Friends of Epicenter,

To say that 2020 was an unprecedented year would be quite the understatement. Regardless, we endured. After all, Epicenter is a non-profit that was founded during the great recession and in an isolated town of 952 people; we know how to pivot and adapt.

Of course, both our survival and ability to help others during this past year was only made possible because of the support of those like you reading this letter. Thank you for sticking by our side during a tough year for us all!

Thanks to your support as well as the dedicated work of my staff and Board of Directors, I’m able to share some of the positive outcomes of the previous year with you all in the following pages.

Some of the many highlights:
-$1 mil secured towards our biggest project to date: Canal Commons
-$60,000 secured in Covid-19 relief funds for Epicenter and our neighbors
-3.8 acres donated by the City of Green River for Canal Commons
-Completion of Lindsey Briceno’s Rose Fellowship
-Promotion of Steph Crabtree to Epicenter’s Deputy Director

Maria F. Sykes - Executive Director
As Epicenter’s executive director, Maria leads with a contagious passion for rural places. After graduating from Auburn University’s School of Architecture, Sykes moved to Green River to co-found Epicenter in 2009. Sykes has been working in rural community development around the globe for less than a decade, but the work has been honored many times, including by Utah Governor Gary Herbert. She loves swimming in the Green River, sitting on her front porch, and taking trips to other rural places around the world.

A detail-oriented builder and do-er, Steph holds a Masters Degree in Architecture from the University of Utah, known for the Design Build Bluff program working in the Navajo Nation. Though she was born and raised in Utah, Steph has traveled as far as Nepal and Japan to serve communities through design. Steph now calls Green River home and leads Epicenter’s housing initiatives. She has a pet dog named Tucker and goat named Bessie.

After completing two years of AmeriCorps VISTA in Green River, Grace joins the Epicenter team as a working artist, proponent of strong rural communities, and lover of the Utah wilderness. Grace came to Green River from small town New England, having grown up in Massachusetts and receiving her BFA in Painting from Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts in Connecticut. She looks forward to helping others form genuine connections with the community and landscape of Green River.

Originally from Louisiana, Lindsey spent six years working as an architect in Dallas, Texas, after receiving her BArch at Louisiana Tech (2010) and MArch at Kansas (2012). She approaches community development through a patient and iterative process that combines housing, the arts, and cultural exploration making her a perfect fit for Epicenter’s Enterprise Rose Fellowship and project lead on Canal Commons.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHANGES
Last year, our Board of Directors evolved, most significantly by adding three women and becoming a fully Utah-based board, a first for Epicenter. With backgrounds in law, finance, affordable housing development, architecture, social impact investment, non-profit administration and more, the board is ensuring Epicenter is perfectly situated for our biggest project yet.

This year, our veteran board member Ethan Migliori retired from the Board. Thank you for many years of your support, Ethan! You always kept our idealism in check without stifling our ingenuity.

Interested in joining the board? Contact info@ruralandproud.org for details. We are seeking to fill a few positions that end this year!

JASON WHEELER, AIA
BOARD CHAIR
Jason Wheeler is Executive Director of ASSIST Inc Community Design Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Prior to joining ASSIST, Jason worked as an architect at APM Architecture in Omaha, Nebraska, focusing on housing for seniors, historic preservation, and custom home design. From 2010 to 2013, Jason was an Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellow in St. George, Utah, improving the energy efficiency of affordable housing in the desert southwest.

JOSHUA ROWLEY
VICE CHAIR
Originally raised in Green River, Joshua returned in 2014 to enter a partnership to revitalize the Tamarisk Restaurant into the even more successful business it is today. Prior to returning home, Joshua sought a design degree from Utah State University and worked at the nationally-known 3-Form in Salt Lake City. River the entrepreneur, Joshua opened Skyfall Guestrooms on the Green River in 2016.

RUTH LINFORD
TREASURER
Utah native Ruth Linford received a Bachelor of Arts from Utah State University in 2008 and a Master of Arts: Community Art Education from the University of Texas at Austin in 2018. Ruth’s nonprofit experience from 2010 to today includes extensive grant writing, financial management, executive directorship, board membership, and resource and program development.

