurs, new residents, and high-yield cultural tourists, and support a more authentic and sustainable tourism economy rooted in local expression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hone the long-term brand and marketing strategy to reflect music and arts in Kingston. Support festivals, murals, music residencies, and public art projects that bring this identity to life. Build partnerships with national arts organizations and talent development programs for a stronger impact.
17. Develop strategy to attract soccer World Cup visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Canada hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2026, Kingston has an opportunity to position itself as a satellite destination for soccer fans. Toronto will be hosting matches on June 12, 17, 20, 23, 26, and July 2, leaving more than two weeks for guests to explore destinations outside of the city. The city’s proximity to major host cities, as well as the VIA Rail railway and its hospitality infrastructure, make it well-suited for pre- or post-event travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging soccer fans could attract both international and domestic visitors looking to explore more of Ontario during their trip. Kingston could draw guests to Toronto outside of the city, with a positive economic impact for restaurants, hotels, and local businesses. Creating themed events or viewing parties could also drive local pride and economic activity. A successful activation could lead to longer-term recognition as a sports-friendly city. There is an opportunity to leverage this model to support other major events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Destination Ontario and regional tourism partners to develop a World Cup dispersal strategy. Host soccer-themed festivals, viewing events, and youth tournaments tied to the excitement of the global event. Develop packages for international fans that include accommodation, local attractions, and transportation between host cities. Develop a framework to leverage other major events from this framework.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINGSTON’S TOURISM INDUSTRY (CONT’D)

6. Opportunities to grow Kingston’s tourism marketing and communications

Opportunity	Description	Potential Impact	Management /Actions
18. Develop campaign on tourism impact in Kingston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Kingstonians are unaware of how tourism supports local jobs, infrastructure, and quality of life, or the role they can play to help develop tourism, including culture, sports, and more, which can lead to local dissatisfaction with what they believe to be negative impacts from tourism. A transparent and engaging public campaign could shift attitudes and build support for tourism initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater understanding and appreciation of tourism’s role could reduce resistance to development and event programming, and most importantly, private investment that could bring in infrastructural developments with huge benefits to both local and tourist life. Residents may become more active ambassadors for their city, improving the visitor experience. A well-informed public could lead to more constructive dialogue around tourism issues, rather than shutting down any changes related to or labeled “tourism.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a multimedia campaign that shares real stories of how tourism benefits local workers, businesses, and services. Use data and infographics to consistently illustrate economic and cultural impact in accessible ways. Develop local ambassadors to open a clear chain of communication and build trust between locals and Tourism Kingston. Host community forums and tourism open houses that foster ongoing dialogue and feedback.
19. Intensify domestic/local marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Kingston does receive regional attention, there is room to strengthen its brand and drive more frequent visitation from nearby markets. With rising costs, interest in local travel, and uncertainty around travel between Canada and the U.S., there is an opportunity to appeal to Ontarians seeking weekend getaways, culture, and waterfront charm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased short-term trips can support steady revenue across sectors, particularly during the shoulder seasons. A more distinct brand presence within Ontario would boost top-of-mind awareness and loyalty and potentially increase the awareness Kingston gets from regional and national organizations as a medium-sized Canadian destination. Enhanced local marketing could also encourage repeat visits and civic pride, positively impacting resident investment towards tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue supporting targeted digital campaigns that highlight Kingston’s seasonal experiences and proximity to major cities. Continue to promote value-added experiences and bundled offers to appeal to budget-conscious travellers. Continue activation of Kingston ambassadors, such as residents, alumni, and artists, to share personal stories and insider tips across social platforms.



VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIC THEMES



VISION

The defined vision for Kingston’s tourism industry provides an aspirational view of the future long-term sustainable tourism growth that is meant to inspire tourism partners, funders, operators, and Kingston’s residents. The vision represents the hope for the kind of tourism and recognition that Kingston wishes to achieve as it aims to accomplish its goals and objectives – a tourism future developed by design.

“ Kingston will be recognized as a **vibrant, inclusive, and creative year-round destination** - where tourism growth enhances **community well-being**, supports thriving **local businesses**, and celebrates the city’s **cultural and historical identity**.
Guided by a **strong enabling environment**, Kingston will continue to evolve through strategic **infrastructure investment**, dynamic **partnerships**, and the full integration of its **creative industries**, delivering shared value for both **residents and visitors**. ”



CRITICAL PATH TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

ENABLE

OPTIMIZE THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TOURISM CAN GROW, UPDATE, DIVERSIFY, AND RENEW ITS OFFERINGS.

Through strengthened organizational collaboration and a broader understanding of tourism's impact in Kingston, partners and the wider community can become more welcoming and supportive of changes and developments that benefit both Kingstonians and visitors.

ELEVATE

EXCEL AS A VIBRANT, YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION WITH A WIDE RANGE OF TOURISM OFFERINGS.

