RESEARCH REPORT — NORTH ATLANTA SMALL BUSINESS SERIES

Do AI Assistants Recommend the Same Local Businesses as Google Maps?

We asked ChatGPT and Google's AI Mode for the best HVAC companies, plumbers, roofers, dentists, auto repair shops and pest control companies in Lawrenceville, Cumming, Gainesville and Canton, then compared their answers with Google's local map results

Prepared by Make It Loud | North Atlanta Small Business Research Series

Data Sources: Original field test by Make It Loud Digital Marketing, Nov. 2, 2026: 24 Google searches, 24 Google AI Mode answers and 24 ChatGPT answers

86%	56%	65%	191
of Google map-pack top-3 businesses that Google AI Mode also recommended	of Google map-pack top-3 businesses that ChatGPT also recommended	of ChatGPT's recommendations that were not in Google's top 3	different businesses recommended across 24 searches, vs. 72 map-pack spots

BOTTOM LINE

For 24 local service searches across Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall and Cherokee counties, Google's AI Mode stayed close to Google's own map results: it recommended 62 of the 72 businesses in the map pack's top three spots (86%) and included the No. 1 map result in 21 of 24 answers. ChatGPT went its own way. It named 40 of the 72 map-pack businesses (56%), included the No. 1 map result in only 12 of 24 answers, and in 3 searches recommended none of Google's top three. Nearly two-thirds of ChatGPT's picks were businesses that did not appear in Google's top three. Ranking in the map pack still carries real weight in Google's AI, but it does not guarantee a mention in ChatGPT.

Executive Summary

When someone asks an AI assistant to recommend a local plumber or dentist, which businesses does it name? And are they the same businesses Google shows in its map results, the three listings that have long been the most valuable real estate in local search? To find out, Make It Loud ran a side-by-side field test on Nov. 2, 2026.

We searched for six common local services in four North Georgia cities, one in each of the counties we serve, using the same wording everywhere: "best [service] in [city], GA." For each of the 24 searches, we recorded the top three businesses in Google's map pack, the businesses Google's AI Mode recommended, and the businesses ChatGPT recommended. Then we compared the lists. In total, the three sources named 191 different businesses.

Finding 1 | Google's AI Mode Largely Follows the Map Pack

Google AI Mode's recommendations closely matched Google's own local results. Of the 72 businesses holding the top three map-pack spots across our 24 searches, AI Mode recommended 62. It included the No. 1 map result in 21 of 24 answers, and in 21 of 24 its first-named recommendation was a map-pack business. In 15 searches, all three map-pack businesses appeared in the AI answer.

AI Mode recommended 86% of map-pack top-3 businesses and led with a map-pack business in 21 of 24 answers

AI Mode usually went beyond the top three, naming 5.5 businesses per answer on average, and it typically organized them by situation, such as "best for emergencies" or "best family-owned option." But its core list looked much like the map pack. For businesses, this means the work that earns a top map ranking (a complete Google Business Profile, steady reviews and a relevant website) appears to carry over directly into Google's AI answers.

Share of Google Map-Pack Top-3 Businesses Each AI Also Recommended (24 Searches)



Make It Loud field test, Nov. 2, 2026. 72 map-pack positions (top three non-sponsored businesses in each of 24 searches).

Finding 2 | ChatGPT Builds a Different List

ChatGPT's answers overlapped much less with Google's map results. It recommended 40 of the 72 map-pack businesses (56%), and its first-named pick was a map-pack business in 14 of 24 searches. Of the 113 businesses ChatGPT recommended, 73 (65%) were not among Google's top three. In 3 searches (plumbers and dentists in Lawrenceville, and dentists in Gainesville), ChatGPT named none of the map-pack businesses at all.

ChatGPT named the No. 1 map result in just 12 of 24 answers; 73 of its 113 picks were not in Google's top three

ChatGPT's answers showed star ratings, review counts and a map, so it was drawing on business listing data. But it selected differently. Even the two AIs disagreed: only 61 of ChatGPT's 113 picks (54%) were also named by Google AI Mode for the same search. A business that ranks well on Google can still be invisible in ChatGPT, and a business outside Google's top three can still be ChatGPT's first recommendation.

How Often Each Source Included Google's No. 1 Map Result (out of 24 Searches)



Make It Loud field test, Nov. 2, 2026. No. 1 map result = first non-sponsored business in Google's local results.

Finding 3 | Dentists Show the Biggest Gap

Agreement varied a lot by industry. For auto repair shops, ChatGPT recommended 10 of the 12 map-pack businesses across the four cities and AI Mode 11. For dentists, ChatGPT recommended only 2 of 12, and AI Mode 7, the lowest for both. HVAC was the second-largest gap for ChatGPT, at 5 of 12.