REN HATT, ESQ
SECRETARY
Green River native Ren Hatt has worked as a legal assistant, research assistant, policy analyst, and more in the Utah Court System, at the Milton A. Kramer Criminal Justice Clinic, and in other medical and law institutions. Upon returning to Green River, Ren began co-managing the family business (Hatt Ranch Inc.) and worked at Epicenter as a Community Coordinator. Ren now works at Green River High School as an educator and continues to co-manage the ranch.

SHALEANE GEE, PHD
BOARD MEMBER
After graduating from the University of Utah, Shaleane received a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago where she was an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow and a Woodrow Wilson Foundation Fellow. Shaleane was the Associate Dean of External Relations & Strategic Initiatives at the University of Chicago before returning to Utah to be the Associate Dean of the Colleges of Architecture, Planning, and the Arts at the University of Utah. For four years, Shaleane was the Director of the Mayor’s Initiatives as well as the Senior Policy Advisor for Salt Lake County under now US Representative Ben McAdams. Shaleane is now the VP of Community + Regional Development at Zions Bank.

DIJANA ALICKOVIC, AIA
BOARD MEMBER
After receiving a Master of Architecture from the University of Utah, Dijana worked in Salt Lake City as an architectural intern and an AmeriCorps VISTA. Dijana has known Epicenter and its founders since the beginning! Throughout her professional career, Dijana has volunteered with architectural nonprofits and co-founded her own, COMMONstudio. She now works as a licensed architect at AJC Architects in Salt Lake City.
COVID RESPONSE

IMPACT
Green River’s current economy relies on seasonal waves of tourism powered by the town’s hotels, gas stations, and restaurants, which employ the majority of residents. In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 closures all but eliminated the town’s major source of income immediately after the winter, when Green River sees very few visitors and many workers have already been furloughed. The COVID-19 crisis froze Green River’s annual economic upswing, and seasonal hospitality, service-based, and agriculture/recreation businesses and their workers are still suffering the consequences.

Throughout 2020, COVID-19 challenged Epicenter to pivot in order to best serve Green River’s immediate needs. As an organization, we temporarily shifted our focus from programs and events to internal fundraising and staying in touch with community needs to ensure that we were able to continue serving Green River. While we were forced to focus our resources on operations and pushing forward with only our highest priority projects, this year provided generous opportunities for innovation and organizational adaptation:

SERVE-IN-PLACE
Modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps (“CCC”) of the 1930’s, Serve-In-Place was developed in 2020 to engage local residents in the development of community assets while paying them for their time and expertise during an economic recession. Residents who participate in Serve-In-Place are paid stipends for their assistance with community outreach, volunteer coordination, design consultation, event planning, translation, landscaping/construction, and additional efforts specific to the Canal Commons project and adjacent public spaces.

GREEN RIVER WORKER’S FUND
The Green River Worker’s Fund was started with the goal of providing direct aid to local workers and their families, especially those ineligible/unable to apply for unemployment. Epicenter raised $4,800 for the fund in early 2020, providing 8 households with an average of $600 to pay their rent and bills, buy groceries, and cover other essential expenses.

OTHER PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS
The following changes were implemented in our programming in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:

• Some aspects of the You Are Here initiative were temporarily postponed while we focused on critical community needs, maintaining progress on our highest priority projects and COVID recovery efforts. For example, Epicenter postponed efforts to promote Green River as a tourist destination during the pandemic.

• Scheduled in-person Frontier Fellowships were postponed indefinitely. We look forward to hosting postponed Frontier Fellows Erin Elder, Erin Mallea, Sophie Maguire, and Blanca Villalobos in 2021-22.

• In lieu of our usual monthly cycle of visiting artists, Epicenter recruited artists and designers as AmeriCorps members to join our team and do critical work on our major projects and initiatives for a term of one year.

