

The North Atlanta Google Ads Cost-Per-Click Benchmarks Study

What Businesses in Gwinnett and Forsyth County Are Actually Paying for Google Ads — by Industry — and What the Numbers Mean for Your Marketing Budget in 2026

Prepared by Make It Loud Digital Marketing Serving Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall, Cherokee, and North Atlanta
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Data Sources: WordStream / LocaliQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks Report (N=13,474 US search campaigns, April 2025 – March 2026) | LocaliQ 2026 Search Advertising Benchmarks | WordStream Google Ads Benchmarks 2016-2026 (10-year archive) | AdManage.ai 2026 CPC Analysis | Google Ads Platform Data

\$5.42	\$9.87	\$66.69	+134%
avg Google Ads CPC across all industries (2026)	CPC for legal services — highest of any category (2026)	avg cost per lead across all industries (2026)	CPC increase since 2016 (\$2.32 → \$5.42) over 10 years

BOTTOM LINE: The average North Atlanta business running Google Ads in 2026 pays \$5.42 per click across all industries — but that average conceals a 6-to-1 range that fundamentally changes how much budget you need to generate a lead. A legal services firm pays \$9.87 per click and \$131.63 per lead. A restaurant pays \$2.05 per click and \$30.57 per lead. An HVAC company or roofer running in the Home Improvement category pays \$8.33 per click and \$90.92 per lead. These are not estimates — they are median figures from 13,474 real campaigns analyzed by WordStream and LocaliQ. For a North Atlanta business spending \$1,000 per month on Google Ads without knowing their industry benchmark, they may be measuring performance against the wrong baseline, making poor budget decisions, and leaving money on the table against competitors who do know the numbers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every North Atlanta business that advertises on Google wants to know the same thing: am I paying the right amount? The problem is that most business owners have no external benchmark to measure against. They know what they're paying per click — but they have no idea if that's high, low, or normal for their industry. They know how many leads they're generating — but they can't tell if their conversion rate is competitive. And they know their monthly spend — but they can't calculate whether that budget should be producing 5 leads or 50. This study provides the benchmarks they need.

WordStream and LocaliQ publish an annual Google Ads benchmarks report based on analysis of tens of thousands of real advertiser campaigns. The 2026 edition analyzed 13,474 US-based search advertising campaigns running between April 2025 and March 2026, covering 23 industry categories. It is the most rigorous publicly available benchmark dataset for Google Ads performance by industry, and it is the primary source for every figure in this study. This report applies those national benchmarks to the North Atlanta context — what Gwinnett County roofers, Forsyth County dentists, Suwanee attorneys, and Cumming HVAC companies should actually expect to pay for a Google Ads click, and what they should expect to pay for a lead.

The findings are significant for two reasons. First, the range across industries is much wider than most business owners realize — a 6-to-1 spread from the cheapest clicks to the most expensive. Second, low CPC does not mean low cost-per-lead. Real estate has the third-lowest average CPC (\$3.22) but one of the highest cost-per-lead (\$102.51) because of a low conversion rate. Auto repair has a mid-range CPC (\$4.35) but the lowest cost-per-lead among high-volume categories (\$29.96) because of an exceptional 15.51% conversion rate. The metric that actually matters for budget planning is cost-per-lead — and most North Atlanta advertisers don't know theirs.

