

The Client

Avant is one of the first purpose-built student housing communities in Canada. It is ideally located on Gerrard Street, which has a long history as a centre of vitality in Downtown Toronto and places the property and its 343 student residents directly across from Ryerson University and minutes from the University of Toronto.

The Strategy

Discovery & Market Research

To ensure the new brand would resonate with the target audience and contribute to improved community reputation and engagement, we conducted extensive market research before launching into branding.

Combining insights from the property management team, target audience demographics, and the history of Ryerson, Gerrard Street, and Downtown Toronto, we moved into the branding phase with a complete picture of how this community could stand out in the market.

Naming & Branding

Using an iterative and collaborative process with the Varsity Communities team, the name Avant was chosen as a representation of the innovation that Ryerson and Downtown Toronto are known for as well as the modernizing renovations that were already transforming the community.

From this name, logo, colors, brand voice, and other branding elements followed. We selected vibrant brand colors that complemented the colors of Ryerson University but did not replicate them, helping us differentiate Avant among the market while still highlighting the location directly across from campus. The logo

The Problem To Solve

With outdated units and amenities, no digital marketing strategy, and poor reviews, this property was seen as a “last resort” among Toronto students. Varsity Communities knew this community could be rehabilitated, but first it would need extensive renovations, completely new branding, and a diverse advertising mix to garner excitement for the upcoming changes.

Starting at 55% occupied and commanding rents 15-30% below market value, Varsity Communities partnered with Threshold to create a new brand, new website, and enhanced digital presence so they could start pre-leasing quickly.

The Dream

With a great location and renovations underway, the client set their sights on lofty goals that would transform the community dramatically:

- Complete a full property rebrand
- Launch a new website and digital web presence
- Improve community sentiment in the market
- Generate 1000 digital leads in 4 months
- Generate 500 completed applications in 4 months
- Re-lease units at 10% higher rates
- Increase Net Operating Income by 10%
- Achieve 97% pre-lease occupancy by September 1st, 2021

design incorporated an upward slant to indicate forward progress and new heights for the community.

Website Design & Development

Building on the vision established by our branding process, we worked quickly to get a new landing page up and running so that we could direct digital ads to a conversion-optimized page where leasing staff could start collecting leads.

Once the landing page was live, we would also continue work on a full website that would provide excellent UX and clear calls to action so that potential residents would be inspired to start their lease application.

Digital Advertising

Digital advertising would play a huge role in informing the Ryerson community of the exciting new changes and drive qualified leads to Avant’s website. We helped Varsity Communities implement digital lead generation campaigns through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Google Display Ads. Amid this competitive urban market, we leveraged geotargeting tactics to ensure we reached the most qualified audience so that no ad dollars were wasted.

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The Results

Rebranded and refreshed, the Avant community soon began earning results that surpassed the already lofty goals established by the client. Because of our well-researched brand positioning, user-friendly web presence, and aggressive digital marketing strategy, the leads started pouring in, much to the excitement of the leasing team.

In just a few months, this new marketing strategy delivered 2,037 qualified leads and 703 completed applications. This was more than double the goal the team had originally set for lead generation and paved the way for an accelerated lease-up. Instead of achieving 97% pre-leased by September 1st as originally hoped, the leases shot past all the way to 100% pre-leased a full month ahead of schedule.

Not only did the community earn new leases, but with ample buzz and well-executed renovations, these new leases also came in at a 40% higher rent per square foot than had previously been charged, contributing to a 24% higher Net Operating Income. Once again, the client had achieved double what they'd originally hoped for. And the wins don't stop there.

Since all these improvements, Avant has enjoyed 92% 5-Star Google Reviews since September 1st, 2021, completely rehabilitating its online reputation and setting it up for successful lease-ups in the years to come. It now has a loyal community of engaged residents and has earned a spot as one of the leading competitors in the Ryerson student housing market.

100%
Pre-leased
1 month ahead
of schedule



2,037
New Qualified
Leads

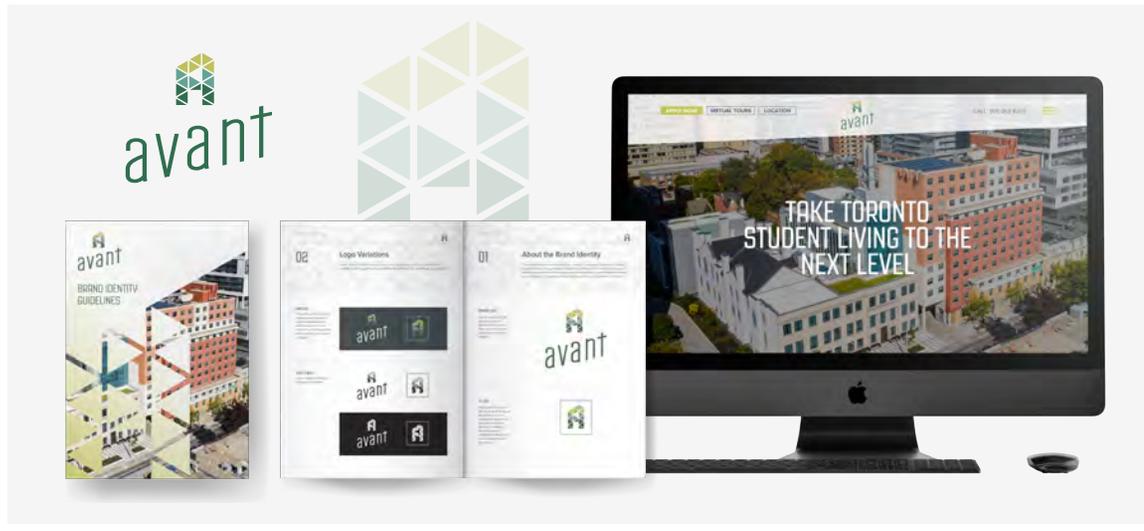
Increased
**Net Operating
Income** by
24%



★★★★★
92% 5-Star
Google Reviews
since 9.1.21

Increased rent
per square
foot by **40%**

703
Completed
Applications

“The THeam at Threshold are highly skilled and results driven. They are the best at what they do. From the first day we discussed this new property assignment, until the last lease was executed ahead of schedule, they have been professional and on top of it. They helped us develop a compelling and powerful brand that our site teams have been able to really grab a hold of and run with. We have turned around the community's perception in the market in a few short months. We have also nearly doubled the amount of leads we were hoping for and in turn were able to drive rents higher than they had ever been. They really are the Real Estate Marketing Dream THeam!”

Connor Patterson, Chief Operating Officer,
Varsity Communities (Canada)

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