Putting people and planet first

2020 ESG & Wellness Report
Our global presence

Canada  
Germany  
Israel  
South Korea  
Mexico  
Poland  
Republic of Ireland  
Romania  
United Kingdom  
United States

About us

Avison Young creates real economic, social and environmental value as a global real estate advisor, powered by people. As a private company, our clients collaborate with an empowered partner who is invested in their success. Our integrated talent realizes the full potential of real estate by using global intelligence platforms that provide clients with insights and advantage.

5,000 real estate professionals  
10 countries... and growing  
100+ office locations
By putting people and planet first, we aim to make a positive impact on our places, spaces and investments – effecting real change for real economic, social and environmental value.

Avison Young is a 2020 winner of the Canada’s Best Managed Companies Platinum Club designation, retaining its Best Managed designation for nine consecutive years.

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About this report
Information in this report covers all Avison Young offices and activities during the 2020 calendar year. Unless otherwise noted, data presented is as of December 31, 2020 and all amounts are in Canadian dollars.
CEO message

With COVID-19 and incidents of racial injustice shining a spotlight on some of society’s biggest challenges in 2020, our heightened commitment to ESG and wellness advanced our intention to be part of the solution.

2020 was a year unlike any other in recent history. Tragically, lives were lost and many people suffered hardship and pain. The events demonstrated how quickly systemic issues can turn the world on its head and highlighted the need to improve the sustainability and resilience of businesses, economies and societies.

While environmental, social and governance (ESG) tenets have been important to Avison Young for many years, they are now a pillar of our business strategy and central to our newly advanced purpose: Avison Young creates real economic, social and environmental value as a global real estate advisor, powered by people.

With this shift, we strengthened many of our ESG systems, standards, programs and inhouse capabilities. We aligned our strategy to global frameworks such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and Principles for Responsible Investment. We also participated in industry efforts to make the built environment healthier and more sustainable; for example, our U.K. business signed on to the World Green Building Council’s (WorldGBC) Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment and we contributed to WorldGBC’s new health and wellbeing framework.

All of us were horrified by the ongoing incidents of racism, violence and social injustice witnessed in 2020, and into 2021. We’ve been vocal in our condemnation of them and taken action internally and externally to address the issues they raised. Among other things, we held anti-racism listening sessions, dedicated our annual dAY of Giving to learning about systemic racism and hidden bias, initiated a supplier diversity strategy and strengthened our overall diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies. It’s our responsibility as a global citizen to be part of the solution, and we continue to examine what that looks like and how we can expand our actions, policies and programs to promote and sustain a more inclusive and equitable society.

As important as all of this work was, in a year defined by the pandemic, we leaned in to something we have championed as a company for nearly a decade: looking after our staff and clients.

As a firm that seeks to perform at a human scale, we show up for wellness. We encouraged our people to work from home, where job responsibilities allowed, and ensured they had the tools and support needed to do their jobs while balancing new work-life integration demands. We placed a strong emphasis on wellness – physical, mental and emotional – and increased our communications and support in this area. As we planned for a return to offices, I was especially proud of the work undertaken with Cleveland Clinic on strategies and protocols to protect our staff and advise our clients on their processes.

I can’t say enough about the resilience, dedication and hard work of our people this past year, as they looked after our clients and one another. Thanks to them, we advanced our purpose and our ESG & Wellness strategy amidst historic challenges, and we face the future with optimism.

Sincerely,

Mark Rose
Chairman and CEO
Progress that matters

It will take more than good intentions to drive progress on some of the social and environmental challenges we face as a society. We introduced ESG & Wellness as a new pillar of our core business strategy to effect change in a deliberate and meaningful way – for today and for the decades that follow.

Aligning with global standards

Avison Young’s ESG & Wellness strategy is grounded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world’s blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The SDGs provide a universal framework for setting meaningful targets and actions, engaging with stakeholders and communicating performance. Along with them, we align with widely recognized frameworks and approaches that are of particular importance to our business and our clients.

We adopted the SDG alignment protocol in 2020 and have identified eight goals where we believe we can make our greatest contribution – both as a business and as an advisor to clients. The relevant SDG symbols appear throughout this report.

The UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) are a voluntary and aspirational set of investment principles that offer a menu of possible actions for incorporating ESG issues into investment practice. Avison Young’s Investment Management group became a signatory of the PRI in 2020.

Our Investment Management group has completed Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB) reporting for 100% of our global investment management portfolio since 2015. We are increasingly assisting property management and consulting clients in the preparation of GRESB reporting for their own portfolios as part of our service delivery. Avison Young earned two Green Stars in the 2020 GRESB survey, placing second in our U.S. peer group.

Our U.K. business signed on to the World Green Building Council’s (WorldGBC) Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment, which commits us to operating our U.K.-based workplaces at net zero carbon by 2030. In 2020, we also contributed to the development of the WorldGBC’s new health and wellbeing framework, Better Places for People, an educational resource for the building and construction sector.
Q&A with Amy Erixon
President, Avison Young Investment Management

What was the significance of Avison Young’s Investment Management group becoming a PRI signatory?

Investment Management’s main business objective is to help institutional investors meet their long-term real estate investment goals through directly managed real estate portfolios or closed-end funds. It’s critical that we pay close attention to ESG factors like climate change because of the significant impact they can have on the long-term performance of these investments.

While responsible investment – that is, the integration of ESG factors into investment and asset management processes – has been core to our business philosophy for many years, we signed on to the PRI in 2020 to publicly demonstrate our commitment. This step is important to many of our clients, and it places us at the heart of a global community seeking to build a more sustainable financial system.

Where did you make the greatest strides in 2020?

We completed our first Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) report, which provided an excellent framework to further our thinking on climate change risks and opportunities. Going through the TCFD process helped us recognize that there is additional information about climate change that can improve our portfolio construction and management processes and drive selected capital investments and operational changes at the asset level.

Thinking through the long-term implications of climate change also opened our eyes to longer-term opportunities and challenges for our business. As this TCFD process was the first of many, we will continue to refine our understanding of risks and opportunities over time as more information about the transition to a low-carbon economy becomes available, including the timing of climate-related regulatory changes and the needs of our clients.
ESG & Wellness governance

ESG & Wellness is central to how we consult with our clients, manage our own operations and workplace practices, and serve our communities. It is delivered through a combination of dedicated professionals, services, online training and support, executive oversight and a Global Citizenship affinity group. Senior executives’ annual variable compensation is directly linked to achieving our core business strategies, including the new ESG & Wellness strategy, as well as corporate financial objectives.

We’re systematically updating policies and integrating ESG & Wellness practices deeper into our governance processes and service delivery model.

In 2020, this included making strategic ESG-related hires, updating our Code of Conduct and diversity and inclusion strategy, incorporating climate-related screens into our due diligence protocols, and introducing responsible investment and responsible procurement policies.

Responsible procurement and the SDGs

We formed a Responsible Procurement Committee in 2020 and created corporate procurement standards that are focused on ensuring that our vendors reflect our corporate ethics, and sustainability and diversity goals. We’ve identified specific 2030 Avison Young targets and metrics for each of the eight pillars associated with SDG 12. Implementation will see us pursue strategies to further reduce waste and offset our carbon and water footprints.

Paris Agreement

Avison Young stands in support of the landmark Paris Agreement, an international treaty on climate change adopted in 2015. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. We do our part by reducing our own carbon footprint and advising our owner, occupier and investor clients on strategies to achieve their ESG goals, including net zero carbon targets.

How Avison Young’s heightened commitment to ESG benefits clients

A word from Jon Gibson,
Head of Sustainability in the U.K.

ESG & Wellness is more important than ever to clients of all types. As we shift from incremental targets and progress in our ESG performance to embedding ESG practices into how we perform our services and stretching our ambition, we’ll be in an even better position to help our clients meet their ESG goals.

