



MAIN
STREET
Now

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From Main Street to Machine Learning: *How Local Search Shapes Business and Community Visibility*

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VML

Hart & Sewell

Content Strategy | Storytelling | Production | SEO





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Co-Founder Hart & Sewell

Introduction

- 20+ years of Agency experience
- Leader of the award-winning Performance Content Team at VML since 2018

Clients:



Awards:



Best Use of Content Marketing



International Search Team of the Year



Target Best-in-Class PDP-Grocery

Walmart Best-in-Class PDP-Household



AGENDA

- + **How Local Search Works**
- + **Google Business Profile Deep Dive**
- + **Best-in-Class & Common Gaps**
- + **AI and Future of Local Discoverability**

How Local Search Works

- Local search focuses on optimizing your online presence to **attract customers** within a **specific geographic area** by **increasing visibility** to **attract more foot traffic** or **generate online conversions**.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "hotel near me with free breakfast and wifi". The search results are filtered for "Hotels | 64116, North Kansas City, MO". The results list three hotels: Comfort Inn & Suites Kansas City - \$79, Homewood Suites by Hilton - \$87, and Sleep Inn & Suites Indoor - \$76. Each listing includes a photo, star rating, number of reviews, and key amenities like free breakfast and pool. A map on the right shows the location of these hotels relative to the Missouri River and local landmarks like Weatherby Lake and Parkville.

Hotel Name	Price	Rating	Reviews	Star Rating	Key Amenities
Comfort Inn & Suites Kansas City	\$79	3.9	(946)	2-star	Free breakfast, Pool
Homewood Suites by Hilton	\$87	4.1	(709)	3-star	Free breakfast, Eco-certified
Sleep Inn & Suites Indoor	\$76	3.9	(1K)	3-star	Free breakfast, Pool



Decoding what Drives Discoverability

1

Proximity

How near a customer is to your business location when they search

2

Prominence

How well known your brand reputation is compared to local competition

3

Relevance

How closely your online offering in listings and website content matches the user query

Why Local Presence Matters

Google searches in the
United States

How many searches
are local?

How many local
searches
become a sale or a service?

Purchase happens
within 24 hours

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1 Billion

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Google searches in the United States



1 Billion

How many searches are local?



46%

460 Million

How many local searches become a sale or a service?

Purchase happens within 24 hours

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How many local searches become a sale or a service?



28%

129 Million

Purchase happens within 24 hours

Why Local Presence Matters

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1 Billion

How many searches are local?



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460 Million

How many local searches become a sale or a service?



28%

129 Million

Purchase happens within 24 hours



88%

113 Million



Global Numbers to Local Impact

TOWN POPULATION: 6,250

AVG SEARCHES: 26,250

LOCAL SEARCHES: 12,075

BECOME A SALE/SERVICE: 3,381



YOUR
OPPORTUNITY
IS HERE

PURCHASE HAPPENS WITHIN 24 HOURS: 2,975

FUN FACT: The average person performs 4.2 Google searches per day



Other stats of interest

1

Google still dominates search

Google has historically powered 90%+ of global search queries. Even with recent shifts, it remains just under that threshold - *StatCounter*

2

Online presence matters

97% of people learn more about a local company online over anywhere else – *SEO Tribunal*

3

Page One

92% of searchers will pick business on the first page of local search results – *SEO Expert*

4

Location, location, location

72% of consumers that did a local search visited a store within five miles.

Your Digital Front Door

Navigating the path to local discoverability

Tools You Can Use:



Google
Business Profile

The below platforms are most useful for businesses with multiple locations. Google Business Profiles is free, and can be used for any size business, even those without a stand-alone location.

