

• SAMPLE REPORT – FICTIONAL DATA

— AI READINESS AUDIT • PLUS TIER • FULL REPORT

How AI Sees Meridian Home Services — and What to Do About It

Where you stand, what's holding you back, and the sequenced plan to fix it.

59 / 100

READINESS BAND • DEVELOPING

Composite of eight scored categories across 20 priority pages and 6 AI platforms. Every point of drag maps to a numbered finding inside.

PREPARED FOR

Meridian Home Services

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Built to be executed.

Every finding is written so your team can implement it without us — the steps, the code, and how to verify each fix worked. Here's the apparatus.

THE SCORE

0–100 per category, computed from pass/fail checks against our v1.7 rubric — never impressions. Bands: Emerging <40 · Developing 40–69 · Competitive 70–84 · Leading 85+.

SEVERITY

Critical = access-level failure capping other work · **High** = material citation/accuracy impact · **Medium** = compounding drag · **Low** = polish and insurance.

EACH FINDING CARRIES

- Summary + plain-language deep dive
- The evidence behind it
- Ordered fix steps (+ code where useful)
- An owner role and a "done when" check

HOW TO USE THE ROADMAP

Quick Wins first (this week), then the three phases in order — sequencing is deliberate: access before structure, structure before measurement. Every item cites its finding.

ONE HONEST CAVEAT

AI platform behavior changes independently of any work performed. Visibility results are a dated snapshot; trends across re-tests matter more than any single reading. No citation or ranking outcome is guaranteed — what this report guarantees is that the machine-readable foundation is right.

The verdict, in one page.

Where you stand

Meridian is partially visible to AI — and losing citations to competitors it outranks in classic search. A strong technical base (rankings, reviews, a fast desktop site) is being wasted at three choke points: AI crawlers are blocked at the door, the brand's entity is poorly defined and inconsistently named, and structured data is fragmented into disconnected islands. The result is a capable site that AI engines can't fully read, can't confidently understand, and won't consistently recommend. The good news is the pattern of the findings: the highest-impact fixes are also the fastest, and none of them requires a redesign.

What matters most

Three findings drive most of the composite. First, robots.txt disallows GPTBot and Google-Extended while the CDN silently challenges PerplexityBot — so three of six major AI surfaces can't reliably read the site at all; every content improvement is capped until this is fixed. Second, the brand is blurry to AI: no Wikidata item, three name variants ("Meridian Home Services," "Meridian HVAC," "MHS") and schema that never declares which is canonical — so engines default to competitors they can identify with confidence. Third, on 14 of 22 category queries, an AI engine cited Lakeview Comfort Systems while Meridian was absent; Lakeview's cited pages share a repeatable, replicable structure: answer-first sections, visible pricing ranges, and connected schema.

The path forward

Week one belongs to the Quick Wins: unblock the crawlers, correct the discontinued-service description, and ship Organization schema on the homepage — three fixes, none over two hours, that raise the ceiling on everything else. The 90-day arc then runs in the roadmap's three phases: unify the entity (canonical name, Wikidata, connected graph), restructure the top service pages into extractable answer-first format, and re-test the full query set to measure citation movement. Executed in order, Meridian moves from Developing into Competitive territory on the re-score.

01 The door is closed: crawler blocks cap every other effort until week one removes them.

02 The brand is blurry: entity signals (40/100) make AI default to clearer competitors.

03 The gap is closable this quarter: no top finding requires a rebuild — sequencing is the strategy.

Eight categories. One number.

59 / 100

Developing. Strong classic-search fundamentals undercut by access blocks, entity ambiguity, and fragmented markup. Every category's drag is itemized in the findings — nothing here is unexplained, and nothing requires a rebuild.

AI Crawler Access CRITICAL FINDING		45
Two major AI crawlers are blocked at the door; the CDN challenges a third.		
Rendering Architecture		78
Core pages survive without JavaScript; two templates and a form embed don't.		
Page Performance		74
CWV passes on desktop; mobile LCP misses on service pages. Agentic checks mixed.		
Schema & Structured Data CRITICAL FINDING		52
Markup exists but is fragmented — no connected graph, one orphaned node.		
Content Structure		61
Strong service pages; blog answers bury the lede and lack extractable blocks.		
Entity Clarity CRITICAL FINDING		40
No Wikidata item, no Knowledge Panel, and three name variants in circulation.		
AI Visibility Monitoring		58
Cited on branded queries; largely absent on category queries that drive revenue.		
Competitive Intelligence		66
Lakeview wins the AI answers you should own — for structural, fixable reasons.		

Scoring model: **standard weight set** — Meridian's engagement is not YMYL-classified (residential HVAC; no health, financial, legal, or safety-topic pages in the assessed set), so trust-bearing categories carry standard weights. Full weight tables and classification rationale in *Methodology & Scope*.

— QUICK WINS

Fixes you can ship this week.

Low effort, high impact, no dependencies. Each references its full finding — start here, because two of these raise the ceiling on everything else in the report.

