ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

# How AI search decides which towns a service area business covers

A two-truck plumber based in Dublin, Ohio works in four towns. AI assistants only name the business where the web gives them evidence. Each column is the pile of proof for one town; the bottom row is how many of four assistants (ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Google AI Mode) named the shop for "plumber in [town]."

## COVERAGE EVIDENCE BY TOWN

| | Dublin<br>home base | Hilliard<br>~12 jobs / month | Powell<br>~6 jobs / month | Upper Arlington<br>~8 jobs / month |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Business Profile service areas**<br>Up to 20 cities or ZIPs, ~2 hrs drive | **Listed** | **Missing**<br>Never added | **Listed** | **Listed** |
| **Reviews that name the town**<br>The customer's own words | **41 reviews**<br>mention Dublin | **2 reviews**<br>mention Hilliard | **5 reviews**<br>mention Powell | **14 reviews**<br>mention UA |
| **Town page on the website**<br>Real jobs, prices, permit notes | **Homepage**<br>names Dublin | **None** | **Templated**<br>name-swapped copy | **Real page**<br>3 jobs + price ranges |
| **Directory listings**<br>Yelp, BBB, Angi, chamber | **30 listings**<br>show "Dublin, OH" | **0**<br>areas-served blank | **0**<br>areas-served blank | **3**<br>areas-served filled |
| **Job photo captions**<br>"Tankless swap, Hilliard, Oct 2026" | **Uncaptioned** | **Uncaptioned** | **Uncaptioned** | **9 captioned** |
| **Named in AI answers**<br>"plumber in [town]," 4 assistants | **4 / 4**<br>named every time | **0 / 4**<br>Hilliard shops + a franchise | **1 / 4**<br>named once | **3 / 4**<br>named most times |

## WHAT A MODEL CAN MATCH TO A TOWN

### Reads as nothing

*"Proudly serving all of central Ohio and surrounding areas."*

- ✕ No town named, so nothing matches "plumber in Hilliard"
- ✕ Templated city pages: same 400 words, town name swapped (Google's spam policy uses city doorway pages as an example)
- ✕ Stock water-tower photo, no jobs, no prices

### Reads as evidence

*"We do water heater, drain, and repiping work in Dublin, Hilliard, Powell, and Upper Arlington, usually same-day for leaks."*

- ✓ Each town named in a sentence a model can lift whole
- ✓ Town page built from real jobs: house type, the problem, what it cost
- ✓ Permit notes from your own pulls, drive time, local reviews

## THE NOT-OUR-TOWN TEST: 10 PROMPTS X 4 ASSISTANTS = 40 ANSWERS

**Home town** (2)

*"plumber in Dublin, Ohio"*

*"emergency plumber open now in Dublin"*

**Weekly towns** (4)

*"plumber in Hilliard"*

*"water heater replacement Powell Ohio"*

*"drain cleaning Upper Arlington"*

*"repipe older house Hilliard"*

**Edge towns** (2)

*"plumber in Plain City"*

*"plumber in Lewis Center"*

**Control: not served** (2)

*"plumber in Lancaster, Ohio"*

*"plumber in Newark, Ohio"*

Log for each answer: were you named, who was named instead, and what town the assistant says you're in. Named at home but skipped next door = an evidence gap. Named in a control town = something overstates your area.