MOZ
LOCAL

\$

whitespark
\$


\$\$


\$\$-\$\$\$



\$\$-\$\$\$



\$\$\$ - Custom

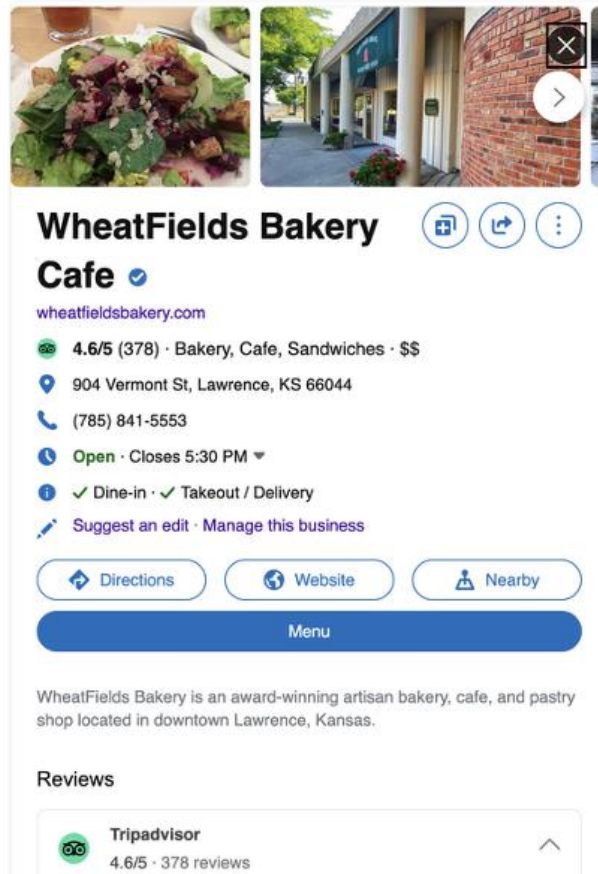
Lastmile 

All Custom

\$ < \$20/Month
\$\$ < \$100/Month
\$\$\$ = \$200+ or Custom Pricing

What is a Google Business Profile?

Google Business Profile (GBP) is a free tool offered by Google to help businesses manage their online presence. It allows you to create and optimize a business listing that appears in Google Search and Google Maps when people search for your company or relevant services in your area.