F-01

Unblock the two AI crawlers

~30 min

Remove the GPTBot and Google-Extended disallows in robots.txt; request re-crawl.
Caps everything until done.

F-07

Correct the discontinued-service description

~1 hr

Update the duct-cleaning page and Organization schema so AI stops recommending a service you exited in 2024.

F-04

Add Organization schema to the homepage

~2 hrs

Give AI one clear, machine-readable statement of who Meridian is, where it operates, and what it does.

Verify each with its "done when" check in the full finding, then re-run the free AI Visibility Check to see early movement before the Phase-2 work begins.

Eighteen findings. Every one actionable.

Ordered by category, matching the report card. Severity, owner, effort, and pillar are labeled on each; Quick Wins are flagged in the header bar.

F-01 • AI Crawler Access • QUICK WIN

CRITICAL IMPACT

SUMMARY

Your robots.txt disallows GPTBot and Google-Extended sitewide, so ChatGPT's crawler and Google's AI training systems cannot read meridianhome.com. This single file caps the ceiling on every other optimization in this report.

DEEP DIVE

The disallow lines were added in March 2024 — almost certainly from a "block AI scraping" template that circulated widely that year. The directives don't protect your content in any meaningful way; public pages remain visible to humans and to every crawler that ignores robots.txt. What they actually do is remove Meridian from the retrieval layer of the two largest AI ecosystems: OAI-SearchBot respects the GPTBot policy family for ChatGPT search results, and Google-Extended governs Gemini training use. Because AI answers now precede a site visit for a growing share of home-services buyers, an unreadable site quietly exits the consideration set before price or quality is ever compared. Verification during this audit confirmed live 200 responses to normal browsers and disallow-compliant refusals for both bot families — the block is real, current, and complete.

Evidence: meridianhome.com/robots.txt lines 4–7 (captured 06/16); per-UA probe log: GPTBot → disallowed, Google-Extended → disallowed; 22-query visibility set: 0 ChatGPT citations.

BUSINESS IMPACT

ChatGPT alone cannot cite you for any of the 22 tracked buying queries. Every content and schema investment underperforms until the door is open.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Open robots.txt at the site root via your host or Rank Math's editor.
2. Delete (or narrowly scope) the GPTBot and Google-Extended disallow blocks.
3. Deploy, then confirm the file returns 200 and no longer lists those agents.
4. Request re-crawl; re-test brand representation in 2–3 weeks.

```
# remove these blocks:
User-agent: GPTBot
Disallow: /

User-agent: Google-Extended
Disallow: /
```

OWNER

Developer/IT

DONE WHEN

robots.txt no longer disallows GPTBot or Google-Extended; ChatGPT search returns meridianhome.com pages within 3 weeks.

F-02 • AI Crawler Access

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

Cloudflare's bot-fight settings serve JavaScript challenges to PerplexityBot and to Brave's crawler — the index Claude's citations mirror ~87% of the time. Both fail the challenge and index nothing.

DEEP DIVE

The account has "Bot Fight Mode" enabled with default managed rules, which treat lesser-known verified crawlers as suspects. Our per-agent probes recorded 403/challenge responses for PerplexityBot on 9 of 20 priority pages and for Brave's crawler on all 20 — which explains why Perplexity shows partial, stale coverage and why site:meridianhome.com on Brave Search returns only 12 pages. Because Claude retrieves through Brave's index, this one CDN setting is simultaneously a Perplexity problem and a Claude problem. The fix is not disabling bot protection; it's an allow-rule for verified AI crawlers, which Cloudflare supports natively and which preserves protection against actual scrapers.

Evidence: Cloudflare bot-management screenshot (client-provided, 06/17); probe log: PerplexityBot 403 ×9, Brave crawler challenge ×20; Brave site: count = 12 of ~140 indexable URLs.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Two of six tracked AI surfaces (Perplexity, Claude) see a fraction of the site; Perplexity cited a 2023 blog post as your "current pricing" during accuracy testing.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. In Cloudflare → Security → Bots, review Bot Fight Mode and Super Bot Fight Mode settings.
2. Create an allow custom rule for verified bots: PerplexityBot, Brave's crawler, ClaudeBot, OAI-SearchBot (custom rules evaluate before managed rules).
3. Re-probe each agent for clean 200s across the priority-page set.
4. Re-check Brave's site: count in 2–4 weeks; expect it to climb toward full coverage.

OWNER

Developer / IT

DONE WHEN

All listed AI user-agents return 200 on the 20 priority pages; Brave indexation exceeds 100 URLs.

F-03 • AI Crawler Access

MEDIUM IMPACT

SUMMARY

Bing indexes 87 of ~140 indexable URLs — and Bing's index feeds both ChatGPT search and Copilot. Pages absent from Bing cannot be cited by either, regardless of quality.

DEEP DIVE

Bing Webmaster Tools was unverified until this audit, so no sitemap had ever been submitted to Microsoft and Bing discovered the site only through links. Bing also prunes thin or low-signal pages more aggressively than Google, which is why the gap concentrates in service-area pages and older posts. The practical consequence: even after the robots.txt fix (F-01), ChatGPT can only cite what Bing holds. IndexNow — free, supported natively by Rank Math — closes the freshness half of this gap by pinging Microsoft on every publish and update instead of waiting weeks for a crawl.