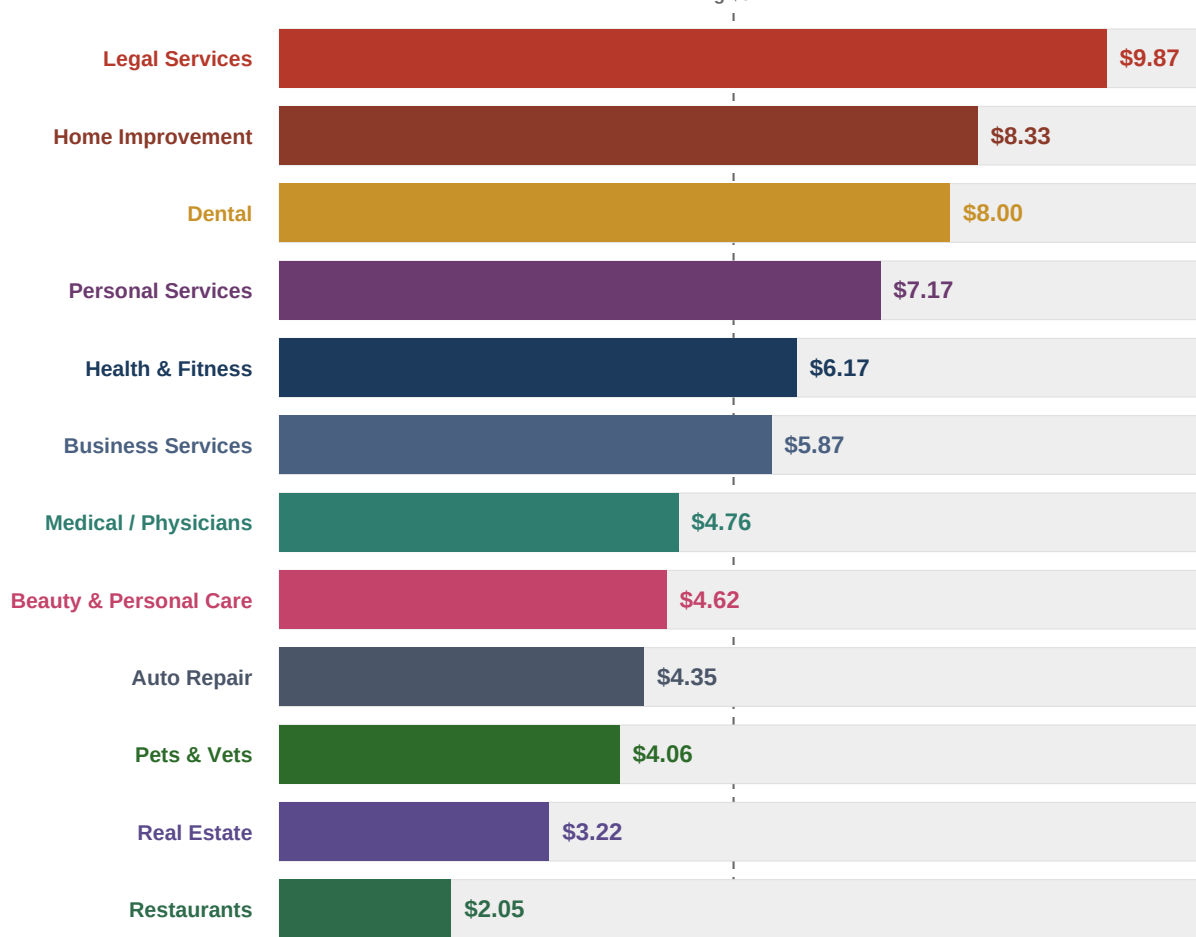
Finding 1

North Atlanta Google Ads Costs
Span a 6-to-1 Range Depending on
Your Industry Category

**\$1.63 to \$9.87 per
click — same
platform, very
different costs**

The 2026 WordStream benchmark data documents a 6-to-1 spread in average cost-per-click across the industries most relevant to North Atlanta businesses. At the high end: Attorneys and Legal Services at \$9.87 per click — the most expensive category in the entire dataset. Home and Home Improvement (which covers roofing, HVAC, plumbing, and remodeling) at \$8.33. Dentists and Dental Services at \$8.00. At the low end: Restaurants and Food at \$2.05, Real Estate at \$3.22, and Auto Repair at \$4.35. The all-industry average is \$5.42. This range exists because CPC in Google Ads is determined by advertiser competition and the commercial value of each click. An attorney paying \$9.87 per click may be doing so because a single retained client is worth \$5,000 to \$50,000 in revenue — making even a \$131 cost-per-lead highly profitable. A restaurant paying \$2.05 per click has a lower transaction value per customer, so the economics only work at a lower cost. The implication for North Atlanta businesses: your industry benchmark, not the all-industry average, is the only relevant comparison for evaluating whether your Google Ads costs are competitive.