By responding to the needs and interests of both residents and visitors, Kingston can shape a destination anchored in its unique assets, offering diverse experiences that increase tourism revenue and reduce the negative patterns of seasonality.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Integrated Destination Strategy 3.0 is guided by three overarching goals that define the long-term outcomes Kingston aims to achieve through tourism development. These goals reflect a balanced approach that places residents at the heart of the visitor economy, ensures infrastructure investments are prioritized and strategic, and positions creative industries and partnerships as core drivers of Kingston’s distinctiveness. Each goal is supported by a focused set of objectives that translate ambition into actionable direction, ensuring the strategy remains grounded, measurable, and aligned with community priorities.

1

STRENGTHEN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Position Kingston residents as the primary beneficiaries of tourism by fostering transparency, inclusive engagement, and alignment with community values, ensuring tourism development enhances local quality of life.

Supporting Objectives:

- a. Foster a shared understanding of tourism’s role in enhancing community well-being
- b. Build trust and alignment between the tourism industry and residents
- c. Promote a sense of local ownership and pride in Kingston’s visitor economy
- d. Ensure tourism development respects and reflects community values

2

OPTIMIZE AND IDENTIFY CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Identify, prioritize, and champion critical tourism-related infrastructure projects that require clear evaluation frameworks and strategic partnerships.

Supporting Objectives:

- a. Establish clarity around what infrastructure matters most to Kingston’s tourism future
- b. Support infrastructure that delivers both community and visitor benefit
- c. Enable long-term, phased investment through coordinated planning and prioritization
- d. Improve the functionality and connectivity of Kingston as a visitor destination

3

ELEVATE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND INTEGRATE BROADER SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Transform creative industries from a fragmented ecosystem into a cohesive economic pillar within Kingston’s tourism strategy, while advancing sustainable goals and deepening alignment with national and provincial tourism partners.

Supporting Objectives:

- a. Position creative industries as a core component of Kingston’s tourism identity
- b. Encourage greater cohesion across creative sectors to strengthen destination appeal
- c. Deepen collaboration with Indigenous tourism leaders and cultural partners
- d. Expand Kingston’s visibility and alignment within the broader Ontario and Canada tourism ecosystem

STRATEGIC THEMES

Strategic themes act as a bridge between the high-level guiding principles and the actionable strategic pillars, ensuring that Kingston’s values are translated into focused areas of priority. They provide a cohesive narrative that aligns intent with implementation, guiding how principles are operationalized through concrete strategies and initiatives.

- 1 FOSTER RESIDENT CONNECTION AND SUPPORT**
Before advancing destination initiatives, it’s critical to rebuild local trust and involvement. Kingston must be more present in residents' lives, ensuring tourism brings shared value and relevance to the broader community.
- 2 ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS AND SEASONALITY**
Tourism infrastructure must evolve to meet full summer capacity while also enabling shoulder and off-season growth. Addressing these gaps will have a domino effect across the visitor economy and improve quality of place for residents.
- 3 AMPLIFY KINGSTON’S CREATIVE AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP**
The creative industries – especially music, arts, film, media, and culinary – are central to Kingston’s identity. Supporting these sectors within the tourism strategy will allow Kingston to influence the visitor economy and Canada’s cultural narrative.
- 4 POSITION TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER**
Economic impact is a key motivator for city and council decision-making. Demonstrating how tourism supports job creation, business growth, and long-term economic resilience is essential to securing support and investment.
- 5 BUILD COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY BEYOND TOURISM KINGSTON**
Many initiatives essential to Kingston’s tourism future will fall outside of Tourism Kingston’s direct mandate. Building cross-sector partnerships and fostering collaborative leadership will be necessary to advance these broader goals.



STRATEGIC PILLARS & INITIATIVES

STRATEGIC PILLARS & INITIATIVES DRIVING THE INTEGRATED DESTINATION STRATEGY

The third Kingston Integrated Destination Strategy is structured into five main pillars focused on actioning the strategic themes for tourism development in Kingston. Each pillar contains initiatives that Tourism Kingston and partners should undertake over the next months and years to achieve its ambitions and those of the residents and key city partners. Tactical actions, timelines, roles, outputs, and outcomes for each initiative are outlined in the following sections.

1

RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Ensure tourism development reflects the values, needs, and participation of Kingston residents through transparency, collaboration, and shared leadership.

- 1. Develop a tourism engagement and communication strategy with residents and community leaders
- 2. Position Tourism Kingston as the lead agency for music and film
- 3. Establish tourism as a pillar of Kingston's investment attraction

2

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Identify and advance priority tourism infrastructure that strengthens Kingston's competitiveness and meets both visitor and community needs.

- 4. Support investment to develop a conference centre
- 5. Prioritize improvements for sports and event facilities
- 6. Facilitate transportation access for visitors
- 7. Support the city to explore different investment models for the airport
- 8. Advance waterfront infrastructure

Launch a tourism infrastructure investment framework to prioritize initiatives within this pillar

3

MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Position Kingston's creative and cultural assets as central pillars of tourism, enhancing the destination's distinctiveness and appeal.

- 9. Integrate preexisting creative industries strategies into the IDS
- 10. Establish sustainable funding for the Music Office and the Film and Media Office
- 11. Continue to support the development of the film and animation studios
- 12. Support Esport development

4

KEY TOURISM DEMAND GENERATORS

Diversify and enrich Kingston's tourism offerings with unique, high-quality experiences that increase year-round visitation and engagement.