Evidence: BWT index count 87 (verified 06/18) vs. 141 indexable URLs in the XML sitemap; missing-URL sample list in appendix.

BUSINESS IMPACT

A third of the site is invisible to the two Microsoft-fed AI surfaces — including 6 of the 20 commercial priority pages.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Verify BWT (one-click GSC import) — completed during this audit; retain access.
2. Submit the XML sitemap in BWT.
3. Enable IndexNow in Rank Math (Instant Indexing module) so future updates ping automatically.
4. Inspect the 6 missing priority URLs in BWT after 2 weeks; address any individual crawl errors.

OWNER

Developer / IT

DONE WHEN

Bing index count exceeds 130; all 20 priority pages inspectable and indexed in BWT.

F-04 • Schema & Structured Data • QUICK WIN

CRITICAL IMPACT

SUMMARY

No page declares an Organization node — AI systems find services, reviews, and articles, but no machine-readable statement of who Meridian is, where it operates, or how it's officially named.

DEEP DIVE

Rank Math is installed and emitting page-level types (WebPage, BreadcrumbList, Article), but the site-level Organization block was never configured — the single most important node in the entire graph, because every other entity reference should point back to it. Its absence is a root cause of the naming confusion documented in F-11: with three name variants in circulation and no canonical declaration, engines resolve "Meridian" probabilistically, and in two accuracy tests resolved it to a Meridian-named remodeling firm in another state. The fix is thirty minutes in Rank Math's Local SEO settings plus a review of the emitted JSON-LD, and it unlocks the connected-graph work in F-05.

Evidence: Sitewide JSON-LD extraction (06/18): 0 Organization nodes across 141 URLs; misattribution transcripts in the accuracy log (Gemini, Copilot).

BUSINESS IMPACT

AI cannot confidently attribute your reviews, service pages, or content to a single verified business — weakening every citation decision it makes.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. In Rank Math → Titles & Meta → Local SEO, complete the business profile: exact legal name, logo, address, phone, URL.
2. Confirm the emitted Organization JSON-LD on the homepage includes legalName, logo, address, telephone, and url.
3. Add sameAs entries for GBP, Facebook, LinkedIn, and BBB profiles.
4. Validate in the Rich Results Test; confirm one Organization node sitewide, not one per page.

```
{
  "@type": "HVACBusiness",
  "@id": "https://www.meridianhome.com/#organization",
  "name": "Meridian Home Services",
  "legalName": "Meridian Home Services, LLC",
  "url": "https://www.meridianhome.com/",
  "telephone": "+1-847-555-0138",
  "sameAs": ["https://g.co/kgs/...", "https://www.bbb.org/..."]
}
```

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

Homepage emits a valid Organization (HVACBusiness) node with @id, legalName, and sameAs; Rich Results Test passes with zero errors.

F-05 • Schema & Structured Data

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

Each page's markup redeclares entities inline with no @id references, so AI reads 141 unrelated fragments instead of one connected picture of the business.

DEEP DIVE

Service pages emit Service types with a plain-text provider name; articles emit author strings rather than Person nodes; reviews emit ratings unattached to any organization. Nothing references anything else. Modern retrieval systems assemble entity graphs from @id-linked nodes — define the Organization once, then point every Service's provider, every Article's publisher, and every Review's itemReviewed at that node. The connected version is what lets an engine conclude "this five-star review belongs to the same verified business that provides this furnace-repair service in Evanston." With F-04 in place, this is systematic template work in Rank Math's schema builder rather than per-page hand-coding: three templates (service, article, review-bearing) cover 90% of the site.

Evidence: Graph-connectivity validation (06/18): 0 @id cross-references among 312 extracted nodes; 1 orphaned LocalBusiness node on /contact with a non-canonical URL.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Entity authority fragments across the site instead of compounding — a direct suppressor of the Entity Clarity score (40/100).

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Establish the @id convention: /#organization, /#website, /services/[x]/#service.
2. Update the three Rank Math schema templates so Service.provider, Article.publisher, and Review.itemReviewed reference the Organization @id.
3. Fix the orphaned /contact LocalBusiness node: merge into the Organization node or reference it.
4. Re-run graph validation: every node reachable from the Organization; zero orphans.

```
"provider": { "@id": "https://www.meridianhome.com/#organization" }
```

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

Graph validator reports one connected component, zero orphan @ids, and canonical URL consistency on all nodes.

SUMMARY

Four pages carry schema claims the visible page doesn't make — a stale price range, an aggregate rating with no visible reviews, and two service descriptions that predate the 2024 service-line change.

DEEP DIVE

Since March 2026, mismatches between structured data and rendered content are actively demoted rather than merely ignored — Google's guidance now treats parity as a trust signal. The four instances here are innocent drift: the schema was written once and the pages evolved. The maintenance-plan page's schema still asserts the \$189 annual price retired last fall; the reviews widget was removed from two pages whose AggregateRating markup remained; and the duct-cleaning schema (also F-07) describes the exited service. Drift like this is why the roadmap adds schema validation to the publish checklist — parity is cheap to keep and expensive to lose.