Average Google Ads Cost Per Click by Industry — North Atlanta 2026



'Personal Services' includes cleaning, salon, alterations, and similar local service businesses. 'Home Improvement' includes roofing, HVAC, plumbing, and remodeling. Average CPC across all industries: \$5.42. Industries shown represent primary North Atlanta April 2025 – March 2026. All CPCs are median values across Google Search and Microsoft Ads. Source: WordStream / LocalIQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. N=13,474 US campaigns,

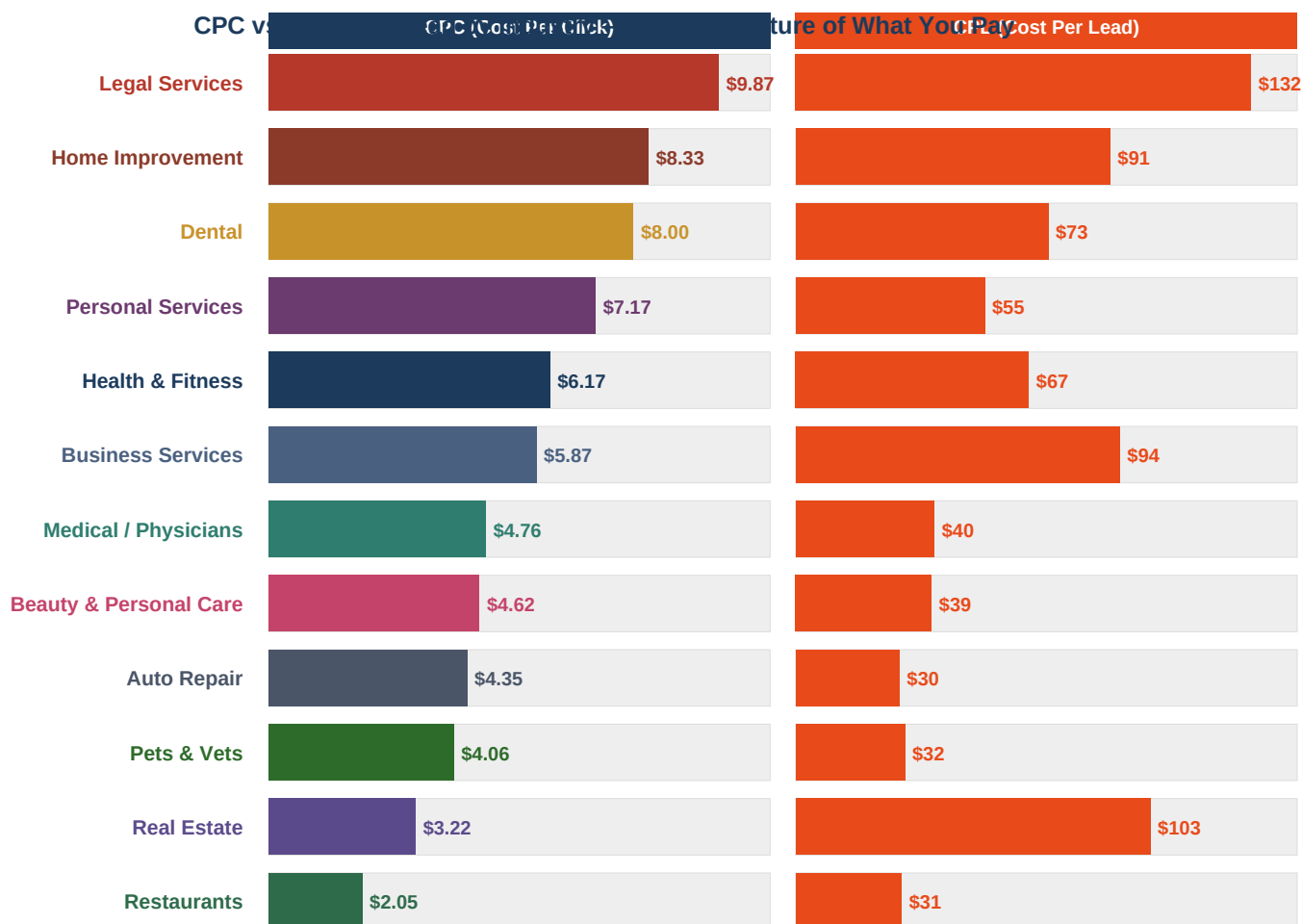
All CPC figures from WordStream / LocalIQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. N=13,474 US search advertising campaigns, April 2025–March 2026. Figures are median values combining Google Ads and Microsoft Ads. All-industry average CPC: \$5.42 (dashed reference line). 'Home Improvement' = roofing, HVAC, plumbing, remodeling, and related trades. CPC increased +134% from \$2.32 in 2016 to \$5.42 in 2026.