- 13. Unblock and protect Kingston Pen to activate year-long programming
- 14. Support the creation and funding of a Kingston restaurant association

5

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

Expand Kingston's reach and appeal through targeted marketing, partnerships, and enhanced visitor conversion across key markets.

- 15. Advocate for better provincial funding for external funding match programs
- 16. Target visitors to Ontario around marquee events e.g., FIFA World Cup 2026
- 17. Invest in a strategy to elevate Kingston within the tourism industry



PILLAR 1: RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

PILLAR 1: RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Initiative 1: Develop a tourism engagement and communication strategy with residents and community leaders

Description/Rationale

- As Kingston grows as a visitor destination, it is essential that tourism development reflects the values and priorities of its residents. While tourism generates significant economic and cultural benefits for the city, these contributions are not always visible or well understood by the community. Mistrust or fatigue among residents, especially regarding infrastructure development and the perceived over-prioritization of tourism, has led to political pushback and lost momentum for key projects.
- This initiative recognizes that the residents are Tourism Kingston’s primary customer. It aims to proactively strengthen the relationship between the tourism sector and the people who live in Kingston by improving transparency, promoting shared leadership, and fostering long-term trust. Report that quantifies tourism’s value in terms residents care about. This will ensure residents feel informed, heard, and part of the city’s tourism journey.

Tactical Actions

- Develop a resident-facing communications plan across channels (social, local media, newsletters) to highlight tourism benefits and projects
- Publish and distribute an Annual Community Impact Report demonstrating how tourism supports jobs, events, and public services
- Launch “Tourism Open House” town halls twice a year to present initiatives and answer resident questions
- Create a “Tourism in My Backyard” awareness campaign encouraging locals to explore and share Kingston experiences

CRITICAL ENABLER TO ACHIEVE TOURISM OBJECTIVES

Timeframe

- Immediate (0-3 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston, local media, community associations, sector committees

Outputs

- Year-round communications plan activated
- First annual Community Impact Report published

Outcomes

- Increased resident trust and tourism literacy
- Higher resident support for tourism-related investments and events
- Reduced resistance to infrastructure or promotional efforts involving visitor traffic

PILLAR 1: RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Initiative 2: Position Tourism Kingston as the lead agency for music and film

Description/Rationale

- Music and Film/Media are powerful drivers of Kingston’s tourism brand and economic distinctiveness. However, responsibility for these sectors has historically been fragmented across departments and organizations. This has led to inconsistent leadership, underutilized funding, and a lack of strategic direction. At the same time, Kingston is experiencing momentum in its cultural development, including investments in a film office, music office, and a future animation studio.
- This initiative builds on that momentum by formally designating Tourism Kingston as the lead agency for music and film. Tourism Kingston already houses both and has the operational capacity, industry reach, and destination marketing mandate to centralize governance. As lead, it will act as an incubator and promoter of talent, providing coordination, business support, and national and international visibility for Kingston’s creative economy. This integrated approach will allow Kingston to better compete for music and film investment, attract cultural tourism, and retain local talent while bringing a unified vision to its creative identity.

Tactical Actions

- Create a Music and Film Sector Incubator program for local creators (e.g., grants, residencies, workspace access, business mentorship)
- Promote Kingston’s music and film venues and professionals through outreach to regional and national booking agents and producers

Timeframe

- Medium-term (6-12 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Tourism Kingston
- **Support:** City of Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners

Outputs

- Formalize the 5-year SLA with the City and Tourism Kingston to include Music and Film/Media
- Music and Film Industries established and operational
- Incubation and outreach programs launched

Outcomes

- Stronger coordination and growth across music and film sectors
- Increased visibility of Kingston’s creative identity in national tourism and media
- More funding, programming, and economic opportunity for Kingston musicians and filmmakers

PILLAR 1: RESIDENT-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Initiative 3: Establish tourism as a pillar of Kingston’s investment attraction

Description/Rationale

- Tourism is one of Kingston’s fastest-growing sectors, contributing directly to employment, new business creation, and infrastructure revitalization. However, it is not always treated as a central pillar of the city’s broader economic development efforts. As a result, visionary private sector projects, such as new attractions, premium accommodations, and event venues, often struggle to gain traction within Kingston’s investment ecosystem. Moreover, without a coordinated investment narrative, developers and operators face unclear signals about the city’s openness to bold, tourism-driven ideas.
- This initiative seeks to reposition tourism as a key economic driver in Kingston’s future by working closely with Kingston Economic Development Corporation (EcDev), the City, and sector partners. It will embed tourism in the city’s investment strategy in alignment with the City of Kingston’s strategic plan, improve visibility of investable assets, and build a proactive "Kingston is open for tourism business" message aimed at private developers, operators, and funding partners. By aligning public and private interests, this initiative will unlock new opportunities, reduce development friction, and ensure tourism plays a central role in shaping Kingston’s next phase of growth.