• The annual Rock and Mineral Festival, which Epicenter is working with the City to implement as a City-run event, was cancelled for 2020 and 2021. We look forward to using this time to ensure that the 2022 festival is the most successful yet.

• The Canal Commons timeline was pushed back in accordance with uncertainty around funding and funding delays as a result of the pandemic.
AN UNPRECEDENTED LAND DONATION
In late 2019, the City of Green River issued a Request for Proposals for a 3.8-acre lot in acknowledgement of the need for more accessible, affordable housing in town. Epicenter’s proposal for the development of Canal Commons was selected by the City: 10 affordable single-family homes, with both rental and owner-occupied options. Because the City originally received the land as a donation, Epicenter proposed a trade of in-kind service equal to the land’s value; assistance with city events, grant writing, design services, etc. This trade allows Epicenter to absorb the $109,000 land “cost” rather than pass that cost on to the future tenants and homeowners. In 2020, Epicenter officially received the deed to the lot.

PROJECT SOURCES
In 2020, Epicenter officially secured all commitments of funding needed to proceed with the first phase of the project: constructing 5 affordable rental homes. A total of $1,224,000 has been committed by multiple sources, including the Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund, Rocky Mountain Community Reinvestment Corporation, Community Impact Board Fund (CIB), Federal Home Loan Bank, City of Green River (land donation), private foundation grants, and individual private donors.

EPICENTER PROPERTIES, LLC
Epicenter Properties, LLC, was formed in mid-2020 as a limited-liability company specifically for Canal Commons in order to increase public fiscal transparency. To avoid for-profit interests, Epicenter is the sole-member of the LLC.
In addition to focusing on solidifying funding sources for our largest project to date, we spent much of this year finalizing the design for the first phase of the project. The housing typology selected for Canal Commons is both market selected as well as inspired by the historic, vernacular housing in town. With every historic economic boom, affordable worker housing was built in Green River, and it was typically minimal single-family detached houses. When surveyed in 2019, prospective tenants and home-owners valued outdoor space and privacy. Additionally, the single-family detached housing typology will integrate well into its surroundings by mirroring the adjacent housing as Epicenter believes all affordable housing should.
CANAL COMMONS

CLICK HERE
AMERICORPS
At the end of August, Epicenter welcomed four new AmeriCorps members. In addition to doing critical work on the Canal Commons Project and an upcoming in-house publication, our AmeriCorps team is doing direct service in the local high school, elementary-age after school program, community thrift store and food pantry with our partner organization, Green River PACT.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

DARCIE QUIST
Born and raised in Green River, Darcie is no stranger to our town or AmeriCorps. She served for one year as an AmeriCorps NCCC member in 2000, after which she received a degree in culinary management from The Art Institute of Salt Lake City.

DOUG TOLMAN
Doug comes to us from Salt Lake City, UT, with an interdisciplinary art background. Most interested in place-based art, they believe connecting people to the spaces they inhabit will encourage better stewardship of both local and global ecology.

EMILY MORA
Born and raised in Texas, Emily has always felt quite at home in the western landscape. Emily moved to Green River from Auburn, AL, where she studied Environmental Design and had the opportunity to participate in multiple design-build projects in rural landscapes.

FRANCES ERLANDSON
Frances is a writer, reader, and maker from Los Angeles. She comes to Green River from rural Vermont after graduating from Bennington College with a focus in poetry and architecture. Frances is particularly invested in creating storytelling platforms for Green River residents.

Interested in AmeriCorps service? Email info@ruralandproud.org for more information.
**CANAL PARK PROJECT**

One of the main community engagement initiatives our AmeriCorps team has been focused on is co-designing the public park within Canal Commons. On the site of the new housing development, an isolated grove of historic Cottonwood trees provides opportunity for enhancement of a naturally comfortable space. The team hosted COVID-safe drop in events, organized site visits, created remote design activities, and ultimately recruited a volunteer team of 20 residents from diverse age ranges and backgrounds who will continue to participate in the project from design revision to landscaping workshops and build days. Landscape architect Sophie Maguire is assisting our team with the design of the space, including an outdoor classroom/community gathering venue, and artist/builder Prescott McCarthy will be designing and constructing functional sculpture for the park. Other partners on this project include Joseph Bondi, Community Rebuilds, the City of Green River, Utah State University Extension Office, Green River High School, and the John Wesley Powell Museum.