Along with providing more in-depth ESG training to employees, we continue to establish a broad range of dedicated professionals to deliver technical expertise and support our growing suite of sustainability products and services. In the U.K., this now includes services related to ESG strategy and reporting, net zero carbon and climate risk assessment and strategy, and health and wellbeing consultancy for occupiers, developers and landlords.
Living our values

With the pandemic putting enormous strain on everyone around the world, we looked for ways to help our people, clients and communities navigate the crisis and move forward with confidence.

From the onset of the pandemic, we were guided by our values and commitment to put the wellbeing of our staff and clients at the heart of our response. We provided them with relevant information and resources; closely followed the recommendations of the world’s leading health organizations; and implemented our business continuity plans in response to the developments.

Within days, many of our teams were working remotely – as were our clients. As clients advanced their work from home (WFH) practices, Avison Young leadership and business continuity teams were there to help, providing solutions for workplace analytics, employee engagement, WFH practices, technology, footprint optimization and more.

4 company-wide webinars dedicated to mental health
Our people-centric response

With many of our teams working remotely by the end of March 2020, we shifted to virtual meetings, increased internal communications and sought to help people cope with the demands of working from home while homeschooling their children and caring for loved ones throughout the rest of the year.

Town halls became a critical forum for discussions on business continuity and strategy, as well as key topics such as mental health, social justice and impacts of the pandemic. The virtual town halls typically saw 50% to 75% of the company in attendance, with replays available for those who couldn't attend live.

With numerous studies pointing to the pandemic's heavy toll on mental health, we reaffirmed our commitment to wellness – physical, emotional and mental. This included candid blog posts by our CEO, who is a champion of mental health, and several company-wide webinars, at which we heard from doctors from Cleveland Clinic, ranked the #2 hospital in the country by U.S. News & World Report, and renowned psychologists. The webinars saw strong engagement, with 60% of our organization attending at least two of the four sessions.

Regular pulse surveys gave us a good sense of how our people were managing, how they felt about returning to the office, and the actions we needed to take. In contemplating a return, we’ve collaborated with Cleveland Clinic on strategies and protocols to protect our own staff and advise clients on their process. The guidance documents for Avison Young offices and for our clients are based on the best practices of human resources, medicine and real estate, and are readily available on our website.

The future of work

While the past year has shown us that we can be productive from just about anywhere, we also recognize the importance of the office environment to our culture and collective intelligence, and to how we serve clients and develop our people. Going forward, we’re considering a hybrid structure that would allow staff to split their time between the office and working remotely.

We’re also piloting office innovation in some of our markets. Starting with Dallas, our offices are intended to become WELL-certified, a designation for advancing health and wellbeing in buildings. We’ve implemented different settings for employees to choose from and flexible working spaces to adapt to changing workstyles with a thoughtful design that places a priority on people’s health and happiness and reduces our carbon footprint.
Reimagining the post-COVID office

When moving our Edmonton, Alberta, office to accommodate our growing staff, we implemented some of the latest best practices in office design and sustainability. Our new home features a mix of assigned and unassigned seating. Glass walls and high ceilings let in natural light and give the office an expansive feel. Open space dominates with a wide variety of soft to hard seating options, including banquettes, chesterfields, communal long tables and automated sit-or-stand desks.

Various “collision rooms” dot the premises, ranging from dimmed lounges to airy meeting rooms. Individual offices are enclosed in floor-to-ceiling glass, situated in the core and face out into the communal spaces. The wall insulation is made of recycled denim jeans, containing 53% less CO$_2$e than conventional fiberglass insulation. In total, the project prevented 1,880 lbs of drywall from entering the landfill, eliminating 1,548 lbs of CO$_2$e that is normally released when drywall decomposes in the landfill.

The pandemic has been a catalyst in our industry for rethinking the role of the workplace. We’re counselling our clients on how to design what we call X Factor office experiences. See our X Factor website to learn more.

53% less CO$_2$e by using wall insulation made of recycled denim jeans  

1,880 lbs of drywall prevented from entering the landfill
Helping clients build resilience

In the U.K., we delivered a number of cross-business initiatives and campaigns to help our clients build resilience and capitalize on opportunities as they emerge from the pandemic:

— Recognizing that the need to minimize real estate costs and conserve cash is likely to persist for some time, our cost containment diagnostic tool helps clients rapidly assess cash-savings opportunities.

