

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

BY LAUREN BOSTON

One student housing community turned a food truck into a successful mobile leasing office, offering a tasty surprise.

If students can buy gourmet mac and cheese, tacos and lobster rolls from a food truck, why not order up an apartment, too?



Eddie Moreno, Portfolio Manager for Cardinal Group Management, says his team considered the idea last fall while brainstorming ways to introduce students at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) to Tetro Student Village, opening in fall 2014.

Unlike dense markets, such as West Campus in Austin, Texas, Moreno (left) says the UTSA student body is spread out in a relatively large area surrounding the campus. Therefore, reaching the student population to create brand aware-



TetroStudentVillage.com
855.281.1897

ness and market penetration were identified as the team's greatest challenges.

While discussing this particular obstacle and the need for temporary leasing space, Moreno says the team kept returning to the fact that Tetro's success would be born from—and sustained by—a commitment to thinking outside of the box, with the student body and community in mind. Moreno says that's when a light bulb went off—the “community” that Tetro was becoming a part of was not just UTSA, but rather the city at large.

Like many cities throughout the country, San Antonio has been hit by the food truck craze in recent years, supporting these small, locally born and bred businesses and even boasting its own food truck association.

“We quickly came to the conclusion that the student body's familiarity with food trucks would be a key advantage in making the concept work,” says Moreno, whose team was discussing lease-up strategies with the Carter development team at—of all places—the campus food court when the idea was born. “From there, it was simple planning and execution—take a food truck and make it a fully functional leasing office on wheels.”



Tricked-Out Ride

Within an hour of the meeting, Cardinal Group Management was at a food truck builder's fabrication shop, pitching the idea and determining if the project was feasible. The vendor seemed like the perfect partner and was immediately hired to convert the food truck—originally designed for a vineyard—into a mobile leasing office.



The Tetro truck hosts daily events around campus at shuttle stops and outside of the construction trailer.

The vineyard model had twin trucks outfitted to host guests and conduct tastings. Cardinal Group Management took that basic layout and had the food truck team add a functional desk on the passenger side of the box and build out the rest per their specifications.

And spiffy specifications they were: The Tetro Truck was designed to include two 42-inch flat screen TVs, one mounted on the back wall and another on an articulating arm that swings out of the side bay door to stream the community’s various social media feeds. Each flat screen TV is synced and mirrored with an iPad that allows team members to conduct virtual tours, review the floor plans and site amenities, and ultimately walk a prospect through the application and lease process.

The truck, which operates off of a built-in generator when it’s not moving, has plush leather bench seating for eight to 10 people, an interior and exterior sound system, and a fully equipped leasing desk, computer, printer and small refrigerator. A storage locker integrated into the back exterior wall houses promotional collateral and branded games, such as Cornhole and giant Jenga.

What’s more, the exterior of the truck utilizes an application called Layar—an augmented reality application that allows a

smartphone to recognize a known image and provide additional detail on that image, or take the user to a destination site similar to a QR code. Moreno says the Layar feature recognizes the amenities menu located outside of the truck’s service window, as well as the round Tetro logo and rear panel design.

The entire process took approximately 45 days from concept to delivery and cost less than \$75,000, which included purchasing the truck, fabrication, design and outfitting it with technology to lease on the go. A Denver-based design studio provided the exterior and interior design concepts and a local print shop applied the wraps.

With that, the mobile leasing office was ready to roll.

Keep On Truckin’

The Tetro Truck was introduced to the UTSA market through a 30-day trickle campaign before hitting the market in December with daily events around campus, at shuttle stops and outside of the construction trailer, which is also wrapped in the same theme.

Within 48 hours of its unveiling, Moreno says Tetro’s social media pages saw a significant boost in traffic, including a sizable increase in the number of “Likes” on the community’s



A menu offers students a sneak peek at all the amenities Tetro Student Village offers.



The inside of the truck is tricked-out with a TV, small refrigerator, computer and sound system.

Facebook page. Prior to the Tetro Truck release, the site had approximately 320 likes. Two days later, Moreno says the likes exceeded 730—bypassing existing and new competitors’ Facebook pages.

“The student feedback was instantaneous,” says Moreno, whose team has sourced approximately 30 percent to 40 percent of its traffic from the truck.

Moreno says this includes direct outreach marketing around campus, driving the truck to local retail centers and even taking it to future residents’ homes or workplaces to conduct remote signings.

“This strategy has been particularly successful when signing large groups of 10 or more,” Moreno says. “The team loads the truck with leases, pizzas and drinks and heads out to the specified destination to sign multiple leases at the same time.”

The onsite team uses the truck on a daily basis, whether it’s projecting music into the parking lot at the construction trailer or making its regular rounds near the UTSA campus. Moreno says the Tetro Truck’s schedule changes from week to week depending on student activities, sporting events, class schedules and community hosted functions.

“The truck has developed a reputation and following in the market and is known for its Tetro Takeovers, which are impromptu street-side parties where the team plays music, streams live content and generally has a good time,” Moreno says.



In keeping with the theme of the truck and the commitment to the food truck concept, the Tetro Student Village team also partners with local food trucks to host Food Truck Fridays. The community foots the bill for the food and drives traffic to the community for a free meal, good music, and fun and games. ■

Lauren Boston is NAA’s Staff Writer and Manager of Public Relations. She can be reached at lauren@naabq.org or 703-797-0678.

lets talk about
**MANAGED
PROCUREMENT**
and help you build a customized
purchasing program



Who’s managing your procurement process?
eSupply Systems is a simple, cloud-based
procurement and spend management solution.
We’re the best of both worlds, combining
technology and advisory services. Get in touch
with us today, and we will start building a cus-
tomized purchasing program that works for you.



eSupply Systems
PURCHASING INTELLIGENCE

877.655.MPCC
mpcc@esupplysystems.com
7800 West IH 10, Suite 130 | San Antonio, TX 78230

www.eSupplySystems.com