To learn more about this project, visit: [www.canalparkproject.ruralandproud.org](http://www.canalparkproject.ruralandproud.org).

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**HIGH SCHOOL WORK STUDY**

Heading into 2021, Epicenter recruited high school student Megan Vollmer through Green River High School’s work-study program. Megan will receive a stipend to assist our staff and AmeriCorps team on the Canal Park Project and Canal Commons.
Volunteers participate in a Canal Park site clean-up through Epicenter’s Serve-In-Place initiative.
FRONTIER FELLOWSHIP

TADD MECHAM
In the final weeks of 2020, Epicenter selected Tadd Mecham to complete a Frontier Fellowship in early 2021. As a Green River resident, Tadd is able to complete his residency while not increasing COVID risk to our isolated community. Tadd is a local filmmaker who spent the first two decades of his life growing up in Green River. As a member of the LGBTQ community growing up in a rural place, Tadd found acceptance in the world of film. He received his Bachelor’s in Film and Media arts from the University of Utah. Primary influences of his work include gritty 70s and 80s slasher movies, the original The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and the drawings of Francisco Goya (Here Comes The Bogeyman).

SOPHIE MAGUIRE
In the fall of 2020, we invited Sophie Maguire to work with us on the design of Canal Park and the green spaces adjacent to Canal Commons. Originally scheduled for an on-site, month-long residency with Epicenter in the summer of 2020, we’re excited to be able to work with Sophie in a different context until we can host her in Green River at a safer time. Sophie holds a masters degree in landscape architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design (2017) and a Bachelors of Art in dance and political science from Connecticut College (2010). Her research spans an array of topics including the informal design of an adventure playground in the UK, India’s stepwells, landscape architecture’s role in non-urban geographies, differences in interpretation of ‘giving back’ between indigenous and non-indigenous societies, and the marginalization of teenagers in public space. Her expertise has already proved incredibly valuable to have on the project team. Sophie will join Epicenter in-person in the Fall of 2021.
In January 2020, Epicenter hosted Frontier Fellow Sam Cox, a documentary filmmaker. Sam Cox is a graphic designer and documentary maker. His work revolves around the intersection of landscape, identity and religion. A Raleigh native, Sam received his BA in graphic design from North Carolina State University and currently operates a graphic design studio called Diagram Office that focuses on maps and information design. His design work has been featured by NPR and Fast Company Design, and has appeared in WIRED and CMYK magazines.

During his fellowship, Cox was drawn to explore the unique boundary that the residents of Green River share with total, remote wilderness and how their lives are shaped by inevitable intersections of the two. Sam spent his residency creating a short film, *River Omens*, that focuses on a local resident who has a dynamic relationship with the ever-changing currents of the Green River. Clarence, the film’s storyteller and a knowledgeable boatsman, tells of reading the signs of the river and the perils and rewards of being on the water. Sam also used his time in Green River exploring the overlap of wilderness and civilization through design, using traffic signage to convey the tension of this boundary. Epicenter looks forward to inviting Sam to return to produce more films that speak to his investigations.

**SAM COX**

**RIVER OMENS**

*A short documentary film by Frontier Fellow Sam Cox*

**CLICK HERE TO WATCH**
Several years ago, the City of Green River initiated a fund for recreation, arts, and parks from tax revenue. In line with moving forward with the Waypoint revitalization plan, we’ve begun generating ideas for utilizing those funds to stimulate economic activity. Epicenter is proposing the development of a multi-use, community-curated outdoor space: a project we’re calling Open Grounds. Located on a large plot of land that used to be the riverbed before the current changed course, the primary feature of Open Grounds will be a flexible-use site that can be utilized for drive-in movies, flea markets/swap meets, city events or festivals, and more. Specific aspects in the plan include a rodeo grounds setup, BMX pump tracks, walking trails and a dog park. The first phase of Open Grounds will include designing and building mobile fixtures that can be used throughout town; initial ideas include converting an old Winnebago camper into a concession stand, or a Volkswagen van into a marquee sign and information booth. Funding from the National Endowment of the Arts will support this first step in executing plans for Open Grounds.