Finding 2

Low CPC Doesn't Mean Low Cost Per Lead — Why the Conversion Rate Changes Everything

Real estate:
\$3.22/click →
\$102/lead
Auto repair: \$4.35/click →
\$30/lead

The most important — and most misunderstood — insight in the benchmark data is that cost-per-click and cost-per-lead are not the same metric and do not move together. Real estate is the clearest example in the North Atlanta market: at \$3.22 per click, it has one of the lowest CPCs in the dataset. But at a 3.70% conversion rate, a very high proportion of clicks leave without becoming a lead — producing a cost-per-lead of \$102.51. A business spending \$1,000 per month in real estate search gets approximately 310 clicks and roughly 11 leads. Contrast that with auto repair: \$4.35 per click is a higher CPC, but a 15.51% conversion rate means roughly one in six clicks becomes a lead — producing a cost-per-lead of \$29.96. The same \$1,000 per month in auto repair generates approximately 230 clicks and 36 leads. The conversion rate is what connects CPC to CPL, and it is driven by factors that a well-managed campaign can influence: landing page quality, ad relevance, keyword intent match, offer clarity, call-to-action strength, and site speed. For North Atlanta businesses, understanding both numbers — CPC and CPL — is the baseline for any intelligent conversation about Google Ads budget allocation.



Source: WordStream / LocaliQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. N=13,474 campaigns Apr 2025–Mar 2026.

Auto repair: \$4.35/click but only \$29.96/lead due to 15.51% conversion rate.

Real estate: \$3.22/click but \$102.51/lead due to 3.70% conversion rate.

CPL = cost per lead (what you pay per converted contact). Low CPC does not guarantee low CPL.

CPC and CPL from WordStream / LocaliQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. CPL = cost per lead (cost per conversion). Real estate CPL (\$102.51) driven by 3.70% average conversion rate. Auto repair CPL (\$29.96) driven by 15.51% average conversion rate — highest CVR of any local service category in the dataset.

The CPC Trap: A North Atlanta business in the Home Improvement category spending \$500/month on Google Ads at the \$8.33 industry average CPC gets approximately 60 clicks. At the 8.05% industry-average conversion rate, that produces approximately 5 leads — at an average cost of \$90.92 each. If their campaign is underperforming that benchmark, they may be getting 2-3 leads for the same \$500. If it's outperforming, they may be getting 8-10. The benchmark is the only way to know which situation you're in.

