

A scenic view of a canal with tall grasses and trees with yellowing leaves under a blue sky. The canal is the central focus, winding through a landscape of tall, golden-brown grasses. On the left, several large trees with vibrant yellow and orange autumn foliage stand prominently. The sky is a clear, pale blue with a few wispy clouds. In the distance, utility poles and power lines are visible against the horizon. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Canal Commons

Project Update - July 2022

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

LAND & SOURCES

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.



*TOP: Overhead view of the land Epicenter received from the City Of Green River in exchange for in-kind services.
BOTTOM: On-site view of the donated land (SE corner where Pearl Baker Park is now located).*



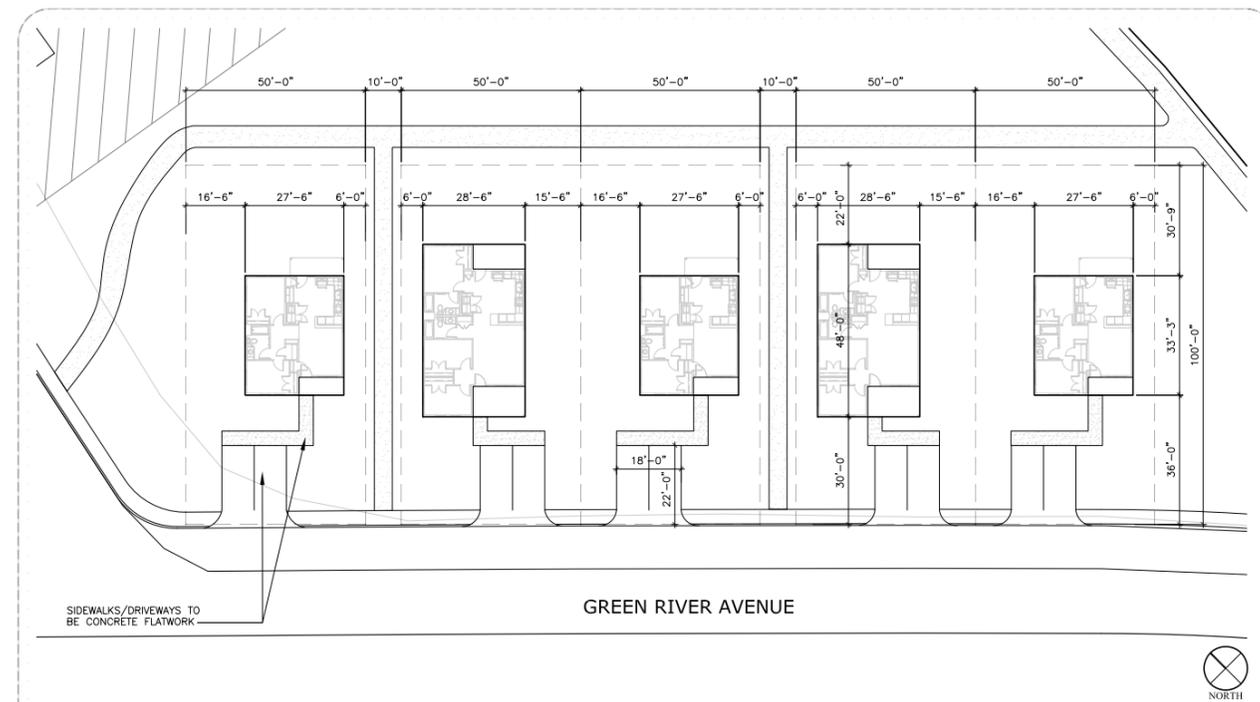
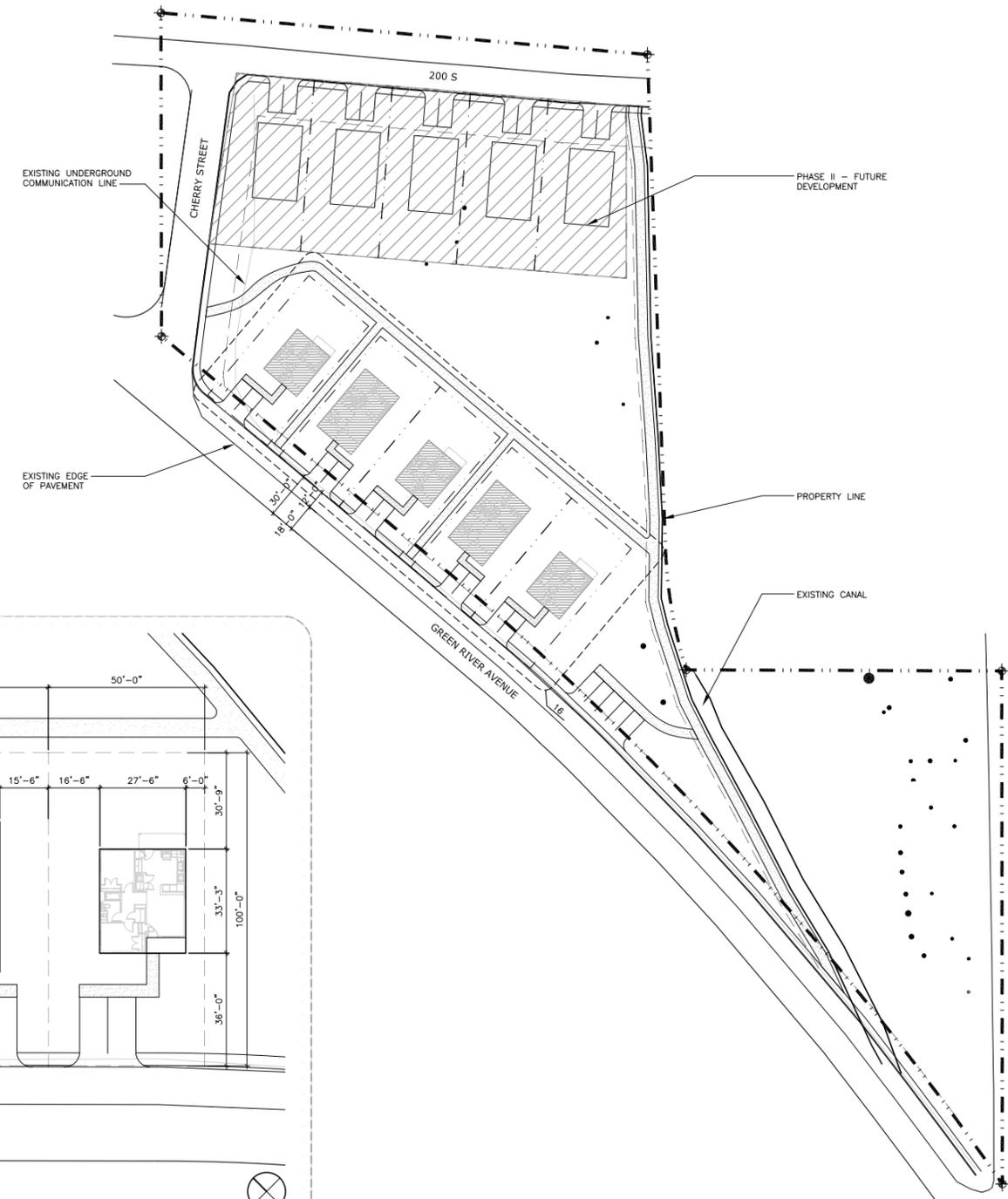
SITE PLAN

