

Three business cards sat on the kitchen counter for two weeks before I finally picked up the phone. Two came from neighbors whose fences had gone up in the past year. The third came from a flyer that arrived in the mailbox, promising fast installation and free estimates. The yards on either side of mine were different animals: one sat on a gentle grade with open views, and the other backed onto a ravine lot where the ground dropped away and the soil turned to heavy clay after every rain. One walk around that property line made the situation clear. Comparing those three contractors would mean comparing three different readings of a complicated site, and the cheapest number in the pile would probably belong to the company that ignored half of what I could see. That is the honest starting point for anyone learning how to compare local fence contractors while searching for a fence contractor near me. The search is easy. The comparison is where the real work begins.

How to Compare Local Fence Contractors: Start With the Yard, Not the Search

Before you type anything into a search bar, walk the full perimeter of the property with a notebook. You are not measuring the fence yet, though rough numbers will help later. You are documenting the conditions a contractor will have to work with, because those conditions are what actually separate one bid from another. Note where the existing fence is still sound and where it is rotting at ground level. Look for grade changes, low spots that hold water, tree roots pushing against the line, and any spot where a post would have to go through buried concrete or rock. Write down how many gates you want, how wide they need to be, and whether the driveway side of the house gives a crew room to bring materials through, or whether everything has to be carried down a narrow side yard by hand.

Then settle the boundary question before anyone sets foot on the property. A surprising number of fence disputes start with an owner who assumed the old fence marked the true line. If the fence sits on or near the property line, and especially if you share it with a neighbor, confirm where the line actually runs. A survey is the reliable way to do this, and if the property was surveyed recently, dig out the drawing. Your municipal office can tell you what records exist for your lot and what rules apply to fence placement in your area, so verify the current requirements there before you commit to a design. This sounds like paperwork, but it is the cheapest insurance you will buy on this project, because the alternative is paying to move a brand-new fence.



Build a Candidate List Worth Calling

Three to five candidates is a healthy number. More than that and the comparison gets muddy. Fewer, and you have no real picture of the market. The most reliable source of names is still the fence that is already standing: a neighbor whose fence has looked straight through five winters can tell you who built it and whether they would hire them again. Local fence supply yards also know which crews do clean work, because they see the same contractors week after week. Online reviews are useful, but read them the way you would read a reference letter. Look for the recent ones, the ones that describe a specific problem, and the way the company responded. A contractor who answers a complaint with a clear explanation and an offer to fix the issue is telling you more about their character than a stack of five-star ratings ever will.

Filter for fit before you invite anyone over. Does the company work in your area, or will the crew drive a long way each way and charge you for the travel? Do they build the type of fence you want, or are they a cedar specialist who will happily sell you a vinyl fence they install twice a year? How long have they been in business, and can the

person on the phone talk about materials and installation like they do this every week? None of these questions are about price. They are about whether this contractor is a realistic candidate at all, and they take five minutes to answer.

The First Phone Call Is a Filter

Treat the first call like a screening interview, because that is what it is. Ask whether they use their own crews or subcontract the installation. A company that hires out the actual building work is a company whose quality you cannot inspect in advance. Ask what the scheduling situation looks like for your season, and listen for a straight answer. Across the GTA, spring thaw and early summer book up fast, and a contractor who promises a start date two weeks out in peak season without hesitation may be promising more than they can deliver. Ask whether they handle the permission process for the job themselves or expect you to, and be ready to verify whatever they tell you with your municipality.

Pay attention to how the estimator talks on the phone. Do they ask about your site, or do they quote a per-foot price before they have seen anything? A flat per-foot number over the phone is a red flag, because the fence behind your garage on a slope is not the same fence as the straight run along the front yard. The right response to your questions is more questions. If the person on the other end of the line is impatient with your situation now, they will be worse in August when there is a problem.

Site Visits Are Working Sessions

The site visit is where you learn the most, and most owners waste it by standing in the driveway making small talk. Walk the line with the estimator. Watch whether they pace out the full run or stop at the gate. Notice whether they ask about the shared fence on your north side, the grade change behind the garage, or the utility corridor at the back of the lot. A good estimator flags the things that cost money before you ask: the post that has to go in near a buried sprinkler line, the section of old fence that has to come out by hand, the corner where clay soil will need extra attention to stay put through a freeze-thaw cycle.

Ask each estimator how they would handle the specific complications on your property. If the backyard slopes, how do they deal with the change in grade: stepping the panels, racking them, or running a stepped top line? If you back onto a hydro corridor or an easement, do they know the access rules for that land? If snow loads worry you, how do they set posts and what spacing do they recommend? You are not quizzing them. You are listening for whether they have thought about your site as a real place or are reciting a standard procedure. The contractor who measures twice and asks about the neighbor's dog is telling you how they run their business.

Quotes Only Matter When the Scope Matches

Here is the number one reason bids from different contractors never match: they are not quoting the same fence. One company prices a six-foot cedar fence with two gates and concrete-set posts. Another prices the same fence with posts set on gravel backfill and a single gate, or cedar on the front face and a cheaper picket on the back. When the numbers come in, you are not comparing apples to apples. You are comparing a fence to a different fence. The fix is to write your own scope sheet before you ask for quotes and hand it to every contractor. Include the material, the height, the total run in feet if you have measured it, the number and width of gates, the post installation method, removal and disposal of the old fence, and cleanup expectations.

Then ask each contractor to price that exact list, and ask them to show their line items rather than one lump sum. You want to see how they break out materials, labor, demolition, and extras, because that breakdown tells you what they actually plan to do. If one bid comes in dramatically lower than the others, do not celebrate. Ask what

[residential vinyl fence contractor](#) is different. It may be a legitimate discount on materials. It may also be a thinner gauge of metal, less concrete per post, or a crew that has not priced the removal of that concrete pad behind the garage. The conversation about the difference is where the real comparison happens.

Check References Like You Mean It

Ask every candidate for a recent job in your area and actually call the owner. Keep it short. Ask whether the crew showed up when they said they would, whether the site was left clean, whether the final bill matched the quote, and whether anything changed mid-job and how that was handled. That last question matters most, because every fence job has a surprise, and the difference between a good contractor and a bad one is how the surprise gets handled. If the reference is a commercial property manager, ask the same questions. Their answer will tell you how the company behaves when the client is not standing in the yard every day.

Make the Call, Then Read the Contract

Price matters, but it is one input among several. Weigh the estimate against the estimator. The company that walked the whole line, asked about your neighbors, and explained its post installation method in detail is worth more than the one that emailed a number an hour after the visit. Look at scheduling, at who will actually run the job, and at how the company communicates. Then read the contract before you sign it. It should name the materials and their specifications, the height and total length, the gates, the post spacing and installation method, the timeline, the cleanup commitment, and the payment schedule. Confirm the warranty terms in writing, and if anything about permits, property lines, insurance, or liability coverage is unclear, verify the current requirements with your municipality and with the contractor's insurer before work begins.

The Comparison Is the Whole Project

Learning how to compare local fence contractors properly does not take a spreadsheet genius. It takes order: know your yard, filter your candidates, run the visits, align the scopes, check the references, and read the contract. Do that, and the search for a fence contractor near me ends with a fence that stands straight through a GTA winter, a neighbor who is still speaking to you, and a final bill that matches the number you were quoted. That is a good outcome, and it has very little to do with luck.