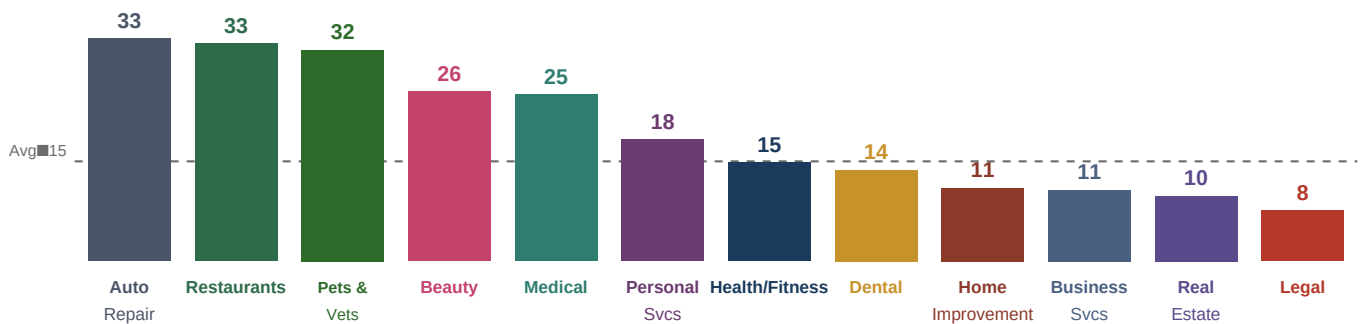
Finding 3

What \$1,000/Month Buys in Google Ads — by North Atlanta Industry Category

30-40 leads for restaurants vs. 7-11 leads for legal and real estate

Applying the 2026 benchmark cost-per-lead to a \$1,000 monthly budget produces dramatically different outcomes by industry — a calculation that most North Atlanta business owners have never done against their own industry benchmark. A veterinary practice or pet groomer spends \$1,000 and gets approximately 32 leads at the \$31.50 industry average CPL. An auto repair shop gets approximately 33 leads at \$29.96. A restaurant gets approximately 33 leads at \$30.57. A dental practice gets approximately 14 leads at \$72.97. A home improvement contractor gets approximately 11 leads at \$90.92. A law firm gets approximately 8 leads at \$131.63. None of these figures are right or wrong — a law firm converting 8 leads per month at an average case value of \$5,000 is generating \$40,000 in potential revenue from a \$1,000 ad spend, which is an exceptional return. A dental practice converting 14 new patient leads at \$500 average value per patient is generating \$7,000 in potential revenue from \$1,000 in spend. The point is not that some industries are better than others for Google Ads — it is that budget decisions without benchmark context produce arbitrary results. The right question is not 'how much should I spend?' It is 'how much does a lead in my category cost, and how many leads does my business need per month to justify that spend?'

Estimated Leads Per \$1,000 Monthly Budget — By Industry



Source: WordStream/LocalIQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. Assumes industry-average CVR. Actual results vary by campaign quality.
Leads per \$1,000 = $\$1,000 \div \text{industry average Cost Per Lead (CPL)}$. Higher bars = more leads per dollar.

Leads per \$1,000 = $\$1,000 \div \text{industry average CPL}$ from WordStream 2026 benchmarks. Assumes industry-average conversion rate and CPC. Actual results vary based on campaign quality, landing page performance, ad relevance, keyword selection, geographic targeting, and competitive intensity in the specific local market.

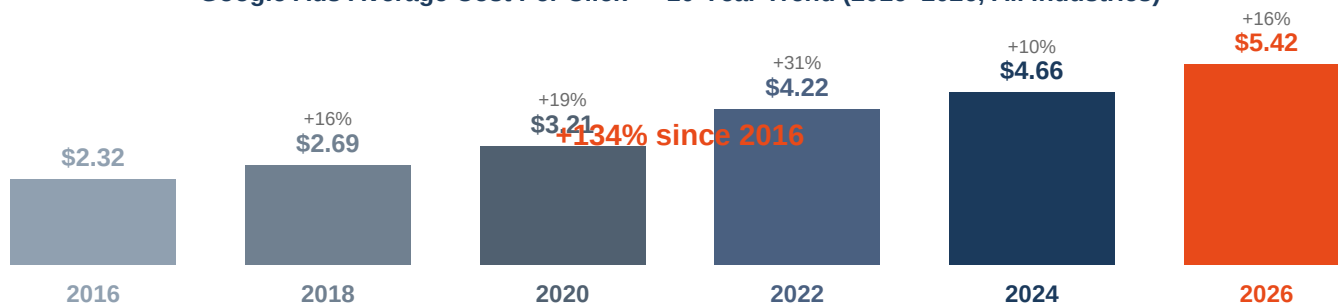
Finding 4

Google Ads Costs Have Risen 134% in 10 Years — and 2026 Is the First Year of Stability

2016: \$2.32 avg CPC
2026: \$5.42 avg CPC
+134% in 10 years

WordStream has published annual Google Ads benchmark data for 10 consecutive years, creating the only multi-year longitudinal dataset available on search advertising cost trends by industry. The 10-year picture is stark: average CPC across all industries has risen from \$2.32 in 2016 to \$5.42 in 2026 — a 134% increase over the decade. Cost-per-lead increased from \$59.18 to \$66.69 over the same period, a more modest 12.7% — meaning that while clicks cost more, conversion rates have generally improved enough to partially offset the click cost increase. The most significant recent changes: CPC increased 10% in 2024 and 12.88% in 2025, representing two years of sharp cost acceleration. In 2026, the trend stabilized significantly — CPC increased only modestly across most industries, and average cost-per-lead actually declined for the first time in five years. This stabilization is attributed to wider adoption of AI-powered campaign optimization (Performance Max, AI Max, Smart Bidding) and a more stable economic environment. For North Atlanta businesses that exited Google Ads in 2022 or 2023 due to rising costs, the 2026 benchmark data represents a meaningfully more favorable environment than the previous two years — though costs remain dramatically higher than they were five years ago.