Tactical Actions

- Co-develop a Tourism Investment Narrative and “open for business” messaging aligned with the City’s EcDev strategy and the City of Kingston strategic plan
- Identify and map key investment-ready tourism assets (e.g., adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, new accommodations, tour operations)
- Create a digital investor toolkit with data, zoning guidance, and process steps for tourism-related investment
- Partner with EcDev to target tourism and hospitality investors through trade shows, investor summits, and digital outreach
- Develop a tourism infrastructure prioritization framework to support business case alignment with council expectations

Timeframe

- Medium-term (6-12 months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, Kingston Economic Development Corporation, City of Kingston
- **Support:** Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Kingston Accommodation Partners

Outputs

- Kingston tourism investment prospectus developed and distributed
- Prioritized pipeline of investable projects
- Investor-facing digital toolkit published

Outcomes

- Increased private sector tourism investment
- Improved perception of Kingston as tourism-development ready
- Stronger political alignment with tourism sector growth



PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Initiative 4: Support investment to develop a conference centre

Description/Rationale

- Kingston’s current inventory of meetings and events infrastructure lacks the scale, flexibility, and modern amenities required to compete in Ontario’s business events market. Demand analysis shows a clear gap for a mid-sized, purpose-built conference facility capable of hosting multi-day meetings, exhibitions, and hybrid events. The absence of such infrastructure has limited Kingston’s ability to attract high-value corporate, government, and association business, especially outside the summer leisure season.
- This initiative builds directly on the findings of the 2024 Conference Centre Feasibility Study and partner consensus on its economic importance. The goal is to secure the development of a new conference centre by finalizing a location, engaging with funding partners, confirming governance structures, and initiating architectural planning. The conference centre will support local employment, stimulate year-round hotel demand, and increase mid-week and shoulder season visitation. If planned and executed in close coordination with the private sector and City of Kingston, it can become a cornerstone of Kingston’s long-term visitor economy growth.
- Tourism Kingston’s role is to prime the pump for potential conferences, promote Kingston as a business event destination, etc., and then market the conference centre when built to relevant markets.

Tactical Actions

- Structure a public-private partnership (PPP) model, including hotel developer alignment
- Submit applications for infrastructure funding from federal and provincial programs
- Incorporate design features that enable year-round use, sustainability, and community integration

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Accommodation Partners, private investors, provincial tourism partners, meeting planner associations

Outputs

- Finalized Conference Centre Development Agreement

Outcomes

- Increased overnight stays and weekday visitation through business events and conferences
- Enhanced downtown vibrancy and hospitality revenues
- Positioned Kingston as a tier-two meetings destination in Ontario

PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Initiative 5: Prioritize improvements for sports and event facilities

Description/Rationale

- Kingston’s sports and event infrastructure is aging and unevenly distributed, resulting in missed opportunities to host regional tournaments, high-performance training events, and indoor/outdoor recreational activities. Facilities such as Centre 70, the INVISTA Centre, the Memorial Centre, and aquatic centres all require targeted upgrades to meet contemporary standards for accessibility, spectator experience, and athlete performance.
- In addition, the new East End High Performance Centre offers a chance to rebalance facility access across the city. This Centre has multi-sport capabilities, but also satisfies Kingston’s need for turf as an option for a soccer stadium project.
- This initiative aims to systematically identify, scope, and prioritize recommended investments in Kingston’s sport and event venues that could best position them as community assets with tourism potential. Strategic modernization undertaken in alignment with City-led asset management and infrastructure renewal will improve Kingston’s competitiveness in the provincial and national tournament circuit, while also serving local needs. Improvements of identified benefit to sport tourism would consider locker room upgrades, lighting, digital infrastructure, and accessibility. Partnerships with user groups, local sports clubs, schools, and event producers will be key to ensuring the upgrades reflect demand and generate sustainable use.

Tactical Actions

- Conduct a detailed asset audit of priority sports and event venues, including seasonal demand and repair status
- Coordinate with the City to identify facility requirements for event compliance (e.g., changing rooms, media facilities, spectator seating, accessibility) in alignment with Asset Management and Strategic Plans
- Collaborate with national and provincial sports associations to identify hosting opportunities linked to upgrades
- Leverage public funding programs to align tourism objectives with community benefit
- Conduct a detailed analysis of ice surface usage across sports and event activities, including capacity, seasonal demand, and future infrastructure needs
- Coordinate with partners to develop strategies to allocate ice during periods of infrastructure renewal and/or construction when ice pads may be unavailable for use, with an intent to balance and mitigate impacts to tourism events/tournaments and community use

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** City of Kingston, Tourism Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Accommodation Partners, provincial sport organizations, local sport organizations, private-public sport infrastructure facility providers

Outputs

- Sports Infrastructure Upgrade Action Plan
- Capital Funding Proposals and Grant Submissions
- Sports Hosting Prospectus aligned with upgraded facilities

Outcomes

- Increased hosting of regional, national, and international sports events
- Improved community access and functionality of sports assets
- Boost in off-peak hotel demand and tourism spending

PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Initiative 6: Facilitate transportation access for visitors

Description/Rationale

- Kingston's intercity transportation infrastructure is a vital but under-optimized element of its visitor experience. Although Kingston is serviced by VIA Rail and regional bus providers, these systems currently operate in silos, creating fragmented arrival experiences. There is no coordinated arrival hub, minimal shared infrastructure, and a lack of intuitive wayfinding or signage. The VIA Rail station, while a critical node, lacks integration with coach services, taxis, and active transportation options that could better connect visitors to the waterfront, downtown, and key accommodations.
- Support the updated official plan with a specific focus on the integrated mobility plan through the City of Kingston.