— The U.K. Cities Recovery Index monitors the diversity of market activity and the speed and trajectory of the recovery in different regions, using a range of high-frequency indicators across sectors that reflect different aspects of city life.

— The Urban Futures initiative is designed to help public and private sector clients navigate the recovery of Britain’s high streets (known as main streets in North America) post-COVID-19 for both the short and long term.

We joined U.K. businesses, investors and business networks in an open letter calling on the Government to deliver a COVID-19 recovery plan that builds a more inclusive, stronger and more resilient U.K. economy.

Avison Young was also the first real estate firm to support Reskilling the Recovery, a pilot project to boost the number of apprenticeships available to London’s low-paid workers. Our staff also supported research into the experiences of community groups during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As a business committed to net zero carbon by 2030, we have the opportunity, responsibility, accountability and ultimately the privilege to play our part in building a better future for business, society and our environment. We are determined to lead the way for the real estate industry’s role in driving lasting change and are ready to support the implementation of a green recovery plan that will ensure sustainable, inclusive growth and long-term resilience for our economy.”

– Jason Sibthorpe, President, U.K., Avison Young
Standing up for inclusion

We believe that for commercial real estate to meet the needs of the future, it must be powered by people who represent and embrace a diversity of perspectives and thinking. We know there's work to do – within our own walls and as an industry – and we're committed to driving progress.

In a male-dominated industry, Avison Young stands out for its commitment to empowering women. In the last several years, we've worked to increase the number of women on our board and in our executive ranks, to the extent that women now make up 40% of our 23-person corporate leadership group. However, events of 2020 were a stark reminder of the need to go further in our D&I efforts – to take deliberate action to reduce barriers to industry access for people of colour and diverse backgrounds and to more intentionally advance anti-racism and social justice.
Allies for diversity and inclusion

We believe that Avison Young is stronger when it reflects the clients and communities we serve, and when our people can show up as themselves and feel respected and supported. To this end, we are improving our D&I policies, accountability and practices. In 2020, this included:

— Establishing a global D&I Advisory Council to lead workforce diversity initiatives. The Council – consisting of 20 individuals from all areas of the business – is responsible for ensuring Avison Young clearly links our D&I strategy to our business strategy.

— Assessing our current state in the areas of employee recruitment, attraction, development, advancement and engagement, and in supplier diversity. The work involved comparing our current state to best practices and mapping out plans to bridge the gaps.

— Adding to our Employee Resource Groups, including expanding our Women’s Network and IDEA Group (LGBTQ+) and creating a Black Professionals Resource Group, which already has more than 100 members.

— Conducting multiple global townhall conversations about race, white privilege and micro-aggressions facilitated by outside experts and several of our Black professionals. These events were attended by more than half of our staff, and the resources provided have been viewed thousands of times.

— Training our 23-person executive leadership team on inclusive leadership and making D&I training accessible to all staff through our internal learning platforms.

We’re working on a supplier diversity strategy that will apply across our global organization, while allowing for distinctions by country. Our first steps have been to assemble a global working group, assess our current state and begin drafting a vendor code of conduct that will hold companies to the same standards of responsible and inclusive business conduct we expect of ourselves.

A dAY of listening, learning and action

Each year, Avison Young dedicates a day – our dAY of Giving – for all employees to focus on giving back to their communities through collective action. While this is typically done through in-person volunteer work, 2020 required something different.

We came together for a globally aligned day of learning about systemic racism, building on earlier company-wide anti-racism listening sessions. In a powerful virtual town hall, we learned to identify and challenge micro-behaviours and unconscious biases and came to understand the effects of these behaviours on mental health.

The two-hour global session was attended by more than 60% of our people.
We stand for racial justice

Following the killing of George Floyd in the spring of 2020, Avison Young joined the chorus of voices demanding racial equality, justice and meaningful action.

We published an open letter to U.S. governors and mayors asking them to advance reforms to address systemic racism at state and local levels in the areas of policing and criminal justice.

