PROJECT MILESTONES

2013  City & Epicenter update General Plan
      Epicenter creates Downtown Revitalization Plan ("Waypoint: Green River")

2016  Epicenter designs and builds Frontier House

2017  Predevelopment begins on multifamily housing project

2019  Enterprise Community Partners awards Architectural Rose Fellow
      Housing Open House
      City of Green River donates land
      Canal Commons project financial support secured

2020  Construction documents completed
      Epicenter Properties, LLC formed
      Water & sewer infrastructure brought to site
      Global pandemic hits; housing development paused
      Pearl Baker Park local design committee established

2021  Pearl Baker Park ground breaking ceremony
      Park construction begins

2022  Pearl Baker Park Soft Opening
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 secured all commitments of funding needed to proceed with Phase I of the project: constructing 5 affordable rental homes. A total of $1,224,000 is 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 and future Epicenter real estate developments. Epicenter, a 501(c)3, is the sole-member of the LLC.
DESIGN OF THE CANAL COMMONS SITE

The site is bound by Green River Avenue to the South, Cherry Street to the West, 200 South to the north, and to the east by the historic Green River Canal, which gives the project its name. Ten units will be located on the perimeter of the site with easy access from the three existing roads; the bottom five units are considered Phase I (rental units: two three-bedroom, one two-bedroom, and one accessible two-bedroom) and the top are Phase II (e.g. 5 owner-occupied units yet to be designed). The interior of the site is reserved for a “commons,” a semi-public outdoor space, for residents of Canal Commons; this area is to be designed and built after all housing units are complete (i.e. Phase III).

The detached single-family 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. In addition to the historic precedent, when surveyed in 2019, prospective tenants and home-owners overwhelmingly preferred the outdoor space and privacy brought by single-family detached units. Finally, the single-family detached housing typology will integrate well into its surroundings (as all affordable housing should) by mirroring all of the existing adjacent housing.

The southeastern part of the site located on the east side of the town canal was designated as a public park space due to both its historic status at the original (but 30+ years abandoned) town park as well as the grove of shady 100-year-old Cottonwood trees.
Aerial photo of the Canal Commons site from the southeast corner
HOUSING UNITS

DESIGN OF THE PHASE I HOUSING UNITS

The design of the units focuses on efficiency, durability, and quality design specific for rural Southeastern Utah’s climate and economics. Both the site plan (previous page) and design of housing units were completed in 2020.

Design of the housing units was based off of lessons learned through Epicenter’s past projects: the design/build of a Habitat for Humanity house, the Fix It First Home Repair program, various local housing studies and surveys, working with local contractors, and the design, construction, and occupancy of Epicenter’s Frontier House (affordable housing prototype built in 2016-17, pictured below). Through this research, the proposed units are appropriate for the climate, minimal (easy to maintain), able to be constructed locally, and remain affordable to build.

In response to both the busy street and train tracks located to the south, the units all “face” inward towards a common/shared greenspace. To achieve this, the street entrance is designed as a service or informal entrance while the interior “front” entrance is designed to be a welcoming front porch.
Unable to build housing due to supply chain issues and labor shortages caused by the global pandemic, Epicenter shifted to what could be done during these times: using local labor and materials to rebuild the old town park, eventually named Pearl Baker Park during the community design process.

On the Canal Commons site, an isolated grove of historic Cottonwood trees provided opportunity for the enhancement of a naturally comfortable space. Epicenter hosted COVID-safe events, organized small group site visits, created remote “at home” design activities, and ultimately recruited a volunteer team of 30 residents from diverse age ranges and backgrounds who will continue to participate in the project from design revision to landscaping workshops and build days. Epicenter even recruited a high school student through Green River High School’s work-study program; she received a stipend to assist our team on Canal Commons with a focus on the park. Construction on the park continues but a soft opening was held in mid-July of 2022.
Volunteers participate in a site clean-up.
NEXT STEPS

In order to close with financial partners, Epicenter awaits updated bids from contractors. Unfortunately, the effects of the pandemic are still being felt especially in construction supply chains and labor shortages. But as soon as the economy settles, Epicenter expects to break ground on construction of Phase I.

In the meantime, Epicenter continues construction on Pearl Baker Park and will soon begin pre-development of Phase II housing units.

To support these continued efforts, consider a donation to Epicenter.