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



DESIGN OF THE PHASE I HOUSING UNITS

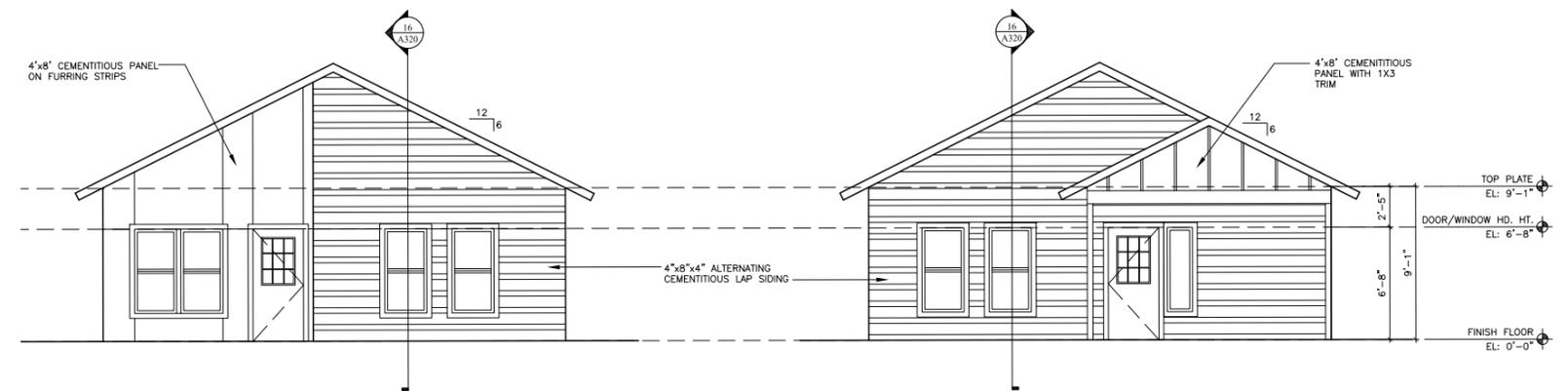
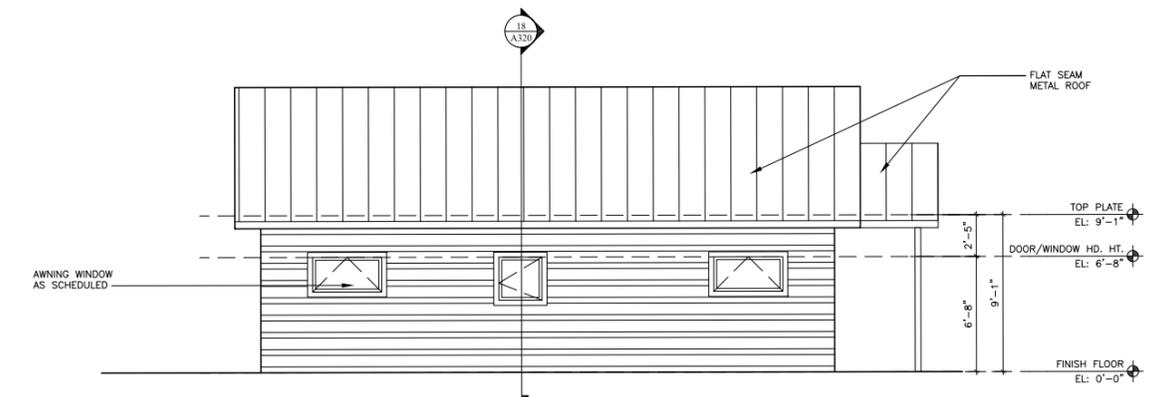
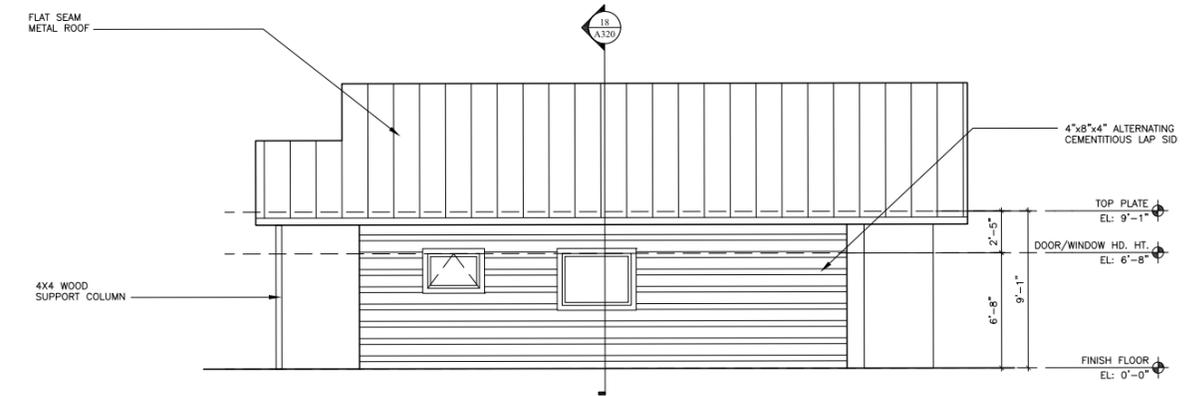
The design of the units focuses on efficiency, durability, and quality design specific for rural Southeastern Utah's climate and economics. Both the site plan (previous page) and design of housing units were completed in 2020.

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.



HOUSING UNITS



LEFT: Frontier House prototype housing unit.

ABOVE: Construction drawing elevations for Canal Commons two-bedroom unit.

PEARL BAKER PARK



PEARL BAKER PARK

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 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. 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.

*LEFT: Original park concept design by Landscape Architect Sophie Maguire.
TOP RIGHT: Photos from community design process and construction.*

Volunteers participate in a site clean-up.



The background image is a landscape photograph taken during the "golden hour" of sunset. In the foreground, two large, dark tree trunks are visible, one on the left and one on the right, with their branches and leaves silhouetted against the bright sky. The ground is covered in dry, golden-brown grass and fallen leaves. In the middle ground, there is a large, rounded mound of earth or sand, possibly a construction site or a natural feature. Several utility poles with power lines are visible against the sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong, warm glow that filters through the trees and illuminates the scene.

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.

DONATE