WheatFields Bakery Cafe ✓

wheatfieldsbakery.com

4.6/5 (378) · Bakery, Cafe, Sandwiches · \$\$

904 Vermont St, Lawrence, KS 66044

(785) 841-5553

Open · Closes 5:30 PM

✓ Dine-in · ✓ Takeout / Delivery

Suggest an edit · Manage this business

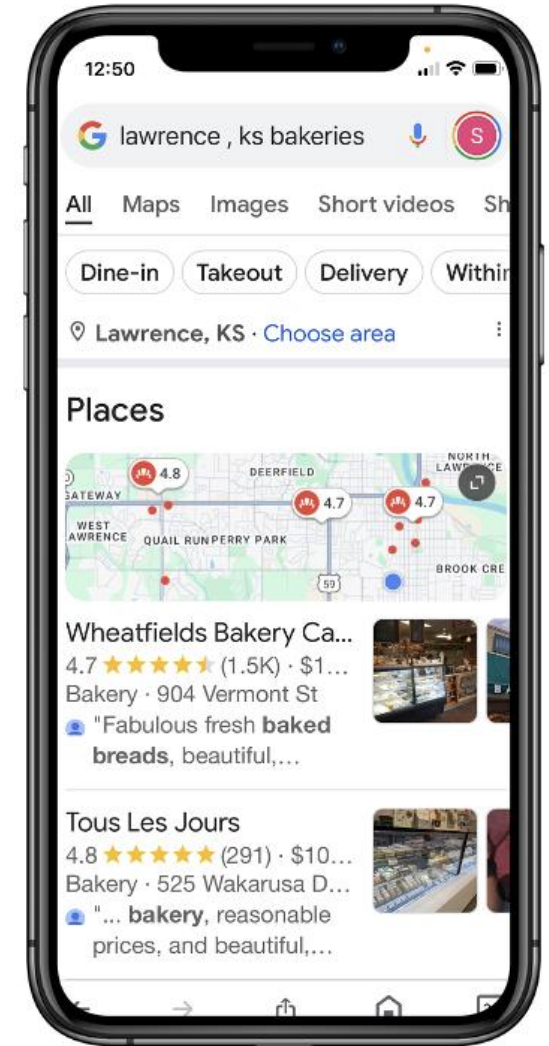
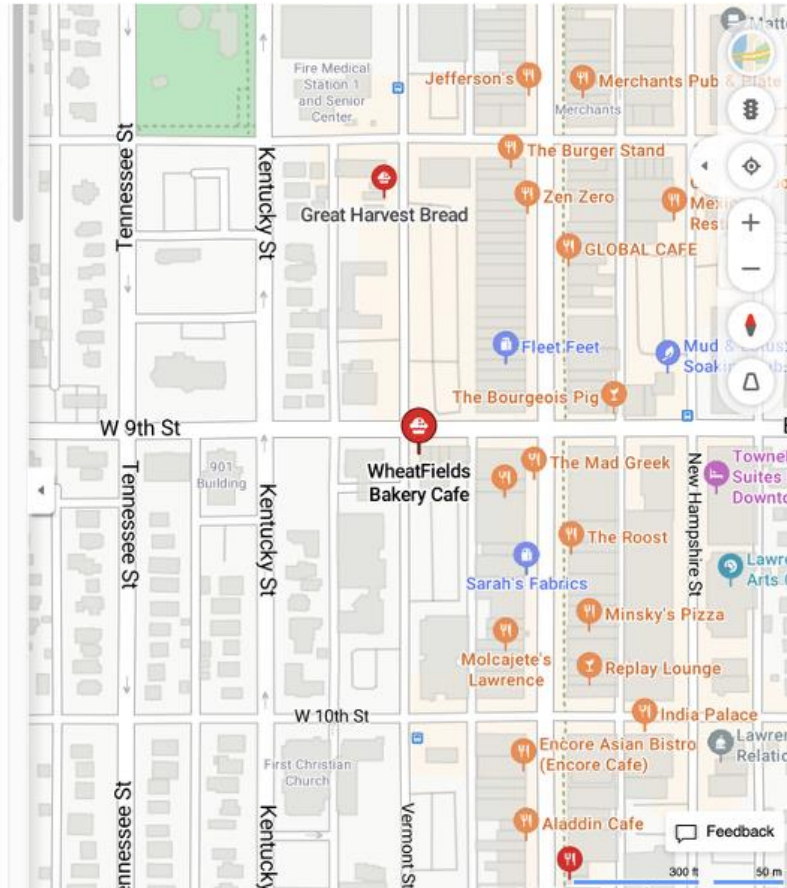
Directions Website Nearby

Menu

WheatFields Bakery is an award-winning artisan bakery, cafe, and pastry shop located in downtown Lawrence, Kansas.

Reviews

Tripadvisor 4.6/5 · 378 reviews



Foundational Information (Accuracy & Completeness)

1 Accurate Business Name

Use your legal business name. Avoid keywords or unnecessary additions.

2 Precise Address

Use your physical address. If you serve customers at their location, you can hide your address but still specify your service area.

3 Correct Phone Number

Use a local phone number that you actively monitor.

4 Primary Business Category

Choose the most accurate primary category that describes your core business. This is crucial for relevance in search results.

5 Additional Categories

Add relevant secondary categories to further refine your business description. Don't overdo it; stick to categories that genuinely apply.

6 Business Hours

Maintain accurate and up-to-date business hours, **including special hours for holidays or events.**

7 Website URL

Link to your official website. Ensure the website is mobile-friendly and loads quickly.

Compelling Content (Engagement & Information)



1 Detailed Business Description

Write a compelling and keyword-rich description that highlights your unique selling points, services, and target audience. Focus on benefits, not just features. Avoid keyword stuffing.

2 High-Quality Photos & Video

Exterior Photos: Show the outside of your building, making it easy for customers to find you.