Recommendations included establishing a duty to intervene policy to prevent excess force by officers and requiring comprehensive reporting each time an officer uses force or threatens to do so; improving training, policies and practices to reduce the use of force; establishing independent investigative bodies; insisting upon collaboration with and inclusion of community stakeholders; addressing criminal justice system inequities; providing re-entry support and more.

In early 2021, an all-too-familiar feeling of unease and anxiety – stemming from the uptick in violence and racism against Asian Pacific Islander Americans in the U.S. and the abduction and murder of Sarah Everard in the U.K. – prompted us to issue a second statement condemning violence and intolerance in all forms.

Measuring social value in buildings and places

The trend toward generating additional social value for communities in places and buildings has always been a strong part of what Avison Young delivers when working with clients. In recent years, the measurement of these social value outcomes has become more important and more sophisticated.

According to Jon Gibson, our U.K. Head of Sustainability: “Now more than ever, issues such as public health, inequality in communities and the amount of accessible open green spaces, which have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, need to be addressed. We expect the real estate industry at large to play a big part in this and embrace new ways of creating lasting social value through projects.”

To this end, we contributed to a report developed by the U.K. Green Building Council, which provides the real estate industry with clarity on the various approaches and best practices to measuring the social value of projects, with some excellent examples.
A heart for Peel Children’s Aid Society

In 2020, our Project Management team was proud to present the new, purpose-built home of Peel Children’s Aid Society (Peel CAS) in Mississauga, Ontario, designed with staff and client wellness at its heart.

Located in one of Canada’s largest and most culturally diverse cities, Peel CAS strives to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community’s most vulnerable with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. It works with families facing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, ill health, domestic violence, mental health issues, or caring for a child who has serious physical, emotional or developmental difficulties – and does everything it can to keep the families together.

Avison Young is a corporate donor to Peel Children’s Aid Foundation, and team members from across our service lines collaborated to bring this special project to life – from finding the perfect location to designing, developing and fitting it out. Together, they helped deliver Peel CAS’s new home, which features:

- Office, education and training spaces, a fitness area and an outdoor terrace for staff
- Community space with classrooms, a gymnasium and facilities where youth in care can go to do their homework or to play basketball, dance or watch a movie
- Private living room settings where families in care or transition can go for counselling or to visit a child in care
- An outdoor playground for visiting children
- A distribution centre for managing and distributing donated clothing and household materials for families in need

“What’s special about working with Peel CAS staff is that it’s never about them. Every person puts community first and is passionate about achieving the organization’s mission. You can’t help but feed off their energy and want to do what you can to support them.”

– Brent Kingdon, Principal, Practice Leader, Project Management Services, Avison Young

Watch the video to hear from Peel CAS.
Toward net zero

As evidence of the threats posed by climate change mounts, more and more governments, businesses and investors are taking action to beat it back – pledging to reduce their net carbon emissions to zero.

Climate change presents risks and opportunities for those invested in, or occupying, real estate. Beyond the need to decarbonize, climate-related events – such as droughts and floods – are now recognized as being among the most significant business risks. That’s why steps such as those taken by our U.K. business in 2020 are so important; we’ve pledged to reduce carbon emissions in all of our U.K. workplaces to net zero by 2030 and committed to inspiring and leading clients on their transition to net zero carbon buildings and communities as well.

We plan to increase the energy procured from renewable sources to 100% coverage across all U.K. sites

Our net zero commitment

Upon announcing our net zero commitment, we began work on a roadmap for getting there, which includes strategies relating to the acquisition and fit-out of new premises, retrofit and operational energy efficiency projects, and renewable energy strategies. The intent is to start in the U.K. and then expand to other parts of our multinational business. Throughout 2020, we laid the groundwork for success by:

- Forming a net zero carbon working group, bringing together diverse expertise from facilities, IT sustainability, quality and risk, procurement, workplace, and energy groups to develop our plans
- Collecting data from across our U.K.-occupied real estate (and across systems, processes, procedures and landlords) to establish our carbon footprint baseline
- Deploying a new data platform that will serve as the single repository for both our carbon footprint and our wider sustainability data
- Installing automatic meter readings at all our office locations, where possible
- Developing a carbon literacy training program for all staff – so that everyone can play a role
- Creating an action plan to increase the energy procured from renewable sources to 100% coverage across all sites

The U.K. team also developed a new standard for promoting high sustainability values for all Avison Young fit-outs and refurbishments. Applicable to all project teams and contractors, the standard specifies minimum building requirements in areas such as health and wellbeing, energy efficiency, water and waste management, materials, transportation and ecology.