Tactical Actions

- Collaborate with VIA Rail, intercity coach operators, and the City to explore shared arrival infrastructure at the VIA Rail station
- Install clear visitor-oriented signage, maps, and wayfinding at key arrival points
- Develop a mobility marketing toolkit for visitors (e.g., transit pass info, bike share, walking paths)
- Continue to advocate for alignment between visitor flows and the City's Official Plan/Integrated Mobility Plan and planned infrastructure updates

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** VIA Rail, Ontario Motor Coach Association, Kingston Transit, Kingston Airport

Outputs

- TBD

Outcomes

- Improved visitor arrival experience and satisfaction
- Increased use of sustainable transportation by visitors
- Enhanced access to attractions and accommodations from gateways

PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Initiative 7: Support the city to explore different investment models for the airport

Description/Rationale

- Kingston Airport has commissioned a master plan which outlines alternatives for use and activation.
- The Kingston Airport is a latent tourism asset: strategically located, municipally owned, and underutilized in terms of commercial air service. Recent attempts to restore scheduled air connectivity have faltered due to infrastructure limitations, operator risk, market uncertainty, fuel costs, and skilled labour shortages. However, without air access, Kingston’s competitiveness for business travel, event hosting, and long-haul tourism is significantly constrained.
- This initiative will assess different models of governance and operations as a path to unlock investment and reintroduce viable commercial service. The goal is not simply to revive air access, but to do so in a way that aligns with Kingston’s destination brand, meets the expectations of high-value travellers, and complements broader visitor economy goals. By anchoring this initiative in a robust feasibility study and partner engagement process, Kingston can pursue an air service model that is operationally sustainable, regionally integrated, and attractive to carriers.
- This initiative also has a significant impact on resident-life; approximately 80k residents used the Kingston Airport prior to COVID and now await its reactivation.

Tactical Actions

- Accelerate the airport master plan recommendations
- Support development of a landline motorcoach service between Kingston and Toronto Airport
- Integrate airport strategy with broader destination access and promotion plans

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Economic Development, private aviation partners, Kingston Accommodation Partners

Outputs

- Partner alignment on air service strategy

Outcomes

- Reintroduction of sustainable commercial air service
- Enhanced connectivity to priority visitor markets
- Increased ability to attract business events and long-haul travellers

PILLAR 2: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & OPTIMIZATION

Initiative 8: Advance waterfront infrastructure

Description/Rationale

- Kingston’s waterfront is one of the city’s most defining tourism assets, offering iconic views, accessible public spaces, and a strong connection to the region’s maritime heritage. However, existing infrastructure does not fully meet the needs of today’s evolving visitor economy. Challenges such as limited docking capacity, inadequate terminal amenities, and the absence of integrated transportation and coordinated programming reduce the waterfront’s ability to support a broad mix of tourism activities – from recreational boating to waterfront events and sailing experiences. Enhancing waterfront infrastructure and visitor readiness will better serve current demand, extend activity into shoulder seasons, and unlock new visitor markets, all while improving community access to Kingston’s unique shoreline.
- This initiative proposes infrastructure enhancements and experience improvements while ensuring alignment with community expectations. Investments should focus on terminal functionality, signage, transportation links, and partnerships with downtown businesses. It will also leverage other high-potential waterfront assets, such as Portsmouth Olympic Harbour and Breakwater Park for complementary sailing and water-based experiences. By prioritizing an activated, visitor-friendly waterfront, Kingston can position itself as a standout Great Lakes port city.
- Furthermore, advancement of waterfront infrastructure also supports water access for residents to use by way of an outdoor pool, lessons, and recreational usage.

Tactical Actions

- Conduct infrastructure assessment of docking capacity and future needs
- Improve walking facilities and welcome services
- Develop diversified water-based experiences, wayfinding, and guided tour offerings
- Partner with city core merchants and cultural sites to create seamless visitor pathways
- Explore seasonal activation of adjacent waterfront nodes like Portsmouth Olympic Harbour
- Explore the feasibility of a deep-water dock, including but not limited to a lease, the operational plan, staffing, financing, etc.

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Accommodation Partners, Parks Canada, Downtown Kingston BIA, cruise operators

Outputs

- Upgraded docking infrastructure and signage
- Optimization of existing infrastructure
- New seasonal partnerships across waterfront businesses and attractions

Outcomes

- Increased downtown visitor spending
- Enhanced visibility of Kingston as a Great Lakes port
- Revitalized waterfront experience aligned with both community and visitor needs



PILLAR 3: MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

PILLAR 3: MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Initiative 9: Integrate pre-existing creative strategies into the IDS

Description/Rationale

- Kingston has invested in multiple cultural and creative strategies across music and film/media, yet many of these efforts remain disconnected from its broader tourism planning. Without alignment, opportunities to leverage creative assets for destination differentiation, economic impact, and resident engagement are diluted. As creative industries increasingly drive tourism demand and cultural brand value, there is an urgent need to unify these strategies within the Integrated Destination Strategy framework.
- This initiative seeks to map, align, and integrate Kingston’s creative sector strategies into the implementation of IDS 3.0. Doing so will provide clarity to partners, support funding applications, and unlock synergies across programming, marketing, and infrastructure. It will also create a stronger foundation for creative-led visitor experiences and city-wide storytelling.

