

Your 2026 Small Business Website Checklist

35 things every Westside LA small business website needs (or should) — the legal, technical, and growth essentials.

Print this. Go through your site, room by room. Tick what you have. Star what you're missing. The must-haves below are the items that legally protect your business or hold you back from being found. The nice-to-haves are growth opportunities most small businesses leave on the table.

25 MUST-HAVES

LEGAL & PRIVACY

- ☐ 1. **Privacy Policy that covers California's CCPA/CPRA** — Fines start at \$2,500 per violation.
- ☐ 2. **Cookie consent banner with real opt-out** — Required by California law for any tracking cookies.
- ☐ 3. **SSL certificate (HTTPS padlock)** — Without it, browsers warn visitors and Google penalizes rankings.
- ☐ 4. **Accessibility Statement page** — Demonstrates good-faith compliance with ADA Title III.
- ☐ 5. **Industry-specific legal disclaimers** — Medical, financial, fitness, beauty all have specific requirements.

ACCESSIBILITY (WCAG 2.2 AA BASICS)

- ☐ 6. **Color contrast that passes WCAG (4.5:1 for body text)** — Light gray on white fails — and shuts out older customers.
- ☐ 7. **Alt text on every image** — Required for screen readers AND for image SEO.
- ☐ 8. **Proper heading hierarchy (one H1, logical H2/H3)** — How screen readers and Google understand your page.
- ☐ 9. **Form labels that stay visible (not placeholder-only)** — Placeholder text disappears the moment someone types.
- ☐ 10. **Keyboard-navigable site (every link reachable by Tab key)** — Top-cited issue in ADA web complaints.

ON-SITE TECHNICAL SEO

- ☐ 11. **Mobile-responsive design that actually works** — Google ranks the mobile version of your site — not desktop.
- ☐ 12. **Page speed under 3 seconds** — Every extra second loses ~7% of visitors.
- ☐ 13. **Unique meta titles and descriptions per page** — Controls click-through from Google search results.
- ☐ 14. **Schema markup (LocalBusiness, Organization)** — Required for rich snippets, knowledge panels, and AI citations.
- ☐ 15. **Sitemap submitted to Google Search Console** — Tells Google which pages exist — 15-minute setup.
- ☐ 16. **Image optimization (compressed, WebP, lazy-loaded)** — Biggest single cause of slow pages.
- ☐ 17. **Internal linking strategy across the site** — Helps Google understand which pages matter most.

AI SEARCH OPTIMIZATION (GEO & AEO)

- ☐ 18. **Content structured for AI summaries (GEO)** — ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity cite well-structured content.
- ☐ 19. **FAQ section with schema markup (AEO)** — Captures voice search and AI answer traffic.
- ☐ 20. **Author / expertise signals (E-E-A-T)** — Named authors with credentials outrank anonymous content.

CONVERSION TACTICS

- ☐ 21. **One clear primary call-to-action above the fold** — Confused visitors leave — pages with one CTA convert 2-3x better.
- ☐ 22. **Phone number visible site-wide (clickable on mobile)** — For most local businesses, calls are the highest-converting lead.
- ☐ 23. **Social proof (Google reviews, testimonials)** — Westside customers are skeptical — independent proof is worth more than your copy.
- ☐ 24. **Trust signals (badges, certifications, years in business)** — Tells visitors you're real and reliable in 3 seconds.

PAGE LAYOUT AND HIERARCHY

- ☐ **25. Clear navigation with no more than 7 items** — More than that and visitors scan, miss things, and leave.

10 NICE-TO-HAVES (growth opportunities)

Not required — but each one drives measurable growth when added to a site that already has the must-haves.

- ☐ **1. Online booking / scheduling** — 40% of customers prefer to book without a phone call.
- ☐ **2. Email capture with a real lead magnet** — Email remains the highest-ROI marketing channel.
- ☐ **3. Live chat or chatbot** — Captures leads that arrive after hours or want instant answers.
- ☐ **4. Video content (intro, testimonials, demos)** — Lifts time-on-site and conversion meaningfully.
- ☐ **5. Local content (blog posts about your neighborhood)** — Captures "best X in Santa Monica" search traffic that ages well.
- ☐ **6. Customer portal or login area** — Differentiator for professional services with repeat clients.
- ☐ **7. Multi-language support (Spanish on the Westside)** — Opens up a meaningful share of the LA market.
- ☐ **8. Loyalty or referral program integration** — Existing customers are the cheapest source of new ones.
- ☐ **9. Heatmaps and session recordings (Microsoft Clarity is free)** — Shows you exactly where visitors get stuck or leave.
- ☐ **10. CRM integration for lead capture and follow-up** — Following up within an hour increases conversion 7x.

Spotting gaps? Don't panic — they're fixable.

Most Westside small business websites are missing 10-15 of these items. That's normal — and it's exactly why I do what I do. If you'd like a free 30-minute call to walk through your site together, identify what matters most to fix first, and get a clear sense of priority, I'd be happy to. No pitch, no funnel — just a real conversation.

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