ChatGPT matched 17% of the dental map pack, vs. 83% for auto repair shops

Categories with many similar, well-reviewed providers, such as dental practices and HVAC contractors in fast-growing suburbs, appear to give AI assistants more room to pick differently. In those industries, being in the map pack is less of a guarantee of being named by AI.

Service	Map-pack businesses	Named by AI Mode	Named by ChatGPT
HVAC	12	11 (92%)	5 (42%)
Plumbing	12	12 (100%)	8 (67%)
Roofing	12	10 (83%)	8 (67%)
Dentists	12	7 (58%)	2 (17%)

Auto repair	12	11 (92%)	10 (83%)
Pest control	12	11 (92%)	7 (58%)
All services	**72**	**62 (86%)**	**40 (56%)**

Map-pack businesses = top three non-sponsored businesses in Google's local results, across four cities (12 per service). Source: Make It Loud field test, Nov. 2, 2026.

Finding 4 | AI Answers Widen the Field Beyond the Top Three

Three sources named 191 different businesses for 24 searches, an average of 8 per search

Google's map pack shows three businesses. The AI answers named more: an average of 5.5 per answer for AI Mode and 4.7 for ChatGPT. Across all three sources, 191 different businesses were recommended, an average of 8 per search. Agreement across all three was limited: in 20 of 24 searches at least one business was named by the map pack, AI Mode and ChatGPT, but only 37 of the 72 map-pack spots (51%) went to businesses that all three recommended.

That is both a risk and an opportunity. Businesses outside the top three can now be recommended, often for a specific need such as emergency service, older vehicles or anxious dental patients. Businesses that have relied on a top map ranking may share the spotlight with competitors they used to outrank.

City (county)	Map-pack businesses	Named by AI Mode	Named by ChatGPT
Lawrenceville (Gwinnett)	18	15 (83%)	7 (39%)
Cumming (Forsyth)	18	16 (89%)	12 (67%)
Gainesville (Hall)	18	16 (89%)	11 (61%)
Canton (Cherokee)	18	15 (83%)	10 (56%)

18 map-pack positions per city (six services, top three each). Source: Make It Loud field test, Nov. 2, 2026.

Finding 5 | Ads Are Showing Up Inside AI Answers

Google AI Mode included a sponsored local business section in 2 of 24 answers

Google's regular results showed a sponsored listing at the top of the map pack in 6 of 24 searches. Google AI Mode added a labeled "Sponsored" block of local businesses below its answer in 2 of 24 searches, both in Lawrenceville (HVAC and plumbing), where local service providers advertise heavily. We did not see advertising in ChatGPT's answers. AI search is becoming another place where local businesses can pay for visibility, though for now it is still uncommon in these searches.

What This Means for Local Businesses

1 Your Google Business Profile matters more, not less.
Google's AI Mode recommended 86% of the businesses in the map pack. Reviews, categories, photos, hours and a complete profile feed both the map results and Google's AI answers.

2 Don't assume Google rankings carry over to ChatGPT.
ChatGPT recommended only 56% of the map-pack businesses and often named companies Google ranked lower. Being visible to ChatGPT requires a strong presence across the web: reviews on more than one platform, accurate directory listings, local press and a website that clearly explains what you do and where.

3 Tell AI what you are best at.
Both AIs grouped recommendations by need: emergency service, family-owned, budget-friendly, specialties like septic, European cars or dental anxiety. Businesses that state their specialties clearly on their website and profile give AI a reason to recommend them for those situations.

4 Check your own visibility.
Ask ChatGPT and Google's AI Mode the questions your customers ask, in the cities you serve, and note who gets named. Answers change over time, so repeat the check regularly.