Tactical Actions

- Review and synthesize all existing municipal and sector-led creative strategies
- Identify shared goals, overlaps, and implementation synergies
- Develop a shared creative sector work plan aligned with IDS objectives
- Coordinate timelines and responsibilities with relevant departments and partners
- Build in performance measures tied to creative economy and visitor engagement

Timeframe

- Short-term (1-6 months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston

Outputs

- Consolidated creative sector implementation roadmap
- IDS-aligned action items across culture, music and film/media
- Coordinated messaging and storytelling strategies

Outcomes

- Stronger integration of creative assets into tourism strategy
- Greater cross-sector collaboration and funding alignment
- Increased visibility of Kingston’s cultural identity among visitors and residents

PILLAR 3: MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Initiative 10: Establish sustainable funding for the Music Office and the Film and Media Office

Description/Rationale

- Kingston’s Film and Media Office and Music Office have become cornerstones for attracting productions, supporting local talent, and enhancing the city’s cultural profile. However, funding is currently dependent on year-to-year allocations, limiting their ability to plan long-term, develop programs, or compete with peer cities offering more stable incentives and infrastructure. As film and music tourism become increasingly viable economic and promotional tools, Kingston must institutionalize support for this office to fully capitalize on its creative potential.
- This initiative aims to secure long-term, sustainable funding for the Film and Media Office and Music Office through a combination of municipal contributions, private-sector partnerships, and fee-for-service mechanisms. It will also expand the offices’ mandate to include talent development, festival support, scouting services, and strategic promotion of Kingston as a production destination. Establishing reliable funding will elevate Kingston’s competitiveness, enhance industry professionalism, and better integrate the offices into city-wide tourism and economic development plans.

Tactical Actions

- Develop a multi-year funding agreement with the City of Kingston and partner organizations
- Create a blended revenue model, including private sponsorships, fee-for-service, and grant-seeking support
- Establish performance metrics to demonstrate ROI and visitor impact

Timeframe

- Medium-term (6-12 months)

Roles

- Lead:** Tourism Kingston
- Support:** City of Kingston, Ontario Creates, Kingston Economic Development, local production and music partners

Outputs

- Multi-year funding agreement for the Film and Media Office and the Music Office under the 5-year SLA with the City of Kingston

Outcomes

- Increased music and film and media production activity in Kingston
- Stronger industry relationships and talent retention
- Enhanced visibility of Kingston as a cultural tourism hub
- Sustainable funding for music and film and media

PILLAR 3: MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Initiative 11: Continue to support the development of the film and animation studios

Description/Rationale

- The planned animation studio in Kingston represents a transformational opportunity to attract new economic activity, retain youth talent, and diversify the city’s creative industries. With the global animation industry growing rapidly and Canadian jurisdictions competing for high-value productions, Kingston can stand out by offering unique value propositions – including affordability, proximity to Toronto, quality of life, and incentives that rival US-based operations.
- This initiative will support the studio’s development through targeted advocacy, business case promotion, and strategic positioning in provincial and federal conversations. It will also aim to embed the studio into Kingston’s tourism and creative industries ecosystem, exploring synergies with educational institutions, festivals, and talent incubators. Supporting this studio will position Kingston as an emerging hub for digital content production, while reinforcing the city’s creative brand.
- The development of the film studio will be a transformative asset for Kingston, supporting end-to-end production capabilities that attract new investment, create local jobs, and position the city as a competitive hub for film and television in Canada.

Tactical Actions

- Promote the studio’s economic and tourism benefits through business and media channels
- Develop opportunities with Queen’s, St. Lawrence College, and digital arts programs to feed into relevant industries
- Explore visitor experiences or behind-the-scenes programming tied to the studio

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Tourism Kingston
- **Support:** City of Kingston, animation studio partners, Queen’s University, St. Lawrence College

Outputs

- Studio advocacy and promotion package
- Partnership framework with local institutions
- Talent development roadmap for creative workforce

Outcomes

- Secured investment and talent pipeline for the studios

PILLAR 3: MUSIC, FILM/MEDIA & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Initiative 12: Support Esport development

Description/Rationale

- Esport represents a fast-growing segment of the global entertainment and tourism economy, with competitive events drawing thousands of in-person spectators and millions of online viewers. Kingston is uniquely positioned to carve a niche in this field due to its strong student population, affordable infrastructure, and emerging creative tech talent. However, the city currently lacks the planning, partnerships, and facilities to host or support major Esport initiatives. Slush Puppie Place could offer an ideal venue for Esport, which is an additional opportunity that would be leveraged with a purpose-built conference centre.
- This initiative will support Kingston’s entry into the Esport economy by facilitating pilot events, identifying potential venue partners, and integrating Esport into the city’s broader event strategy. It will also explore private-public models to attract gaming companies, connect with post-secondary digital media programs, and generate new visitor segments. By investing early in this sector, Kingston can position itself as a small-city innovator in experiential and digital tourism.