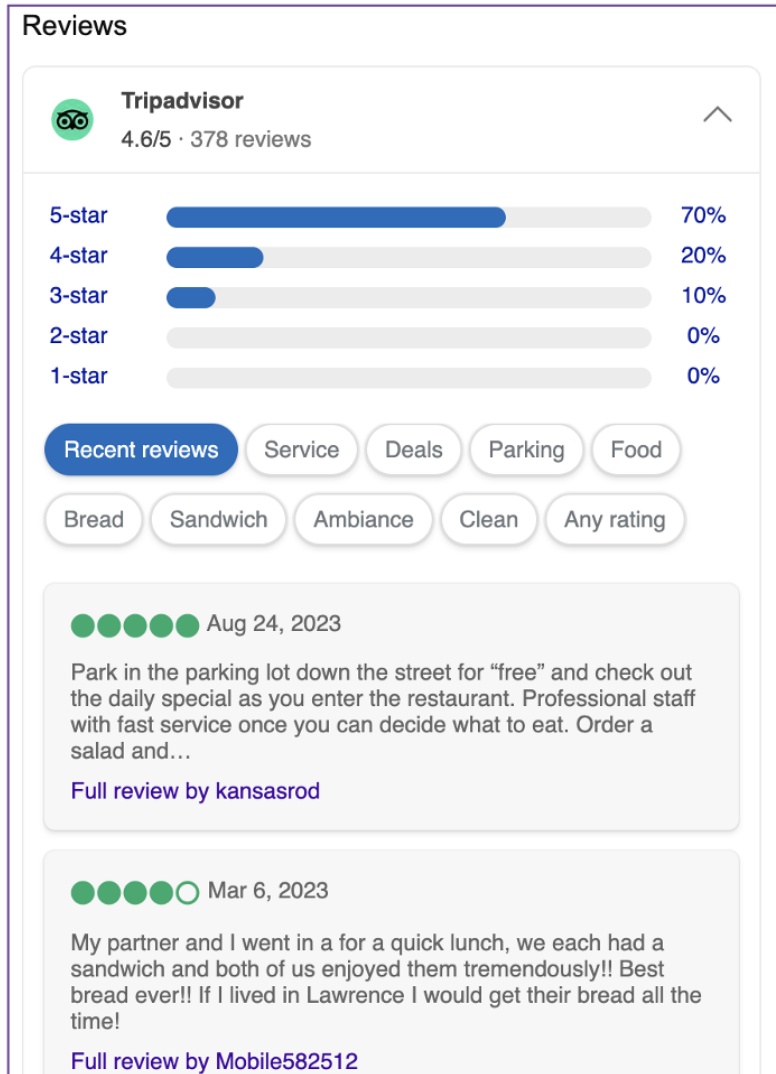
Interior Photos: Showcase your business's atmosphere and ambiance.

Product/Service Photos: Display your offerings in an appealing way.
Team Photos: Introduce your staff to build trust.

3 Products/Services Sections

Utilize the Products and Services sections to list your offerings with descriptions, prices (if applicable), and photos. This helps customers quickly find what they're looking for.

Reputation Management (Trust & Authority)



1 Encourage Reviews

Actively ask satisfied customers to leave reviews on Google.