Google Ads Average Cost Per Click — 10-Year Trend (2016–2026, All Industries)



2026 is first year of relative stability after +10-12% annual CPC increases in 2024 and 2025.
Source: WordStream Google Ads Benchmarks 2016–2026 (annual reports). Average CPC across all industries.

CPC trend data from WordStream Google Ads Benchmarks annual reports 2016–2026. 2018 and 2020 figures are interpolated from benchmark trend data. All figures represent average CPC across all industries, US market. 2026 is the first year CPL declined since before 2020 per WordStream analysis. CPC rose in 87% of industries in 2025; 2026 showed relative stabilization.

THE DATA: 2026 GOOGLE ADS BENCHMARKS — ALL INDUSTRIES RELEVANT TO NORTH ATLANTA

Industry	Avg CPC	Avg CTR	Avg CVR	Avg CPL	Leads per \$1,000 Budget	North Atlanta Notes
Attorneys & Legal Services	\$9.87	5.87%	5.55%	\$131.63	~8	Family law, personal injury, criminal defense — highest CPC of any category
Home & Home Improvement	\$8.33	6.47%	8.05%	\$90.92	~11	Roofing, HVAC, plumbing, remodeling — all major MIL client verticals
Dentists & Dental Services	\$8.00	5.66%	10.67 %	\$72.97	~14	General, cosmetic, orthodontics — high CVR offsets high CPC
Personal Services	\$7.17	7.16%	12.34 %	\$54.60	~18	Cleaning, salon, alterations, pet grooming — broad local services

Health & Fitness	\$6.17	5.81%	6.94%	\$67.36	~15	Gyms, personal trainers, med spas, wellness centers
Business Services	\$5.87	6.10%	4.85%	\$93.69	~11	B2B, consulting, staffing — Gwinnett commercial corridor
Industrial & Commercial	\$5.87	6.57%	8.20%	\$75.19	~13	Commercial contractors, equipment suppliers
Career & Employment	\$5.81	5.88%	3.05%	\$67.36	~15	Staffing agencies, vocational schools, job boards
ALL INDUSTRY AVERAGE	\$5.42	6.64%	8.18%	\$66.69	~15	Baseline across all 23 WordStream industries
Education & Instruction	\$4.81	7.56%	13.14 %	\$77.48	~13	Tutoring, test prep, driving schools — suburban parent market
Physicians & Surgeons	\$4.76	6.61%	12.43 %	\$40.04	~25	Primary care, specialists — Forsyth/Gwinnett medical market
Beauty & Personal Care	\$4.62	6.75%	10.35 %	\$39.25	~25	Hair salons, spas, skincare, waxing — Elite 360 Life territory
Automotive (Repair/Parts)	\$4.35	5.56%	15.51 %	\$29.96	~33	Highest CVR of any local service category — excellent ROI
Animals & Pets	\$4.06	7.49%	16.22 %	\$31.50	~32	Vets, groomers, boarding — very high conversion rate
Shopping & Gifts	\$4.14	8.28%	4.01%	\$49.40	~20	Retail, specialty stores, gift shops
Finance & Insurance	\$3.39	9.83%	2.64%	\$74.44	~13	Mortgage, insurance agents — high CTR, very low CVR
Furniture	\$3.97	6.57%	2.99%	\$106.70	~9	Home furnishings — renovation-adjacent, low CVR
Real Estate	\$3.22	7.61%	3.70%	\$102.51	~10	Low CPC, high CPL — 3.70% CVR is 3rd-lowest in dataset
Sports & Recreation	\$2.77	8.75%	7.69%	\$44.26	~23	Gyms, sports leagues, rec centers, outdoor activity
Automotive (For Sale)	\$2.27	8.28%	6.01%	\$44.26	~23	Car dealerships — low CPC, moderate CVR
Travel	\$2.14	9.32%	5.83%	\$44.70	~22	Travel agencies, tour operators — Condor Tours territory
Restaurants & Food	\$2.05	6.83%	8.05%	\$30.57	~33	Lowest CPC, lowest CPL of high-volume categories — excellent local ROI
Arts & Entertainment	\$1.63	12.75 %	5.91%	\$26.84	~37	Lowest CPC overall — events, venues, entertainment businesses

Red rows: highest-CPC categories in the North Atlanta market. Blue row: all-industry average baseline. Green rows: highest-conversion / lowest-CPL categories. Source: WordStream / LocaliQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks. N=13,474 US campaigns April 2025–March 2026. Figures are median values across Google Ads and Microsoft Ads. Leads per \$1,000 = \$1,000 ÷ CPL (rounded). Actual results vary by campaign quality.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR NORTH ATLANTA BUSINESSES

1

If you're in a high-CPC category, your budget requirement is not optional — it's arithmetic.