Evidence: *Parity flag list (4 URLs) with side-by-side schema-vs-rendered excerpts in the appendix.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Four commercial pages carry an algorithmic trust penalty risk and feed AI stale facts — one of which (price) surfaced verbatim in a Copilot answer.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

- 1. Update or remove the retired price in the maintenance-plan page schema.
- 2. Remove AggregateRating markup from the two pages without visible reviews (or restore the widget).
- 3. Correct the duct-cleaning schema alongside F-07.
- 4. Add "schema matches page" to the content-update checklist going forward.

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

All four parity flags cleared; spot-audit of 10 random pages finds zero new mismatches.

F-07 • AI Visibility Monitoring • QUICK WIN

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

Three of six platforms told our testers Meridian offers residential duct cleaning — a line you exited in 2024. The stale page, its schema, and two directory listings are the traceable sources.

DEEP DIVE

The duct-cleaning service page remains live with present-tense copy, its Service schema intact, and "duct cleaning" persists on your GBP services list and two directory profiles. AI engines cross-reference exactly these sources, and agreement among them reads as confirmation. The business cost is concrete: callers ask for a service you'll decline, and the correction erodes trust at the first touch. The fix is a coordinated cleanup — page, schema, GBP, directories — plus an explicit transition statement so engines have something true to say instead: what you stopped, when, and what you offer in its place. Accuracy corrections like this are the fastest visible win in AI representation because engines refresh factual claims faster than they re-rank citations.

Evidence: *Accuracy-test transcripts: ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot (06/19–06/20); live URL /services/duct-cleaning/; GBP services screenshot; two directory listings flagged.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Misdirected calls plus a trust hit at first contact; Dana's team estimates 3–5 such calls weekly.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: R

1. Rewrite [/services/duct-cleaning/](#) as a transition page: past tense, exit date, and the referral/alternative you actually offer — or 301 it to the closest current service.
2. Update or remove the page's Service schema to match.
3. Remove duct cleaning from GBP services and the two flagged directories.
4. Re-test the three platforms in 3–4 weeks; log the corrected answers.

OWNER

Content / Marketing

DONE WHEN

No tested platform describes duct cleaning as a current Meridian service on re-test.

F-08 • AI Visibility Monitoring

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

On the buying queries that drive revenue ("best furnace repair near Evanston," "AC replacement cost"), Meridian appears in 8 of 22 AI answers across platforms; Lakeview appears in 17.

DEEP DIVE

The full query grid appears in Section 7. The pattern is structural, not reputational: Meridian gets cited where a page happens to answer a question directly (the water-heater sizing guide earns citations on three platforms) and goes missing where the relevant page is a brochure. Lakeview's cited pages share a template — the question answered in the first hundred words, a visible price range, an FAQ block, and connected schema — which is precisely the format the Phase 2 roadmap items rebuild on your top service pages. This finding is the measurement baseline for the whole engagement: the 22-query grid re-runs after the roadmap's Phase 2, and citation share is the success metric.

Evidence: 22-query × 6-platform visibility grid (Section 7), captured 06/19–06/21 with screenshots.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Majority of AI-mediated buying moments currently end at a competitor's name — before price or reviews are ever compared.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: R

1. Treat the 8 currently-cited answers as protected: don't restructure what's winning.
2. Rebuild the six highest-value uncited service pages per the answer-first spec (F-09) in roadmap Phase 2 order.
3. Add visible pricing ranges where policy allows (F-10).
4. Re-run the full grid 4 weeks after Phase 2 completes; compare share.

OWNER

Content / Marketing

DONE WHEN

Re-test shows Meridian cited on ≥14 of 22 queries with no losses among the protected 8.

F-09 • Content Structure

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

Nine of twelve service pages open with brand narrative and reach the actual answer — what it costs, how long it takes, what's included — 400+ words in. AI extraction rarely digs that deep.

DEEP DIVE

Retrieval systems lift self-contained passages that answer a question directly; they don't reward pages for eventually getting there. The audit's extractability scoring (methodology in the appendix) shows the pattern clearly: your three highest-scoring pages open with the answer and earn 5 of Meridian's 8 current citations, while the nine brochure-style pages score 4–6 of 10 and earn one citation among them. The rebuild formula is consistent and preserves brand voice below the fold: first 100 words answer the page's core question with specifics; question-phrased H2s; a 40–60-word self-contained answer under each; comparison tables for options; the narrative and trust content follows. This is a rewrite of openings and structure, not of substance — most source material already exists on each page.

Evidence: Per-page extractability scores (20 pages, appendix table); citation correlation noted above.

BUSINESS IMPACT

The main reason well-ranked pages go uncited: Google rank earns the visit, structure earns the citation, and the structure isn't there.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: A

1. Rebuild the six Phase-2 priority pages: answer-first opening, question H2s, self-contained answer blocks, one comparison table each.
2. Keep existing narrative/trust content below the answer layer — nothing is discarded.
3. Apply the FAQ block pattern with FAQPage schema (connected per F-05).
4. Re-score extractability post-rebuild; target ≥8/10 per page.

