

# March 2026: What We Found When We Scanned Every Plumber, Electrician, and HVAC Website in Huntsville, TX.

The first monthly report from The Huntsville Index. Three industries. 47 businesses. Original research on the digital presence of small businesses in Huntsville, Texas and Walker County.

47

BUSINESSES SCANNED

56

AVG WEBSITE SCORE

15

FABRICATED BY AI

1

FOUND BY AI

In March 2026, we audited every plumber, electrician, and HVAC business visible on Google Maps in the Huntsville, Texas area. We graded their websites on SEO, technical quality, trust signals, and content. We then queried AI search engines about two of those categories and cross-referenced the results against the real businesses. The findings: the average website scores an identical 56 out of 100 across categories, structured data is nearly nonexistent, and AI search engines fabricated 15 business names while correctly identifying just one, a national franchise.

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March 2026 • Huntsville, Texas

## CROSS-CATEGORY ANALYSIS

## Every Category Hits the Same Wall

We graded websites across three local service categories using the same scoring system: SEO and visibility, technical quality, trust and authority, and content. The results converge on patterns no single report could reveal.

METRIC	PLUMBERS	ELECTRICIANS	HVAC
<b>Businesses found</b>	17	14	16
<b>No website</b>	6 (35%)	8 (57%)	0 (0%)
<b>Avg score (sites only)</b>	66	56	56
<b>Scored 90+</b>	0	0	1
<b>Top score</b>	~80	82	94
<b>No schema markup</b>	Most	6/6 (100%)	11/16 (69%)
<b>Custom sites lead?</b>	Yes	Yes (82, 82)	Yes (94, 81, 79)

**57% of electricians have no website at all. Zero percent of HVAC businesses are missing one.** Yet both categories average 56 out of 100. The market that got everyone online and the market where most never built a site landed on the same quality score. Getting online is not the bottleneck. Quality is.

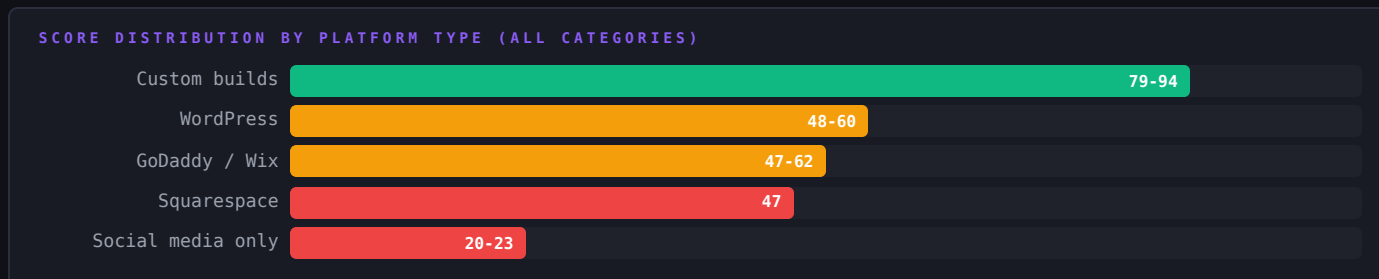
Plumbers sit slightly higher at 66 among those with sites, but 35% of the category has no web presence at all. The pattern holds: the barrier to standing out is not whether a business has a website. It is whether that website is configured to actually work.

**The 56 ceiling:** Template platforms handle the basics automatically: SSL, mobile layout, basic meta tags. That gets a site to roughly 50. Breaking above 56 requires deliberate configuration: installing analytics, writing a meta description, adding a call-to-action, implementing structured data. These are afternoon-sized tasks. Almost nobody is doing them.

## PLATFORM COMPARISON

## Custom Builds Lead Every Category

The platform a business uses to build its website is one of the strongest predictors of its score. Custom-built sites consistently outperform every template platform across all three categories. The gap is significant.



The three highest scores across all 47 businesses (94, 82, and 82) are all custom builds. Templates handle the floor. Custom builds handle the strategy.

WordPress powers more sites than any other platform in these categories, but not one WordPress site cracked 70. The platform provides solid infrastructure out of the box: mobile-friendly layouts, SSL, plugin ecosystems. But the WordPress sites in this market are not using those capabilities. Only half have analytics. Most are missing meta descriptions. Template platforms are not the bottleneck. Configuration is.

Three businesses use GoDaddy Website Builder. They score between 47 and 49. These sites handle the absolute minimum: they load, they work on mobile, they have SSL. Beyond that, they have no schema, no analytics, no contact forms, and no CTAs. They are digital business cards, not lead generation tools.