A Gwinnett County law firm spending \$500/month on Google Ads at the \$9.87 average CPC gets approximately 51 clicks. At a 5.55% conversion rate, that produces roughly 3 leads. At \$500/month, they are paying approximately \$167 per lead — significantly above the \$131 industry average. Increasing the budget to \$1,500/month brings the lead count to approximately 8-9 at the benchmark rate. The budget isn't a preference. It's the math required to generate a meaningful number of leads in a high-CPC category.

2

CPL is your real performance metric — if you're not tracking it, you can't improve it.

Most North Atlanta businesses track clicks and sometimes leads, but do not calculate their cost-per-lead against their industry benchmark. A home improvement company generating leads at \$75 each doesn't know if that's good or bad until they compare it to the \$90.92 industry average. At \$75/lead, they're outperforming the benchmark by 17%. At \$110/lead, they're underperforming by 21%. That gap represents thousands of dollars annually in recoverable efficiency — but only if they know the benchmark to measure against.

3

A high conversion rate is more valuable than a low CPC — and it's improvable.

Auto repair averages a 15.51% conversion rate — the highest of any local service category in the benchmark data. Dental averages 10.67%. These are not random. They reflect specific attributes of searcher intent: someone searching 'oil change near me' or 'emergency dental appointment Suwanee' is ready to act. Campaigns that match high-intent search terms, direct users to specific landing pages (not a homepage), and make it frictionless to call or schedule consistently outperform industry averages. The conversion rate is the variable in the CPL equation that a well-managed campaign can most directly improve.

4

Costs are stabilizing — 2026 is the best entry point in 3 years for new Google Ads campaigns.

After CPC increases of 10% in 2024 and 12.88% in 2025, the 2026 benchmark data shows relative stability, and average CPL declined for the first time since before 2020. For North Atlanta businesses that paused or exited Google Ads during the 2023-2025 cost acceleration, 2026 represents a meaningfully more favorable entry point — particularly in categories like Dental, Medical, and Personal Services, which saw CPL decreases of 20-30% year-over-year. This stabilization is not guaranteed to continue, and CPC remains 134% higher than 2016, but the acute period of cost volatility appears to have moderated.

About Make It Loud Digital Marketing

Make It Loud is a full-service digital marketing agency serving Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall, Cherokee, and the greater North Atlanta area. We specialize in Google Ads management, local SEO, web design, and digital strategy for small and mid-size businesses. We use benchmark data like this to set realistic expectations, size budgets correctly, and measure campaign performance against the right baseline — not just last month's numbers. If you want to know how your current Google Ads performance compares to your industry benchmark, we offer a free campaign audit that answers exactly that question.

Serving Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall, Cherokee, and North Atlanta

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METHODOLOGY & SOURCES

All CPC, CTR, CVR, and CPL figures from WordStream / LocaliQ 2026 Google Ads Benchmarks Report (Susie Marino, May 19, 2026). Dataset: 13,474 US-based search advertising campaigns, April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026, across 23 industry categories. 'Averages' are technically median figures to account for outliers. Campaigns span both Google Ads and Microsoft Ads (Search Network). 10-year CPC trend

data from WordStream annual benchmark reports 2016–2026. 2018 and 2020 figures estimated from published trend analysis. CPL = cost per lead (cost per conversion as tracked in the campaign platform). Leads per \$1,000 budget calculated as $\$1,000 \div \text{industry average CPL}$. All figures represent US national medians; actual costs in any local market will vary based on geographic competition intensity, Quality Score, ad relevance, landing page experience, and campaign structure. This report is for informational and benchmarking purposes; it does not constitute a guarantee of specific advertising results.

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