OWNER

Content

DONE WHEN

Six rebuilt pages score ≥8/10 on the extractability rubric and pass schema parity.

SUMMARY

Ten of the 22 tracked queries are cost-shaped ("furnace replacement cost," "AC repair prices"), and Meridian publishes no ranges — so engines cite competitors' numbers and your name never enters the answer.

DEEP DIVE

Cost questions dominate AI-mediated home-services research, and engines strongly prefer sources that state ranges plainly. Lakeview publishes ranges on five service pages and is cited on 8 of the 10 cost queries. Publishing honest ranges ("most Evanston furnace replacements run \$4,800–\$8,500 depending on...") doesn't commit you to a price; it earns you the citation and frames the conversation before a competitor does. Where policy genuinely prevents numbers, the fallback is a cost-factors block that still answers the question's structure — but ranges outperform factors in every study we track, and your job data makes them defensible.

Evidence: Query grid: 10 cost queries, Meridian cited on 1; Lakeview range pages captured for comparison.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Half the tracked buying questions are conceded to competitors by policy default rather than by decision.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: A

1. Decide the pricing-disclosure posture with leadership: ranges (recommended) vs. cost-factors fallback.
2. Publish range blocks on the six Phase-2 pages using real job data, phrased answer-first.
3. Mark ranges with a visible "as of [month/year]" and keep schema parity (F-06).
4. Track the 10 cost queries specifically in the re-test.

OWNER

Content

DONE WHEN

Cost-query citations move from 1 to ≥5 of 10 on re-test, or the factors fallback is documented as the accepted ceiling.

F-11 • Entity Clarity

CRITICAL IMPACT

SUMMARY

"Meridian Home Services," "Meridian HVAC," and "MHS" circulate across the site, GBP, directories, and social profiles — and no Wikidata item or schema declaration says which is real. AI resolves the ambiguity by guessing, sometimes wrongly.

DEEP DIVE

Entity resolution is string-and-context matching at scale: three names read as three weak entities rather than one strong one, and the accuracy log shows the cost — two platforms conflated Meridian with an out-of-state remodeler of similar name. The repair is a naming protocol plus grounding: pick the canonical form (recommend the legal "Meridian Home Services"), sweep every owned surface to it, encode it in the Organization node (F-04) with alternateName for the variants, and create the Wikidata item that gives every AI system a permanent, unambiguous identifier to ground against. Wikidata has no notability requirement — a properly sourced item (official site, founding date, HQ, industry) is available to essentially any real business, and it becomes the first sameAs reference in the graph.

Evidence: Name-variant inventory (site ×2 variants, GBP ×1, 6 directories ×3, LinkedIn ×1); misattribution transcripts; Wikidata search: no item (06/18).

BUSINESS IMPACT

The single largest drag on Entity Clarity (40/100), and the root of both misattribution incidents.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: S

1. Adopt "Meridian Home Services" as canonical; document it in a one-page naming protocol.
2. Sweep owned surfaces to the canonical form: site templates, GBP, directories, social bios.
3. Add alternateName ["Meridian HVAC", "MHS"] to the Organization node.
4. Create the Wikidata item with referenced statements; record the QID; add it as the first sameAs.

OWNER

Marketing

DONE WHEN

One canonical name on all owned surfaces; Wikidata QID live and referenced in schema; no misattribution on re-test.

F-12 • Entity Clarity

MEDIUM IMPACT

SUMMARY

Six directory listings carry the old Skokie address, a former phone number, or a name variant — feeding AI the disagreement that suppresses confident citation.

DEEP DIVE

Cross-source corroboration is how engines decide a business fact is true; Perplexity in particular requires agreement among independent sources before naming a brand confidently. Right now the directory layer disagrees with the site on address (2 listings), phone (3), and name (4, overlapping F-11's variants). The mechanical fix is a consistency sweep against a single master record — and the strategic upgrade is treating that record as a living artifact: every future change to hours, address, or services propagates from it, so drift can't re-accumulate. The audit's collected profile inventory (appendix) is the working checklist.

Evidence: 14-profile NAP inventory with per-field diffs (appendix).

BUSINESS IMPACT

Corroboration failure suppresses citations platform-wide and compounds the entity ambiguity in F-11.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: A

1. Lock the master record: canonical name, current address, main line, hours.
2. Correct the six flagged profiles (list in appendix); claim the two unclaimed ones.
3. Set a quarterly 15-minute re-verification.
4. Fold the master record into the naming protocol from F-11.

OWNER

Marketing

DONE WHEN

14 of 14 profiles match the master record on name, address, and phone.

F-13 • Rendering Architecture

HIGH IMPACT

SUMMARY

The service-area pages and the reviews page are client-side rendered — with JS disabled they deliver a header and an empty main element. Most AI crawlers never execute JavaScript.

