Friends of Epicenter,

It’s finally been a year of gathering once again, and it felt great! With great caution and thought for the health of the local community, we were able to hold our first Green River Rocks since 2019. Our local community group “Potluck” even regrouped, with over 30 folks from the community in attendance at one meeting. And through our visiting artist program, the Frontier Fellowship, we hosted three month-long artists for community-engaged residencies. Additionally, we held our third ever Summit. This time our Spring Summit brought sixty-seven creative practitioners to our town for three days of shared meals, performances, and more. Thank you to everyone who participated in this year’s programming, especially the Summit!

In addition to bringing people together in Green River (my personal favorite activity), we’ve made progress in an unexpected way with regard to Canal Commons, our forthcoming and first multi-family housing development. As you can imagine it was incredibly discouraging for Epicenter and the community to get Canal Commons right up to the point of breaking ground only to be put on hiatus due to the pandemic. Using readily available materials not impacted by supply chains and the help of local volunteers, we turned our attention to the design and construction of a new public park!

Pearl Baker Park’s soft opening and hosting the Spring Summit were definitely the big highlights for both Epicenter and the community this year. Please join me in reviewing the past fiscal year of Epicenter in the following pages. And, as always, please consider giving a tax-deductible donation here.

From the Frontier,

Maria Sykes, Executive Director
The Frontier Fellowship invites creative practitioners to work with Epicenter in Green River for month-long residencies. These collaborators generate innovative work that is in cooperation and conversation with the region's history, people, and environment. In a place that is prone to the passer-by, Epicenter invites artists, designers, writers, folklorists, musicians, and other creatives from around the world to stay awhile and discover what makes Green River worth listening to, learning from, and celebrating. Fellowship projects bring the town together in order to strengthen local identity and provide opportunities for critical reflection. The Fellowship seeks to elevate rural voices within the region; instead of speaking for the community, Fellows seek to offer residents the tools needed to self-document, express, reflect, and ultimately shape their own futures.

Epicenter hosted three Frontier Fellows during FY22. More information on their respective month-long residencies can be found on the following page.
ERIN MALLEA

We visited the in-progress Pearl Baker Park and continued to the canal, Haylie’s horses, Anna’s garden, Hannah’s farm, and the former missile base near the “Black Pyramid” of uranium tailings. Collage materials included tamarisk, kochia, Little Caesar’s red pepper flakes, Russian thistle, dog hair, goat hair, alfalfa, Dash and Lady’s hair, Anna’s petunias and pansies, missile base fiberglass, sagebrush, cottonwood leaves and seed pods, milkweed, various wrappers, lawn marker flags, grass from a friend’s lawn, sand from Swasey’s beach, dirt, field bindweed and more.

Erin Mallea is a multidisciplinary artist motivated by an attempt to better understand the spaces she inhabits. She explores the past and present of particular microcosms as metaphors for larger human and environmental conditions. Analytical, meandering, playful, and often public in nature, Mallea’s work manifests in a range of media.

BLANCA S. VILLALOBOS

It had been months since I had meditated, journaled or sang; practices that had brought me so much joy yet which had been neglected for months. Perhaps it was Magia’s death or the conflict I had with my parents days before the summer solstice that led me back into the safety of numbness; como si fuera una cebra dentro de un árbol que solo yo sabía cómo encontrar. However, being in a new place with strangers in a desert quite unlike the one I left gave me the motivation to recall all those disciplines and more. Over the course of my time in Green River I was reminded how precious life was and that pleasure could be found in the most mundane activities.

Blanca S. Villalobos (they/them) is a queer, non-binary femme of color that offers services as a bilingual cultural worker and interdisciplinary artist. Blanca resides as a guest on the ancestral lands of the Cahuilla and Yuhaviatam/Maarenga’yam people, in the Morongo Basin of California’s Mojave desert.

WILLIAM TYLER

After attending Epicenter’s Spring Summit (photo above) in early April, I came back as a Frontier Fellow to spend the month of May in Green River, Utah. During that month, I created a radio play called “Twilight Zephyr,” an audio collage made up of field recordings, live guitar compositions, narration and more. The piece was recorded in and around Green River, Utah, and at The Tank Center for the Sonic Arts in nearby Rangely, Colorado.

William Tyler (b. 1979, Nashville, Tennessee) is an American musician and guitarist who plays “cosmic country,” folk, indie folk, and pop rock. His debut studio album, Behold the Spirit, was released in 2010. He has since released three additional solo albums. Tyler splits his time between Nashville, TN, and Los Angeles, CA.
SPRING SUMMIT

A three-day gathering of creative practitioners with shared meals, performances, installations, and more.

Epicenter invited 67 artists, designers, and other creatives to gather around the concept of “Home” with the purpose of cultivating and strengthening creative investment in marginalized places. Like Epicenter, attendees are passionate about arts and design and the cultures of rural areas. The Summit encourages creating opportunities for new collaborative work to develop in rural Utah and beyond.

