



# Evergreen Legacy Fund Give a Little, Get a Lot

by Stephen Knapp

The nonprofit, Evergreen Legacy Fund (ELF), was created to help knit our mountain community together more safely, more accessibly, more efficiently, more attractively. To help them achieve these entirely desirable ends, your neighbors at ELF are relying on the help of their mountain community.

“As a business owner in Evergreen for over 24 years and being involved in this community, I feel it’s important to explain to the residents how an unincorporated community functions,” says Brenda Cumming, ELF board member and owner of Medical Aesthetics. “Newcomers have no idea, and we need to inform all that if they want to see structural improvements like sidewalks and safe crossings and beautification, then it’s on us.”

Not only does Evergreen lack a city government to address non-motorized needs, until very recently it lacked any representative authority capable of petitioning the county for overdue improvements. ELF was founded as a grassroots effort to bridge the divide between the Lake House and the Taj Mahal.

A series of community meetings in 2014 helped ELF identify the 17 most-wanted improvements within the Jeffco Right-of-Way;

and in 2020 it persuaded the county commissioners to approve the creation of the Evergreen Local Improvement District (ELID), a non-taxing entity covering the mountain area from Marshdale to El Rancho and authorized to solicit county action.

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Under the terms of the agreement, Jeffco will undertake each project during the course of normally scheduled operations, assuming responsibility for construction and future maintenance. For its part, ELF must finance the community’s wish list to the tune of \$90,000 per year and secure the grants to cover the additional 80 percent of the cost. That’s a big hunk of cheddar for a district with no official



Photo by Linda Kirkpatrick

**A gravel path for fishermen was part of the rework of the Evergreen North Lake Trail. ELF provided conceptual drawings for a 2-tier replacement to the eroded trail and donated \$50,000.**

source of revenue, which is why ELF has been cultivating unofficial ones, and with considerable success. ELID’s primary funding source is a purely voluntary 1 percent “pass-thru” charge collected by participating local businesses, an idea pioneered by Crested Butte to fund open space improvements.

“Businesses are our primary conduit to the community,” explains founding board member Bob Cardwell. “The 1 percent creates awareness about ELF while also being a funding strategy for businesses and the community supporting, over time, certain infrastructure needs that will never be funded by the county.”

The pass-thru is many littles that have already done much to make Evergreen a more appealing place to live, and those collecting it will tell you that very few people blink when asked to toss an extra buck on top of a \$100 tab.

“Fewer than 2 percent of our customers at Murphy’s ask to have the fee removed,” says Tiffani Parker, co-owner of Evoke 1923 and Murphy’s Mountain Grill. “We had some reluctance to add Evoke 1923 to the list of businesses collecting at first because of all the social media outcry about added fees to cover credit card fees and kitchen help and, in some

cases, tips to wait staff. At our restaurants, all that, except tips to wait staff, is absorbed in our pricing rather than added on. We decided we are proud to have the opportunity to add 1 percent for the improvement of our community.” Evoke 1923 (formerly the Bistro at Marshdale) has just announced it’s joining the growing list of businesses supporting ELF.

The carwashes at Ponderosa and Hilltop are also new members. Owner Frank Compagnino simply builds a 1 percent donation into his pricing. He’s big on promoting ELF as well with identifying stickers on his money machines and a banner to boot, explaining why ELF needs the support.

Longtime ELF supporters run the register from big-ticket businesses to moderately priced concerns, from restaurants to boutiques, from old friends to new faces. Evergreen Crafters and Shadow Mountain Gallery have stood four-square behind ELF from the beginning, and more than two dozen Realtors routinely contribute a portion of their commissions to ELF.

“Fundraising can be tailored to your business,” says ELF’s executive director, Linda Kirkpatrick. “Rounding up to the nearest dollar, using a SKU code to make a donation—just ask us.”

## Evergreen Legacy Fund Timeline

- 2010** Formation of Downtown Evergreen Economic District
- 2012** Formation of the Evergreen Legacy Fund by the Downtown Evergreen Economic District
- 2013** ELF provides emergency assistance when Bear Creek floods
- 2014** Evergreen Trails Master Plan is launched
- 2015** Downtown Evergreen Economic District finalizes the Evergreen Trails Master Plan with Jefferson County
- 2016** ELF prepares design and renderings of the Lake North Trail

Evergreen Local Improvement District is proposed

**2019**

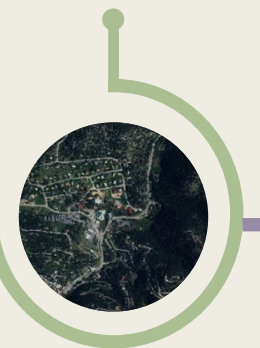
ELF recognized as a foundation by the IRS; County Commissioners formally establish Evergreen Local Improvement District and approve 17 projects



**2017**



Jefferson County and Downtown Evergreen Economic District are selected to host an Advisory Panel



**2020**



And there are no few farsighted private residents who see value in helping to secure a more accessible Evergreen, whether by naming ELF a beneficiary on IRAs, bank accounts or insurance policies, or with a provision in their will. Still, the surest and most gratifying way to support a better Evergreen is by simply shopping and dining at participating shops and restaurants.