DEEP DIVE

The two templates were rebuilt last year on a JS widget framework; browsers render them fine, so nothing looked wrong. But the JS-disabled diff shows main content going from ~1,200 words to zero on all 9 service-area pages and the reviews page — matching their absence from Bing (F-03 overlap: 7 of the 9 are among the missing URLs) and their zero citations despite covering the exact geographic queries in the tracked set. The durable fix is server-side rendering for those templates; the fast interim fix is a static HTML content block above the widget so crawlers get the substance even before the SSR work ships.

Evidence: JS-on/off render diffs for 10 affected URLs (appendix screenshots); crawler-visibility correlation noted.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Ten pages — including every geo page for your service area — are effectively invisible to non-Google AI crawlers.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Short term: add a server-rendered content block (service list, area copy, NAP) above the widget on both templates.
2. Schedule the SSR rebuild of the two templates with your developer.
3. Verify with a JS-disabled fetch: full main content present.
4. Re-inspect the 10 URLs in BWT after the fix.

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

JS-disabled fetch returns complete main content on all 10 URLs; Bing indexes ≥8 of them.

SUMMARY

The scheduling embed loads via JS into an about:blank iframe, so crawlers see no booking capability — and agentic browsers can't complete the flow.

DEEP DIVE

This mirrors the classic third-party-form failure: the widget works for humans and is invisible to machines. The near-term fix costs one line of content — a plain HTML fallback ("Book online or call (847) 555-0138") adjacent to the embed — so both crawlers and the growing agentic-browser layer have an actionable path. As agent-mediated booking grows, the scheduling vendor's accessibility posture is worth a question at renewal; several competitors now offer crawlable booking pages.

Evidence: *Page-source capture showing about:blank iframe on /schedule/ and 4 service pages.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Minor today; a widening gap as agentic browsing grows. Zero-cost insurance available now.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Add the HTML fallback line (booking link + phone) adjacent to every embed instance.
2. Confirm the fallback is server-rendered (visible in the JS-disabled diff).
3. Raise crawlable-booking support with the scheduling vendor at renewal.

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

Fallback visible in JS-disabled render on all 5 embed locations.

SUMMARY

Hero images on the service template push mobile LCP to ~3.4s. Desktop passes; mobile — where most local searches happen — doesn't.

DEEP DIVE

The template ships a 1.2MB hero at desktop dimensions to every device. Field data (CrUX) confirms the lab reading: mobile LCP p75 sits at 3.4s across the service-page group while other templates pass. CWV isn't an AI-citation factor per se, but it is a page-experience input, a rankings input, and — via layout stability — one of the Lighthouse agentic checks; the fix list is the standard one and the wins are cheap: responsive image sizes, modern format, priority hint on the hero, and font-display swap. Expect the group to clear 2.5s comfortably.

Evidence: *PSI field + lab reports for 6 service URLs (appendix); template-level asset audit.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Rankings/experience drag on the highest-value template; blocks a clean Lighthouse agentic pass.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: MEDIUM • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: T

1. Serve responsive hero sizes (srcset) in WebP/AVIF.
2. Add fetchpriority="high" to the hero; lazy-load below-fold images.
3. Set font-display: swap on the two webfonts.
4. Re-test the six URLs; confirm p75 LCP ≤ 2.5s in the next CrUX window.

OWNER

Developer

DONE WHEN

Lab LCP ≤ 2.5s on all six URLs; CrUX p75 clears in the following 28-day window.

F-16 • Competitive Intelligence

MEDIUM IMPACT

SUMMARY

Lakeview wins 17 of 22 tracked queries not on authority but on format: answer-first pages, published ranges, FAQ blocks, connected schema. Meridian's domain metrics are comparable; the structure isn't.

DEEP DIVE

The benchmark teardown (Section 8) compares the three competitors' cited pages against yours on the same rubric this audit scored. Lakeview's edge decomposes almost entirely into the fixable items already in this report: F-09's answer-first structure, F-10's visible pricing, F-05's connected schema. TruNorth wins a handful of queries on a strong review corpus; Hearthstone wins none consistently. Strategically that's the best possible shape for a gap — it means the roadmap isn't speculative, it's a documented reverse-engineering of what the current winner does, applied to a site with equal underlying authority.

Evidence: *Per-competitor cited-page teardowns with rubric scores (Section 8); domain-metric comparison table.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Defines the realistic target: format parity should convert 6–9 currently-lost queries based on the overlap analysis.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: HIGH • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: A

1. Execute F-09/F-10 on the six pages where Lakeview currently wins winnable queries.
2. Match FAQ-block coverage on those pages (answer-first, schema-connected).
3. Do not imitate Lakeview's thin geo-doorway pages — they violate current spam policy and are their exposed flank.
4. Re-run the benchmark with the Phase-3 re-test.

OWNER

Marketing

DONE WHEN

Benchmark re-run shows Meridian citation share within 3 queries of Lakeview on the tracked set.

SUMMARY

Pages show no dateModified on-page, and several cite 2023 statistics. Freshness is an explicit factor on Perplexity and a retrieval trigger on Claude.