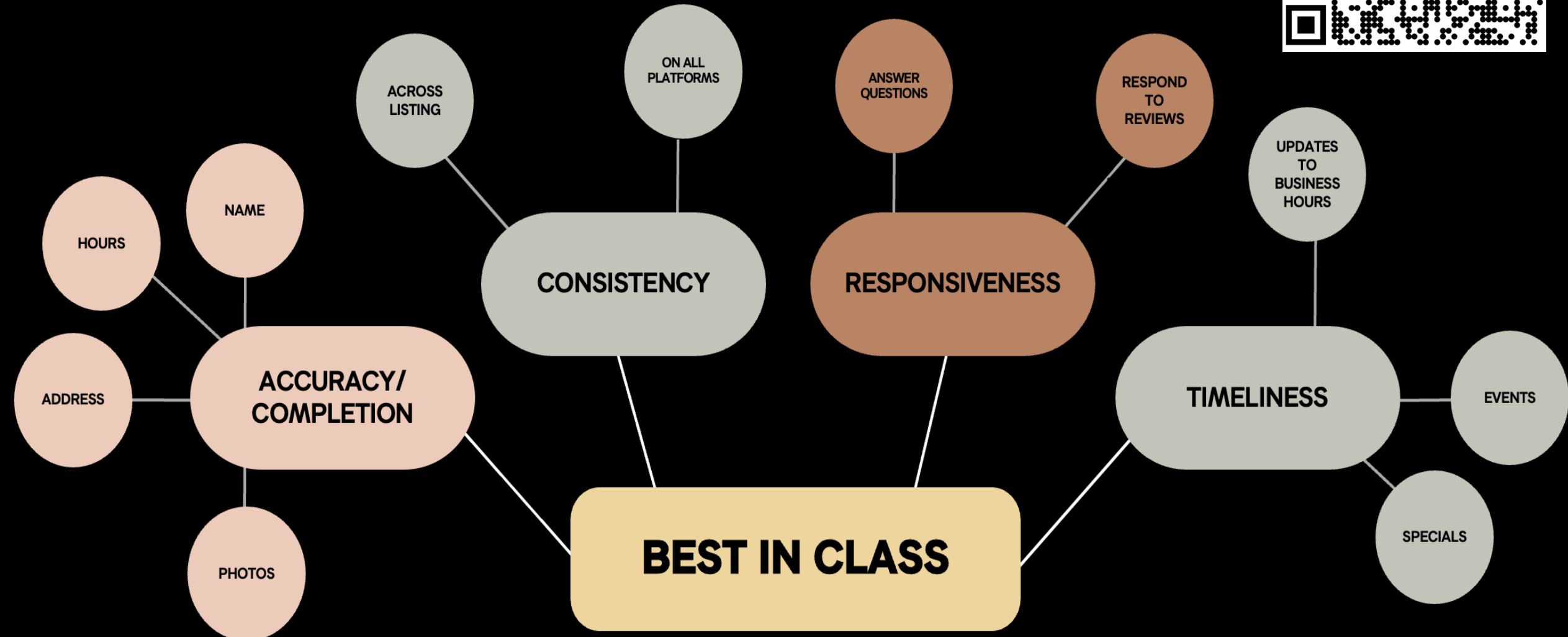
2 Monitor Your Reviews

Regularly check your GBP for new reviews and mentions.

3 Respond to Reviews (Promptly & Professionally)

Respond to all reviews, both positive and negative. Thank customers for positive feedback and address concerns constructively in negative reviews. Show that you value customer feedback.

The Anatomy of Discoverability: *Building Best-in-Class*



Local Content in the Age of AI Retrieval

How LLMs decide who gets mentioned

Where you **MUST** have local content

1

Core (*Highest impact – Non-Negotiable*)

- **Location pages on your website**
 - Most controllable, indexable, and detailed
 - Should include services, geography, FAQs, and unique content
- **Google Business Profile**
 - Feeds directly into Google's ecosystem & increasingly AI answers
- **Reviews**
 - *LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) love natural language content*

👉 Why: These are **primary source-of-truth signals**

Where you **MUST** have local content

2

Validation (*Trust Builders*)

These confirm you're real and credible:

- **Directory listings** (Yelp, TripAdvisor, Apple Maps, Bing Places)
- **Wikipedia**
 - Wikipedia

👉 Why: LLMs heavily weight **cross-source agreement**

Where you **MUST** have local content

3

Amplification (*Breadth of info/Language Signals*)

These expand how you show up:

- **Blog content** (locally relevant topics, not generic SEO fluff)
- **Social profiles** (especially Facebook for local businesses)
- **Local press / PR mentions / Community / Event listings**

👉 Why: These provide **contextual language = long-tail query coverage**

TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Optimize Core Content:** Fully optimize your Google Business Profile and website location page content as primary data sources for search and LLMs
- 2. Ensure NAP Consistency:** Maintain identical Name, Address, and Phone Number across all online platforms for credibility and validation.
- 3. Create “Answer-Ready” FAQs:** Develop natural language FAQ content on your site to directly inform AI responses to user queries.
- 4. Amplify Local Presence:** Expand your footprint with local blogs, social media, press and trusted community mentions.



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