**“...having no city tax means no public funds are available for the projects ELF proposes.”**

“The average donor contributes 25 cents every time they spend \$25 at a participating restaurant,” Kirkpatrick points out. “Visitors who pay \$500 for a couple of nights at Highland Haven are donating \$5. A family that pays \$2,500 for furniture at Mountain Home are giving \$25 to ELF.

“Let’s face it,” she says, “raising money for crosswalks doesn’t exactly tug at one’s heartstrings like finding homes for abandoned puppies or saving teens from suicide or protecting a prime piece of open space. Our kind of fundraising is as impersonal as the infrastructure we make possible—a lot of small donations from a lot of people.

“We are not competing with the charitable groups that pull at the heartstrings,” Kirkpatrick assures. “As a board, our eyes light up talking about the potential for public restrooms, or additional parking spaces, or the possibility of charging stations.”

Perhaps the best reason to support ELF is that you will soon be able to see and enjoy the results of your generosity. Completed projects already delighting residents and visitors alike include but are by no means limited to, the lovely short stretch of Riverwalk and

attractive Evergreen Lake connector bridge downtown, ADA-compliant crosswalks and pedestrian islands in Bergen Park, and vastly improved pedestrian access to and from Wilmot Elementary School.

Improvements in the planning stages include paved shoulders along Meadow Drive and from the Elks Lodge to Center Stage, a sidewalk and ADA ramps over the Forest Hill bridge, and safer pedestrian and bicycle access to and from Evergreen Lake on Upper Bear Creek Road. And, while temporarily stalled at the county level, the planned improvements along Highway 73 between Little Cub and Buffalo Park remain near the top of the queue.

“Jeffco had secured all required approvals for the project last year, but when it went out to bid, they did not receive sufficient contractor response due to risk and budget constraints based on the funding available,” explains ELF’s prime mover, Dean Dalvit. “As a result, they revisited the plan and reduced scope in order to address risks and costs. In the meantime, they did complete the required underground utility work last year, and they confirmed that the revised Hwy 73 project will go to bid in January for 2025 construction.”

ELF has identified at least a dozen more items for future county attention. Being covered by grants and donations, for Evergreen residents, that’s the bargain of the century, particularly when you consider that we enjoy a somewhat smaller tax burden than those folks beyond the Hogback.

“Evergreen is believed to have the lowest sales tax rate in the six-county metro area at 4.5 percent state and county combined,” Kirkpatrick explains. “The rates for incorporated areas elsewhere in the county range from 7.5 to 10.55 percent with lodging taxes adding anywhere from 2-10.75 percent more. Evergreen has no lodging tax.” But having no city tax means no public funds are available for the projects ELF proposes.

Colorado Gives Day is right around the corner on Dec. 10, and your Gives Day gift to

ELF will be amplified with matching incentives pledged by Bruce Anderson of Farmers Insurance, First Bank, and Colorado Gives Foundation. ELF can even help you tailor a legacy project in memory of a loved one. But however you choose to support the Evergreen Legacy Fund, your donation will be a gift that keeps on giving for generations to come.



Photo by Ellen Nelson

**ELF board members study the need for paved shoulders and sidewalks along Meadow Drive to improve pedestrian and cyclist traffic.**



**Tiffani and Rand Packer, owners of Evoke 1923 (formerly the Bistro at Marshdale) are proud of extending their partnership with ELF to include not only Murphy’s Mountain Grill but also this fine-dining establishment. They are considering adding three additional food establishments.**

**EVERGREEN LEGACY FUND**  
A 501(C)(3) NONPROFIT FOUNDATION

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For more information go to: [evergreenlegacyfund.org/elf-timeline](http://evergreenlegacyfund.org/elf-timeline)

**2021**

ELF funded the addition of a mural by EHS students

**2023**

Improving pedestrian safety at Wilmot Elementary School



River Walk and additional parking on Main Street completed

**2022**

ELF donates \$50,000 to EPRD toward the reconstruction of the Evergreen North Lake Trail.

**2024**