Two businesses across the three categories use a social media page as their website. They scored 20 and 23, the lowest in every audit. A social media page gives a business no control over how it appears in search results. It has no SEO configuration, no structured data, no analytics, and no ability to rank for service-specific searches.

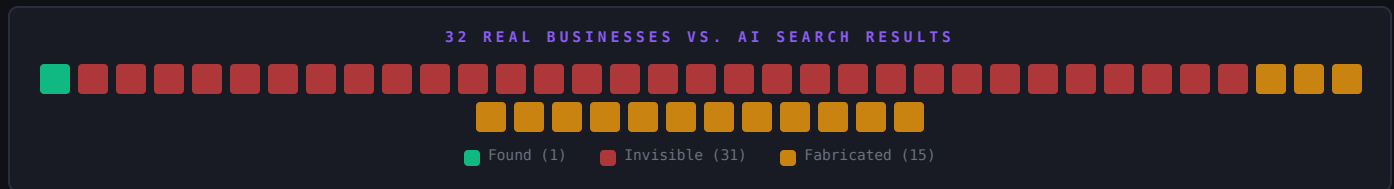
AI SEARCH CHECK, COMBINED RESULTS

# AI Search Is Inventing Huntsville Businesses

We queried an AI language model about local service providers in Huntsville across two categories (electricians and HVAC), then cross-referenced every response against the real businesses on Google Maps.

<p><b>32</b></p> <p>REAL BUSINESSES TESTED</p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>CORRECTLY FOUND</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>FABRICATED BY AI</p>
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METRIC	ELECTRICIANS	HVAC	COMBINED
<b>On Google Maps</b>	14	18	32
<b>Found by AI</b>	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	1 (3%)
<b>Fabricated names</b>	7	8	15
<b>"Sam Houston" hallucination</b>	1 instance	2 instances	3 total
<b>Google AI Overview</b>	0 / 3 queries	0 / 3 queries	0 / 6 queries
<b>Have websites</b>	6 / 14 (43%)	18 / 18 (100%)	24 / 32 (75%)



## WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

## Websites Alone Do Not Solve AI Visibility

**The one business AI found was a national franchise** with a website replicated across 200+ locations. Its brand appears on thousands of web pages nationwide. Every locally-owned business was invisible, including companies operating since 1946, 1969, and 1974 with hundreds of verified Google reviews.

**Having a website made no measurable difference.** The HVAC category has 100% website adoption. AI visibility: 6%. The electrician category has 43% adoption. AI visibility: 0%. Website presence alone does not solve this problem. The differentiator for the one business that was found was national brand data volume, not the presence or quality of a local website.

**The "Sam Houston" pattern:** The AI associates "Sam Houston" with Huntsville, Texas and uses it as a business name prefix for companies that do not exist. Three fabricated businesses across two categories used this technique. It appeared once in the electrician data and twice in the HVAC data. We are tracking it as a documented recurring hallucination.

**Google AI Overview returned nothing for all 6 queries tested.** Google's system consistently declined to generate AI answers for local service queries in this market. It chose silence over fabrication. The standalone language model does not have that restraint. It generates confident, detailed recommendations for businesses that do not exist.

The AI generates more fabricated business names than real businesses it identifies in every category tested. Electricians: 7 fabricated, 0 real. HVAC: 8 fabricated, 1 real. The model's default behavior when it lacks specific local data is to construct plausible-sounding names rather than acknowledge uncertainty.

Traditional Google search, by contrast, worked as expected in both categories. It surfaced real directory listings from Yelp, Angi, BBB, Nextdoor, and Thumbtack. It named real businesses with verifiable addresses, phone numbers, and review profiles. The system that works on verified data still works. AI search does not.