Special thanks to Lisa Ward and Sarah Lillegard for working on early concepts of the project with us!
After over a decade of practice, Epicenter is curating reflections, criticisms, and examinations of our interdisciplinary design practice in a formal publication with the working title of Why This Place?: A Future-Forward Retrospective. In addition to our own writings, the collective publication will consist primarily of content generated by collaborators from the past and present, including Green River residents. The publication will explore the connections between our architecture and design work, artist residency, and economic development initiatives that we have discovered and nurtured throughout the past ten years, and demonstrate that these connections are the core and success of our collective work. Essays, interviews, poetry, reading lists, itineraries, illustrations, and other content will concurrently hold a mirror up to our work and attempt to answer some of our most frequently asked questions:

Why this Place? Why Green River? What have we learned?

Content created by our contributors will be threaded together by several recurring themes that have emerged throughout the span of Epicenter’s practice, including the distinct challenges of designing for a rural place, community resistance, seasonality and the cyclical patterns of Green River, regional tourism and the role of the outsider, and the natural overlap of our disciplines and programs. For example, a local rancher and high school teacher with generations of family history in town examines living long term in a rural place; one folklorist interviews another about ethical visitation practices; Epicenter’s Deputy Director and Housing Specialist is interviewed by a local high school student about non-profit housing development. We are currently working with a group of over 20 contributors from Epicenter’s network of collaborators: poets, folklorists, architects, teachers, rural advocates, artists, curators, critics, and researchers.

The publication will document and explore much of the uncharted territory Epicenter has mapped in our first decade- from our revolving loan home repair program to our first development of 10 single family homes- with a goal of encouraging and defending rural places and the underrecognized work that is being done in them.

PRE-ORDER HERE
## FINANCIAL REPORT

**January 1st - December 31st, 2020**

### ASSETS
- Buildings: $154,069.53
- Bank Accounts: $95,191.33
- Land: $5,000
- Accounts Receivable: $1,724.92
- Equipment: $1,811.29
- Depreciation: $-20,683.81
- Other Current Assets: $272.71
- Total Assets: $229,783.38

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY
- Total Equity: $51,988.75
- Total Liabilities and Equity: $237,385.97

### NET INCOME
- Net Income: $21,473.32

### TOTAL INCOME
- Total Income: $324,542.75

### TOTAL EXPENSES
- Total Expenses: $303,069.43

### PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES
- Personnel Expenses: 58%
- In-Kind Expenses: 25%
- Public Grants: 14%
- Private Grants: 5%
- In-Kind Donations: 19%
- Programmatic Expenses: 23%
- Public Contributions: 58%
- Private Contributions: 20%

**Ally Bank**
**American Express**
**B jig Law Group LLC (BradBritzmann)**
**City of Green River**
**Community Impact Fund (CIB)**
**Enterprise Community Partners**
**Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines**
**Vol A & Edith D. Green Foundation**
**The National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town**
**Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund**
**Bruce and Cecilia Petersen Foundation**
**Rocky Mountain Community Reinvestment Corporation**
**Rocky Mountain Power Foundation**
**Rural Community Assistance Corporation**
**Sorensen Legacy Foundation**
**Tin Can Development (TracyDuson)**
**Union Pacific Foundation**
**UServe Utah**
**Utah Division of Arts & Museums**
**Utah Humanities**
**Wells Fargo Foundation**
**Western Arts Federation (WESTAF)**
**Zions Bank**

**Herbert Steiner**
**The Gee Family**
**The Hatt Family**
**March Studio**
**David Watkins**

The project site for Epicenter’s Canal Commons housing development and new public park.