Tactical Actions

- Conduct a market assessment of Esport tourism potential in Kingston
- Facilitate pilot events with student organizations, gaming companies, and local venues
- Develop partnerships with Queen’s and St. Lawrence College for talent retention
- Explore shared-use venues for tournaments
- Launch marketing pilots to test Esport-driven visitation campaigns

Timeframe

- Medium-term (6-12 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Tourism Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Accommodation Partners, Slush Puppie Place, local Esport clubs

Outputs

- Partner engagement and event calendar
- Strategic roadmap for Esport tourism growth

Outcomes

- New visitor segments attracted through Esport events
- Enhanced use of local venues and talent
- Early leadership in a high-growth entertainment niche



PILLAR 4: KEY TOURISM DEMAND GENERATORS

PILLAR 4: KEY TOURISM DEMAND GENERATORS

Initiative 13: Unblock and protect Kingston Pen to activate year-long programming

Description/Rationale

- Kingston Penitentiary is one of Canada’s most distinctive heritage assets and a cornerstone of Kingston’s visitor economy. With a powerful story, unmatched architecture, and national recognition, the Pen consistently ranks among the top reasons people visit the city. But despite its proven tourism value, the future of the site is under threat. The federal government is considering repurposing the facility for housing, which would represent a dramatic loss to Kingston’s cultural and economic landscape. If the site is removed from the tourism sector, the city risks losing one of its most valuable assets for community storytelling, experiential programming, and shoulder-season visitation.
- This initiative proposes a decisive response. Building on the Kingston Pen Mixed-Use Venue Feasibility Study, it supports the City of Kingston in acquiring the site and positions Tourism Kingston or an operating partner to lead its redevelopment for tourism use. The goal is not simply to preserve the Pen, but to activate it year-round through immersive programming, heritage tours, cultural exhibitions, and events that extend far beyond the traditional summer season. Doing so would support community revitalization, protect Kingston’s leadership in heritage tourism, and open new pathways for investment and creative collaboration.

Tactical Actions

- Advocate to the federal government for a long-term lease of the Kingston Pen
- Develop a long-term governance and operational plan for the site under a designated cultural entity
- Design a phased activation plan that includes immersive tours, seasonal programming, lighting installations, and educational partnerships
- Integrate the Kingston Pen programming with nearby attractions (e.g., Fort Henry, Bellevue House) to establish a heritage-focused marketing and visitor strategy
- Secure funding and community partnerships to support year-round operations and visitor experience enhancements

CRITICAL ENABLER TO ACHIEVE TOURISM OBJECTIVES

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** City of Kingston, Tourism Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Correctional Services Canada (CS), Parks Canada, attractions & museum committees, St. Lawrence Parks Commission

Outputs

- Kingston Pen site acquisition or formalized long-term lease agreement
- Year-round programming and operations plan
- Marketing and visitation strategy for the Kingston Pen heritage district

Outcomes

- Preservation of the Kingston Pen as a long-term tourism and cultural asset
- Increased heritage-based visitation outside the peak season
- Revitalization of the surrounding district through tourism and cultural investment

PILLAR 4: KEY TOURISM DEMAND GENERATORS

Initiative 14: Support the creation of a Kingston restaurant association

Description/Rationale

- The culinary sector is one of Kingston’s most vibrant and visible tourism assets. From chef-driven restaurants to local cafes, breweries, and food events, the city offers a dining experience that rivals much larger destinations. Yet despite its importance to both visitors and residents, the sector lacks formal coordination and representation. Restaurants are underrepresented in strategic planning, fragmented in their marketing efforts, and disconnected from city-wide tourism initiatives that could drive more business through their doors.
- This initiative proposes the creation of a Kingston Restaurant Association under Kingston Accommodation Partners to serve as the collective voice of the food and beverage sector. The association would support restaurants through shared marketing, advocacy, industry development, and event collaboration. It would also play a key role in workforce recruitment and training, seasonal promotion, and participation in destination-wide programming. By bringing restaurateurs together under a common platform, Kingston can elevate its culinary brand, better support local entrepreneurs, and fully integrate food into the city’s visitor economy strategy.

Tactical Actions

- Convene a working group of restaurateurs to co-design the association’s structure, purpose, and governance
- Establish the association under Kingston Accommodation Partners with start-up funding from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
- Identify staff resources to support the long-term sustainability of a Kingston restaurant association (under Kingston Accommodation Partners)
- Launch a membership campaign and host industry networking events to onboard partners
- Create shared marketing initiatives (e.g., culinary trails, dining maps, seasonal promotions) in collaboration with Tourism Kingston
- Develop an advocacy platform to represent restaurant needs in city-wide initiatives, workforce development, and regulatory issues

Timeframe

- Short-term (1-6 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** Tourism Kingston, City of Kingston, Downtown Kingston BIA, Chamber of Commerce, local restaurateurs, culinary event producers, Culinary Tourism Alliance, Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association