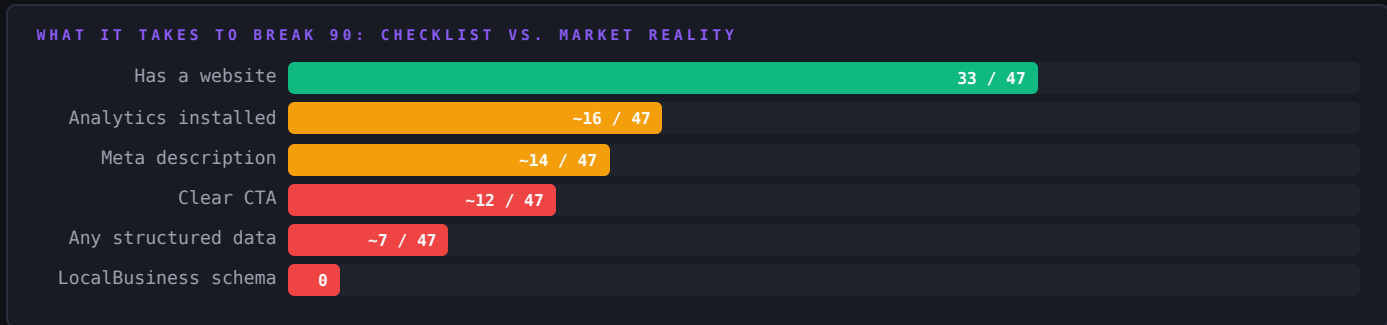
PATTERN ANALYSIS

# What Separates the Top from the Rest

Across 47 businesses and three categories, the data draws a clear line between sites that score well and those that do not. The differentiators are not expensive or technical. They are configuration decisions most businesses have never made.

<p><b>TOP PERFORMERS (70+)</b></p> <p>Custom-built sites. Analytics installed. Contact form or visible phone CTA. Meta descriptions written. Real content describing services and service area. Current copyright dates.</p>	<p><b>BOTTOM PERFORMERS (&lt;50)</b></p> <p>Template platforms with default settings untouched. No analytics. No CTA. No meta description. Copyright dates from years ago. Some using social media as their entire web presence (scored 20-23).</p>
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The gap between 50 and 80 is not budget or technology. It is configuration. Adding analytics takes five minutes. Writing a meta description takes two. Creating a CTA takes ten. Implementing basic LocalBusiness schema takes an hour. These are the moves that separate the top from the middle, and almost nobody is making them.



## THE STRUCTURAL GAP

## The Same Problem from Two Angles

**Zero businesses across all three categories have LocalBusiness schema.** This is the machine-readable markup that tells search engines and AI exactly what a business is, where it operates, what services it offers, and how to contact it. It is the single most impactful structural improvement any local business website can make for both traditional and AI search visibility. Not one of the 47 businesses we scanned has it.

**The audits and the AI checks are the same problem from two angles.** The website audits measure the gap: missing schema, missing meta descriptions, thin content. The AI search checks show the consequence: fabricated recommendations, invisible local businesses, national franchises capturing the only visibility. Fix the structured data gap, and AI systems have something real to work with. Leave it empty, and they fill the void with fabrications.

Of the 47 businesses we scanned in March, exactly **one scored above 90**. That site is a custom build with analytics, a contact form, a clear call-to-action, a meta description, and real content describing its services and location. It still has no structured data and a 10MB page weight. Even the best site in the Huntsville market has room to improve.

The opportunity for any business willing to get the fundamentals right is wide open. A new site with proper structured data, analytics, a contact form, and clear service pages would immediately be among the top-performing sites in any of these categories. The businesses with the most to gain are the ones sitting on strong review profiles with weak websites. Several businesses in these audits have over 250 Google reviews but score below 60 on their websites. They have built real customer trust through their work. Their websites are not capturing the value of that trust.

The bar for standing out in the Huntsville market is remarkably low. That is both the problem and the opportunity.

## APRIL 2026 PREVIEW

## Looking Ahead

March established the baseline. Three categories scanned, 47 businesses graded, two AI search checks completed. The patterns are clear: the quality ceiling sits at 56, structured data is almost nonexistent, and AI search is actively misinforming consumers about who does business in Huntsville.

April continues with new categories. If a plumber, an electrician, and an HVAC company all score 56 for the same reasons, that is not an industry problem. That is a market-wide problem, and likely one that applies to every service category in town.

More importantly, the AI data raises a question that matters to every business owner who depends on new customers finding them online: **if someone asks AI for a recommendation in your category, are they getting your name, or a name the AI invented?** Right now, the answer for 97% of Huntsville businesses is the latter.

## QUESTIONS WE'RE TRACKING

→ If a business adds structured data to their website, will AI actually start finding them, or is the data volume gap too wide to close?

→ Will AI search accuracy improve over time, or is the fabrication rate baked into how these models handle small markets?

→ My competitor has 200 reviews and a terrible website. Am I actually winning customers they are leaving on the table?

→ Is it worth paying for a custom site, or can I fix my template myself and close the gap to 80+?

New reports publish weekly on [refinedwebsolutions.com/huntsville-index](https://refinedwebsolutions.com/huntsville-index). Monday is the AI Search Check. Wednesday is the Speed & Structure Audit. Friday is Ask The Index. The April monthly rollup will be available the first week of May.

### Grade Your Website Free

Our grading tool runs the same analysis we used in these reports. It scores any website on SEO, technical quality, trust signals, and content. Takes about five seconds. No email required.

[refinedwebsolutions.com/grader](https://refinedwebsolutions.com/grader)

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