DEEP DIVE

Engines with time-decay ranking (Perplexity explicitly; others behaviorally) discount pages that look abandoned — and stale visible stats compound the signal. The fix pairs display with discipline: expose the modified date on the article and service templates, refresh the four pages citing 2023 numbers, and fold a light quarterly refresh pass into the content calendar so the signal stays honest. Where a current-year reference is truthful ("2026 Evanston rebate programs"), it earns disproportionate retrieval on Claude's current-year-appended queries.

Evidence: *Template inspection; four stale-statistic URLs listed in appendix.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

A quiet, cumulative citation discount on otherwise strong pages.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: LOW • S.T.A.R.™ PILLAR: A

1. Enable visible "Updated [date]" on the article and service templates (Rank Math variable).
2. Refresh the four flagged pages' statistics with current sources.
3. Add a quarterly freshness pass to the content calendar.

OWNER

Content

DONE WHEN

Modified dates visible sitewide; zero pages citing pre-2025 statistics without context.

F-18 • Entity Clarity

MEDIUM IMPACT

SUMMARY

Meridian's Google reviews are excellent (4.8 ★, 340+), but the wider corroboration layer — Reddit/community mentions, vertical directories beyond the basics, third-party comparisons — is nearly silent, and engines that require cross-source agreement default to better-corroborated competitors.

DEEP DIVE

Perplexity's retrieval weights agreement across independent sources; Claude over-indexes on UGC and review content; ChatGPT favors third-party comparison pages. Meridian is strong on exactly one corroboration channel and absent from the rest: no presence in the r/evanston and r/HVAC threads where the category is actually discussed (Lakeview appears organically in four), no Angi/Houzz depth, and no inclusion in the two "best HVAC near Evanston" roundups that AI answers repeatedly cite. The program here is earned and authentic by policy — disclosed participation, genuinely useful answers, and outreach for roundup inclusion on merit — because manufactured UGC is both a platform-ban risk and a citation-poisoning risk if exposed.

Evidence: *Corroboration inventory: platform-by-platform presence table (appendix); the two roundup URLs AI cites most.*

BUSINESS IMPACT

Caps citation confidence on the two platforms (Perplexity, Claude) where Meridian's review strength should be winning already.

IMPLEMENTATION — EFFORT: HIGH • S.T.A.R.- PILLAR: A

1. Complete Angi and Houzz profiles to parity with the master record; port review highlights where platforms allow.
2. Pursue inclusion in the two cited roundups on merit (your review corpus is the case).
3. Begin disclosed, genuinely helpful participation where the category is discussed; never astroturf.
4. Re-inventory corroboration at the 90-day mark.

OWNER

Marketing

DONE WHEN

Both roundups list Meridian or declined with reasons logged; vertical profiles complete; first authentic community contributions live.

What six platforms say about you today.

22 queries × 6 platforms, captured June 19–21, 2026. Cited = brand named in the answer. Full per-query grid and screenshots in the evidence appendix; the grid below is the platform summary.

PLATFORM	CITED	ABSENT	INACCURATE	READING
ChatGPT	0	18	4	Blocked at crawler level (F-01) — the 4 inaccuracies are stale training-data facts
Gemini	4	16	2	Cites the water-heater guide; conflated brand once (F-11)
Perplexity	2	19	1	Partial index due to CDN challenges (F-02); cited a 2023 post as current pricing
Claude	1	21	0	Brave index holds only 12 pages (F-02) — near-total absence
Copilot	1	19	2	Bing gap (F-03); repeated the retired \$189 price (F-06)
Google AI Overviews	5	15	2	Strongest surface — tracks organic strength; duct-cleaning error appears here too (F-07)

— ACCURACY ISSUES — AND THEIR TRACEABLE SOURCES

WHAT AI SAID	THE FACT	WHERE	TRACEABLE SOURCE
Offers residential duct cleaning	Service discontinued 2024	ChatGPT · Gemini · Copilot	Live legacy page + schema + GBP/directories (F-07)
Maintenance plan \$189/yr	Current plan \$229/yr	Copilot	Stale schema price (F-06)
Conflated with Meridian remodeling firm (TX)	Different company	Gemini · Copilot	No canonical entity / Wikidata (F-11)
"Current pricing" from 2023 blog post	Outdated figures	Perplexity	Partial index + no visible dates (F-02, F-17)

Who wins your queries, and why.

Same 22-query set run for each competitor; cited-page teardowns scored on the audit rubric.

BUSINESS	CITED (OF 22)	WHY THEY WIN	EXPOSED FLANK
Lakeview Comfort Systems	17	Answer-first pages, published price ranges, FAQ blocks, connected schema	Thin geo-doorway pages (policy risk); weaker review corpus (4.3★)
TruNorth Mechanical	6	Deep review corpus; strong Reddit presence	No pricing; brochure-style service pages
Hearthstone HVAC	2	Occasional blog citations	No structural pattern; low entity clarity
Meridian (you)	8	Water-heater guide (3 platforms); review strength; organic rankings	Everything in this report — all fixable

The strategic reading: Lakeview's lead is **format, not authority** — your domain metrics and review corpus are equal or better. Findings F-09, F-10, and F-05 are the documented reverse-engineering of their cited pages, applied to a site with a stronger trust base. Their thin geo-doorway pages are a policy liability we deliberately do not imitate.