Outputs

- Incorporated Kingston Restaurant Association with active membership
- Culinary marketing toolkit and digital assets
- Annual calendar of joint promotions and events

Outcomes

- Stronger representation and coordination within Kingston’s culinary sector
- Increased restaurant visibility in tourism marketing and events
- Enhanced visitor experience and local food identity



PILLAR 5: EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

PILLAR 5: EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

Initiative 15: Advocate for better provincial funding for external funding match programs

Description/Rationale

- Kingston’s ability to scale tourism impact is often constrained by limited access to provincial or federal match-funding opportunities. Programs from Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Celebrate Ontario, and the Ontario Sport Hosting Program require matching funds that can be difficult to secure at the municipal level. This has placed Kingston at a competitive disadvantage relative to larger cities or those with more centralized tourism budgets.
- This initiative aims to proactively engage provincial ministries and funding bodies to improve accessibility and flexibility of matching grants, ensuring Kingston can compete for major event hosting, marketing partnerships, and industry development programs. With dedicated advocacy and cross-sector alignment, Kingston can unlock significant new capital to support strategic initiatives in sports, culture, and tourism growth.

Tactical Actions

- Develop an advocacy plan aligned with provincial tourism and economic priorities
- Coordinate with partner cities and DMOs to collectively lobby for reforms to match-funding criteria
- Engage directly with program administrators to explore pilot projects or Kingston-specific mechanisms
- Build a funding readiness case library to streamline applications
- Communicate the impact of underutilized opportunities to provincial representatives

Timeframe

- Short-term (1-6 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** Tourism Kingston, Destination Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, sport and cultural partners, RTO9

Outputs

- Advocacy framework and position paper
- Portfolio of high-potential, ready-to-fund projects
- Enhanced partnerships with provincial ministries

Outcomes

- Increased provincial and federal funding to support major tourism initiatives
- Enhanced ability to attract and host events and campaigns
- Stronger provincial visibility and collaboration

PILLAR 5: EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

Initiative 16: Target visitors to Ontario around marquee events, e.g., FIFA World Cup 2026

Description/Rationale

- The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be one of the largest tourism events ever held in North America, with multiple matches taking place in Toronto and nearby cities. Kingston has an opportunity to attract domestic and international visitors traveling to Ontario by positioning itself as a charming, accessible side trip or multi-day extension. Beyond FIFA, other major events such as the Grey Cup, Pan-Am Games, and major Canadian anniversaries also create regional visitor flows that Kingston can tap into with strategic campaigns.
- This initiative will activate timely, thematic marketing campaigns and experience bundles that link Kingston’s cultural, culinary, and outdoor offerings with Ontario-wide travel momentum.

Tactical Actions

- Develop FIFA-linked itineraries and landing pages promoting Kingston as a stopover destination
- Partner with Destination Ontario and VIA Rail on themed travel packages
- Launch digital campaigns targeting ticket-holders and major event attendees
- Work with local venues and sports groups to host satellite programming or watch parties
- Track emerging marquee events to proactively position Kingston

Timeframe

- Medium-term (6-12 months)

Roles

- **Lead:** Tourism Kingston
- **Support:** Kingston Accommodation Partners, Destination Ontario, VIA Rail, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, event organizers, hospitality businesses

Outputs

- Event-linked itineraries and travel packages
- Digital campaign assets and landing pages
- Co-branded promotions with regional partners

Outcomes

- Increased visitation during marquee event periods
- Stronger alignment between Kingston and Ontario-wide tourism campaigns
- Expanded awareness of Kingston as a complementary destination

PILLAR 5: EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

Initiative 17: Invest in a strategy to elevate Kingston within the tourism industry

Description/Rationale

- While Kingston has made steady gains in recognition in its key customer markets (e.g., leisure, travel trade), its brand remains overlooked at the greater industry level.
- This initiative supports the development of a multi-tiered brand strategy and visibility that elevates Kingston as a key partner in Canadian and international industry organizations and campaigns (e.g., NorthStar programs for Destination Canada).

Tactical Actions

- Conduct a positioning audit to understand Kingston’s current brand perception across key markets
- Develop a new tiered marketing strategy aligned with emerging segments and visitor trends
- Invest in public relations, trade, and influencer engagement campaigns across Canada and key international markets
- Expand presence at major industry shows, including those focused on culture, sports, and culinary tourism
- Build alignment with Ontario and Canada-level storytelling platforms to amplify reach
- Leverage Kingston's track record as a small destination with a strong brand and Innovative practices within the tourism industry
- Build a Kingston presence on key tourism industry boards, campaigns, and speaking opportunities

Timeframe

- Long-term (12+ months)

Roles

- **Co-leads:** Tourism Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners
- **Support:** Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, RTO9, regional DMOs, media and agency partners

Outputs

- Presence in provincial and national board to showcase Kingston’s tourism offering
- Plan to provide visibility to Kingston as a destination in front of national and provincial organizations
- National and international content partnerships

Outcomes

- Increased awareness and inclusion of Kingston in key tourism industry decision-making and campaigns
- Increased awareness of Kingston across target markets
- Stronger media and industry visibility for key tourism experiences
- Improved brand equity and conversion across high-yield segments

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