Rather than the typical conference approach, this Summit is a peer-run event that places an emphasis on conversation and interactive group experiences. Epicenter does this in order to facilitate a more horizontal exchange of ideas. Though there is not enough time for everyone to present and share equally, all enter the Summit as both participants and contributors, to share and learn from each other.

Activities included lectures, workshops, performances, installations, hikes in nature, shared meals, campfire stories, pecha kuchas, and more.

“RETHINKING […]” BY SLUG MAG

“CURATORS […]” BY SW CONTEMPORARY
From Top Left, Clockwise: Attendees participate in a performance-based ice breaker led by KZMU Moab's Serah Mead. Artist workshop by Katie Boué & Erika Lynne Hanson at Epicenter’s Pearl Baker Park. Keynote lecture by Elpitha Tsoutsounakis at the historic Hatt’s Ranch. The Family Trade performs at La Pasadita taco truck. Ken Layne (Desert Oracle) performs his Campfire Stories at Swasey’s Beach. Participants share a meal at the local La Pasadita taco truck, site of Chip Thomas’ installation and The Family Trade’s performance.
Attendees of the 2022 Spring Summit, Closing Ceremony at Goose Point in Green River, Utah (April 2022)

MORE INFORMATION ON ATTENDEES AND SUMMIT PROGRAMMING
HISTORY: 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.
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, two two-bedrooms, 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 chosen 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 has been built in Green River, typically as minimal single-family detached houses. To complement this, a 2019 survey of prospective tenants and homeowners established overwhelming preference for 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 as the original (but 30+ years abandoned) town park as well as the grove of shady 100-year-old Cottonwood trees.
Aerial photo in winter of the Canal Commons site from the southeast corner before construction began on Pearl Baker Park.
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, a housing open house, 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, require minimal maintenance, are 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.

Left: Frontier House prototype housing unit. (2017)
Above: Construction drawing elevations for Canal Commons two-bedroom unit.
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 July of 2022.
Left: Built natural playscape in Pearl Baker Park within Canal Commons. Right: Original local artist concept drawing by in-house artist Summer Orr.
Pearl Baker Park’s outdoor classroom has been designed with flexibility and ease of use in mind. Its interlocking design lends itself to group gatherings, allowing students and instructors to shift in response to the bright desert sun. The amphitheater will be made of concrete and use gradual shifts in topography to create a cozy community gathering space. In addition to the amphitheater, educational signage will be installed throughout the park giving community members and visitors the opportunity to learn about native plant species, local history, geology, and other topics.

Epicenter has worked with local experts to create a planting plan for native and pollinator-friendly species in the park. Special focus will be placed on planting saplings to eventually complement the mature cottonwood trees currently providing shade on the site.

Although designed with waterwise landscaping in mind for this high desert environment, some irrigation will be required in the establishment phase and during any future droughts. Water will be pumped from the town’s irrigation canal that runs directly through the park site. The irrigation setup will be complemented by swales, a detention zone, and other water management techniques that have been built on site.
**FINANCIAL REPORT**

**ASSETS**

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**TOTAL INCOME** $321,199.52

**TOTAL EXPENSES** $280,670.56

**Individual Donations**

**Private Grants**

**In-Kind Donations**

**Public Grants**

**Gross Operating Revenue $10,529.96**

**Operating Expenses**

**Fundraising Expenses**

**Office & Occupancy**

**Consultant Services**

**Programmatic Materials**

**In-Kind Expenses**

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Thank you to everyone who made this possible.

Jason Dilworth  Alison Jean Cole  Chip Thomas  Ken Layne


**AARP**

**American Express**

**AmeriCorps**

**The Bureau of Land Management (Utah)**

**City of Green River**

**Conoco Phillips**

**The Desert Oracle**

**Emery County**

**Enterprise Community Partners**

**Equinox Foundation**

**Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines**

**Field Notes**

**Green River High School**

**Hatt's Ranch**

**Holiday River Expeditions**

**Home's Overall Ranch**

**JW Powell River History Museum**

**March Studio (LA)**

**MASS Design Group**

**Museums of Western Colorado**

**The National Endowment for the Arts**

**Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund**

**River Rock Inn**

**River Terrace Inn**

**Rocky Mountain Community Reinvestment Corp.**

**Rocky Mountain Power Foundation**

**Rural Community Assistance Corporation**

**Rural Utah Project**

**Sleepy Hollow Motel**

**Sorenson Legacy Foundation**

**Utah Division of Arts & Museums**

**Utah Humanities**

**Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation**

**Utah Office of Tourism**

**Union Pacific Foundation**

**UServe Utah**
Spring Summit attendees volunteer on-site at Pearl Baker Park.