Our next steps are to align our net zero carbon target with the Science-Based Targets initiative and commit to the global Race to Zero initiative.
Innovations in energy management

Six U.K. and Canadian Avison Young clients participated in a pilot project to test out an innovative battery storage platform, created to drive the low-carbon energy transformation and reduce buildings’ dependency on electricity supplied by the local grid.

Energy Open Piazza (EOP) is the first digital twin tool for the built environment that aligns with sustainable energy generation and storage, and provides clear forecasts of returns on investment and carbon emissions reduction. Avison Young partnered with Unit 9, an innovation studio, and other partners in the consortium on this 18-month project. The project team is now looking to roll out this cutting-edge approach to more Avison Young clients.

Meanwhile, our London project management team is working on three of the first Design for Performance (DFP) buildings, which is an initiative to promote best-in-class design and operation of buildings to deliver energy and carbon savings. The DFP initiative is operated by the Better Buildings Partnership, of which Avison Young is a member.

Green light for investment

Avison Young partnered with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), to publish a paper on how the U.K. business rates tax system can be changed to incentivize businesses to invest in energy efficiency in commercial buildings. Through reform of the system, business rates could play a critical role in meeting the U.K.’s net zero ambitions by driving investment in low-carbon technologies for commercial properties.

Our National Environmental Planning team in the U.K. was awarded the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Quality Mark, demonstrating excellence in the field of environmental impact assessment.

Nature-based solutions

Avison Young supports nature-based solutions (NbS),

which are actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges and provide both human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits. We partner with leading conservation organizations and will look to internationally certified carbon offset projects to mitigate aspects of our footprint that will take time to transition.
Our 2020 carbon footprint

By working to reduce our own carbon footprint, Avison Young contributes to the discourse on how companies can operate and strives to set an example within our industry.

With rolling shutdowns affecting our operations for some or most of 2020, and many of our people working from home, we expected our office electricity and water consumption levels – and related GHG emissions – to be much lower than normal. However, a number of variables came into play to skew the results – not only did data collection prove to be challenging, but regional averages that were used previously for performance analysis were not valid due to COVID-19 related impacts on operations, and in some cases landlords were obligated to maintain lighting, comfort and ventilation as stipulated in tenant lease agreements, in anticipation of normal occupancy.

In the end, only 60 of our 104 offices were able to provide electricity data and 57 offices provided water data, and performance among these offices was equal to or slightly better than in 2019. We were, however, pleased to see that of the offices reporting electricity use, those with submetered data achieved greater reductions than those that provided prorated data (prorating means that Avison Young's usage is calculated based on the area we occupy in a building, and assumes that our usage is the same as that of all other tenants in the building). We see submetering of electricity, water and natural gas as a tool that we want to use more often going forward to effect change in our carbon and in the controllable utility costs of our offices.

### Electricity intensity kWh/sf

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<th>Submetered</th>
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### Water intensity L/sf

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<tr>
<td>baseline (2014)</td>
<td>44.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>44.0</td>
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2020 water data was provided by 57 of Avison Young’s 104 offices. For comparative purposes, the 2019 data has been restated to include only those offices that were able to provide prorated data in 2019 and 2020.

### GHG emissions tCO₂e

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Due to the lack of 2020 data, it was not possible to quantify emissions associated with Avison Young offices’ natural gas use or the space heating and cooling for submetered offices. 2020 electricity data was not available to quantify emissions associated with 44 of the 104 Avison Young offices. For comparative purposes, the 2019 data only shows emissions associated with 71 of the 94 offices’ 2019 electricity use.
For more information about our ESG initiatives, please visit us online at avisonyoung.com or contact:

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