Can AI say, with confidence, who you are?

Entity clarity scored 40/100 — the lowest category, and the most consequential: engines that can't confidently identify a business default to competitors they can. Status of each grounding asset:

ASSET	STATUS	PATH
Wikidata item	Absent	Create with referenced statements (F-11) — no notability requirement applies
Knowledge Panel	Absent	Expected to follow entity consolidation; never guaranteed
Organization schema	Absent	F-04 — week-one fix
Connected @id graph	Absent (312 disconnected nodes, 1 orphan)	F-05 — template-level work
Canonical naming	3 variants in circulation	F-11 naming protocol
NAP corroboration	6 of 14 profiles inconsistent	F-12 sweep + quarterly check
sameAs footprint	None declared	Follows F-04/F-11: GBP, BBB, LinkedIn, Wikidata QID

The sequence matters: canonical name first (F-11), Organization node second (F-04), connected graph third (F-05), Wikidata grounding fourth — each step gives the next something to reference. A Knowledge Panel typically *follows* this consolidation; it is never promised, because Google alone grants it.

A sequenced plan, mapped to S.T.A.R.SM

Sequence is the strategy. Phase 1 removes the ceilings — crawler access, the accuracy corrections, and the Organization node — because nothing else compounds until AI can read the site and identify the business. Phase 2 does the structural work that converts access into citations: the entity consolidation and the six-page answer-first rebuild aimed directly at the queries Lakeview currently wins. Phase 3 closes the loop: corroboration depth, freshness discipline, and the full 22-query re-test that measures citation share against this report's baseline. Each item lists its finding reference; nothing in the plan is unexplained.

Phase 1 · Unblock & stabilize		Weeks 1-2
F-01	Remove GPTBot & Google-Extended disallows; request re-crawl	Low effort
F-02	Cloudflare allow-rules for verified AI crawlers	Low effort
F-07	Discontinued-service cleanup: page, schema, GBP, directories	Low effort
F-04	Organization (HVACBusiness) schema on the homepage	Low effort
F-03	BWT sitemap + IndexNow enabled	Low effort
F-06	Clear the four schema-parity flags	Low effort

Phase 2 • Structure & clarify		Weeks 3–8
F-11	Canonical naming protocol + owned-surface sweep + Wikidata item	Medium
F-05	Connected @id graph via the three schema templates	Medium
F-09	Answer-first rebuild of the six priority service pages	Medium
F-10	Pricing-range blocks (leadership decision, then publish)	Medium
F-13	Server-rendered content for the two JS-only templates	Medium
F-12	NAP sweep across the 14-profile inventory	Medium

Phase 3 • Corroborate & measure		Weeks 9–13
F-18	Vertical-profile depth + authentic community participation + roundup outreach	Ongoing
F-15	Mobile LCP fixes on the service template	Medium
F-17	Visible update dates + stale-stat refresh + quarterly pass	Low effort
F-14	Crawlable booking fallback	Low effort
F-08 / F-16	Full 22-query re-test + benchmark re-run; measure citation share vs. baseline	Milestone

METHODOLOGY & SCOPE

How this was measured.

YMYL classification: NOT triggered — Meridian operates in residential HVAC (non-YMYL vertical), and the assessed page set contains no health, financial, legal, or safety-topic pages; standard weight set applied to all category scores. Assessment window June 15–21, 2026. Twenty priority pages selected with the client (checklist C1); competitors client-designated (C2). Technical evidence collected via direct probes (per-user-agent HTTP requests, JS-on/off render comparison, sitewide JSON-LD extraction with graph-connectivity validation, Lighthouse 13.x including the Agentic Browsing category, PageSpeed Insights field data). Index coverage verified in Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools (verified during this engagement), and Brave site-queries. AI representation tested with a fixed 22-query set across six platforms, June 19–21, screenshot-evidenced; consumer-surface answers vary by session and locale, and API-assisted results approximate consumer surfaces — treat single readings as snapshots and trends as the signal. Scores are computed from per-item check results against the v1.7 rubric; category weights and item lists available on request. Facts verified against the client-confirmed fact sheet (checklist B4/B5). AI-platform behavior changes independently of any work performed; no citation or ranking outcome is guaranteed.

NEXT STEPS

Two honest paths.

Path A — your team implements

This report is built to be executed internally. Work the Quick Wins first, then the roadmap phases in order — every finding includes steps, code where applicable, and a "done when" check your team can verify without us. Re-run the free AI Visibility Check after Phase 1 to see early movement.

Path B — we implement

Prefer it handled? Engage the AI Visibility Accelerator within 60 days and the \$750 onboarding fee is waived — this roadmap becomes your Month 1 plan.

Both paths are legitimate, and your findings review call covers either. Questions along the way: hello@maxplaces.com · maxplaces.com/contact · 855-629-6584.