The Data: Results by Search

Search	Map-pack top 3 named by AI Mode	Map-pack top 3 named by ChatGPT	Map pack No. 1	ChatGPT's first pick
HVAC, Lawrenceville	3 of 3	1 of 3	Wall Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.	Triad Mechanical
Plumbing, Lawrenceville	3 of 3	0 of 3	1-Tom-Plumber	Prescher Plumbing Service
Roofing, Lawrenceville	3 of 3	2 of 3	Accent Roofing Service	Accent Roofing Service
Dentists, Lawrenceville	1 of 3	0 of 3	Dental Images of Gwinnett	Collins Hill Dental
Auto repair, Lawrenceville	3 of 3	3 of 3	Gunter Automotive	Gunter Automotive
Pest control, Lawrenceville	2 of 3	1 of 3	Nextgen Pest Solutions	Procare Pest Services
HVAC, Cumming	3 of 3	2 of 3	Allen Norris HVAC	Cheeky Heating, Cooling, & Plumbing
Plumbing, Cumming	3 of 3	3 of 3	AZERPLUMB - Plumbing & Drain	AZERPLUMB - Plumbing & Drain
Roofing, Cumming	3 of 3	2 of 3	Reset Roofing	Ajax Roofing
Dentists, Cumming	2 of 3	1 of 3	North Georgia Smiles	Forsyth Dental Partners, Inc.
Auto repair, Cumming	2 of 3	2 of 3	Team Ryan Automotive Cumming	Scott's Auto Center
Pest control, Cumming	3 of 3	2 of 3	Absolute Best Pest Control	Absolute Best Pest Control
HVAC, Gainesville	3 of 3	1 of 3	Gainesville Mechanical, Inc.	Conditioned Air Systems AC Repair & Plumbing
Plumbing, Gainesville	3 of 3	2 of 3	Gainesville Plumbing	Billy Bell Plumbing Inc
Roofing, Gainesville	2 of 3	2 of 3	Riverside Roofing	Skyline Contracting
Dentists, Gainesville	2 of 3	0 of 3	Georgia Smile Team Gainesville	Green Street Smiles
Auto repair, Gainesville	3 of 3	3 of 3	Pro Import Automotive Service and Repair	Angle Automotive
Pest control, Gainesville	3 of 3	3 of 3	Breda Pest Management	Combs Pest Control
HVAC, Canton	2 of 3	1 of 3	Comfort Zone Heating Cooling Plumbing	Atlanta Air Authority Inc
Plumbing, Canton	3 of 3	3 of 3	Bryan Plumbing Services	Fast Drains Plumbing
Roofing, Canton	2 of 3	2 of 3	Fraser Roofing, LLC	Fraser Roofing, LLC

Dentists, Canton	2 of 3	1 of 3	Greg Elwell Family Dentistry	Greg Elwell Family Dentistry
Auto repair, Canton	3 of 3	2 of 3	Chuck's Auto Repair	Chuck's Auto Repair
Pest control, Canton	3 of 3	1 of 3	Canton Termite & Pest Control	Vision Pest Management

Search wording: "best [service] in [city], GA." Source: Make It Loud field test, Nov. 2, 2026. Business names as displayed. Full lists for every search are available from Make It Loud on request.

About Make It Loud

Make It Loud Digital Marketing is a Metro Atlanta digital marketing agency serving small and midsize businesses across Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall and Cherokee counties and beyond. The agency provides search engine optimization, generative engine optimization (GEO) and AI search visibility, Google Business Profile management, website design, pay-per-click advertising, social media, podcast production and AI consulting for home service, healthcare, professional service, automotive and nonprofit clients. More research is published at makeitloud.net/research.

Methodology, Limitations & Sources

Approach. On Nov. 2, 2026, we ran 24 searches in the form "best [service] in [city], GA" for six services (HVAC company, plumber, roofing company, dentist, auto repair shop and pest control company) in four cities: Lawrenceville (Gwinnett County), Cumming (Forsyth), Gainesville (Hall) and Canton (Cherokee). For each search we recorded three lists. *Google map pack:* the first three non-sponsored businesses in the local "Businesses" results on a standard Google search; sponsored listings were recorded separately. *Google AI Mode:* the businesses recommended in the body of the AI Mode answer, using Google's option to answer without personalization, and excluding the separate sponsored section and the place cards shown below the answer. *ChatGPT:* the businesses in ChatGPT's numbered list of recommendations, using a temporary chat set to unpersonalized, so saved memory and past conversations could not influence results, on the default (Instant) setting.

Matching. Business names were standardized before comparison by removing punctuation, city names and suffixes such as LLC and Inc. (for example, "My Georgia Plumber" and "My Georgia Plumber, Inc."). Every merged name was checked by hand.

Limitations. This is a one-day snapshot. AI answers vary from one request to the next and change over time, and map results depend partly on where the searcher is located. All searches came from one desktop browser, and the city named in the search, not the searcher's location, defined the market. Results apply to these six services and four cities. In three AI Mode answers, one recommended business could not be captured cleanly from the page (two roofing searches and one Lawrenceville dental search that listed only two businesses), which may slightly understate AI Mode's overlap. Other AI assistants, such as Gemini, Perplexity and Copilot, were not tested. Business names are shown as each source displayed them; inclusion is not an endorsement.

Google Search Local "Businesses" results (map pack) and Google AI Mode, google.com, accessed Nov. 2, 2026.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) chatgpt.com, temporary chat, unpersonalized, accessed Nov. 2, 2026.