

Teamwork

is at the heart of EJ Home's success in designing and building forever homes in the Tri-corner area



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Since the magazine's inception almost ten years ago, we have (almost without fail) featured a local business each month to give a glimpse into the ins and outs of that business. These entrepreneurs have been kind enough to share their words of wisdom, business inspirations and drive, as well as their challenges and what they've learned along the way. This month we were able to catch up with a business trio that make up EJ Home – Jusztina Paksai, Endre Molnar, and Steven Leven – who have been able to grow their business in the past couple of years, while creating beautiful forever homes in our community.

Tell us the basics of your business: name, when was it founded and where is it located?

JP: The name of our business is EJ Home, LLC., and it was founded in Lakeville, CT, in 2020.

Who are you – the folks behind EJ Home?

JP: EJ Home was a long-term dream of mine and my husband's, Endre Molnar. We wanted to create a business to help customers get through the renovation process without the typical issues and challenges that surround home

renovations. This became our long-term dream after we spent 15 years property managing first in the UK and then in New York City. While managing properties, we got involved with small renovations on said properties – this then led to larger renovations, and ultimately led to the renovation of our own home.

EM: We moved to the Litchfield Hills in 2015 and started to put down roots. At first we were second home owners and we loved the green spaces, the quietness, and safety to be found here. We also had a lot of friends in the area, and through them and our own exploration, we got to know and love this area more – ultimately relocating here full-time.

JP: When searching for a home, we at first didn't find anything close to our taste. We had an antique home and were very comfortable in it, but wanted to do something new. This ultimately led to us purchasing a house that we renovated, which was a long and painful process. We frequently asked ourselves, "why does it have to be this way – why does it have to be so hard?" From there we came up with EJ Home and its core principle of an easier, more joyful and less stressful way to create a forever home.

How did Steven get involved?

SL: I was renovating a house in Salisbury, CT, and met Endre and Jusztina. We instantly had a great connection and shared the same dream of building beautiful houses and helping guide people through the process. Very soon after that first meeting, we decided that we should collaborate on a project. Within a few months we were partners and had bought a house in Falls Village – and we never looked back. That then led to us looking at larger scale projects as well as land – all with the mission to build unique, high-quality homes in our area.

Do you all have the same design aesthetic and tastes – how does that work?

JP: All three of us do have similar – and somewhat different – design tastes, but we always try to make it work. We're pretty aligned and all of us definitely like modern. We may not have the same color palate preferences, but we always come together.

What is the focus and speciality of EJ Home?

EM: In short what we do is home-building and renovations. Our projects haven't been 100% "new construction," but our latest project

was an almost new construction, it ended up being about 80% new construction. We really enjoyed the project and going forward we'll be doing a lot more new construction.

As for each of the partners, what are your roles within the business?

SL: Each of us brings a different skill to the business, but we all end up sharing jobs and filling in where necessary.

JP: It's really natural for us and we're more like a family that collaborates very well – we make all of the decision together. Everyone has a role, but everyone is involved and covers whatever needs to be covered.

EM: We love the building process and all try to stay involved as much as possible. Unique to us is also the fact that Jusztina is a realtor with Elyse Harney Real Estate. She plays a big part in finding the homes that we eventually purchase and work on, she also gives us advise about properties and the market, and then she represents our properties when they are ready for sale. We feel that her role helps to give us an advantage, because she's got her finger on

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the pulse of the market and what people are looking for.

How has your business grown, evolved, and changed since founding - did Covid have an impact?

JP: Our business has grown from house renovations to home building. Covid created an opportunity for us to take on more projects that were of a larger scale that required more renovation.

EM: Since 2020 we've renovated almost ten houses. The past few years have been very crazy. We usually do single family homes, most of which are aligned with our tastes, but all are very specific. The homes we've worked on have been located in Salisbury, Lakeville, Falls Village, and two in Millerton.

What have been some of the challenges you've faced?

JP: As with all businesses in this time, we are affected by the cost of materials and high labor costs as well as dealing with supply issues. Also, the lack of inventory of older houses has been impacting us for future projects.

What would you say is unique to your business compared with some of your contemporaries and/or competitors?

SL: We focus more on a unique design aesthetic than most other builders and have a more modern style that is a fresh take on typical building styles of the area.



EM: What we feel is unique is that we are trying to create usable spaces in our homes - we are always thinking about how people can live in them - we think about "style" of course, but focus more on being practical in every way and thinking ahead, like setting our homes up to be smart homes with cameras and smart heating systems. We also prepare our homes so they're set up for renewable energy if someone wants to connect their new home to solar, for example.

JP: We want to create comfortable and well-designed homes that the new owner can bring in their own life, tastes, and furniture. We create spaces that have a nice personality but that is not overwhelming, so the new owner can customize it and make it their home.

Would you say that your homes have a specific style?

EM: We like to create clean, white spaces with modern amenities and fixtures. We also install higher-end kitchens and bathrooms with top-of-the-line appliances wherever possible.

JP: Endre and I are of course influenced by our home country of Hungary, which has general crisp designs with very clean lines, light colors and bold natural tones. It is similar to Scandinavian design but coming with an Eastern European background. Every one of our projects is a little bit different depending on what the home has to offer,



but we also try to come up with something new and unique for each project.

What's your process?

SL: In short, we typically buy older homes and redesign them with our aesthetic. But at the start of each project, Juszina tells us if we're buying the property [all three chuckled at this], then we get together to review the potential of the home and discuss the project. But we've generally agreed on every property that we've purchased. Each house that we buy and work on must be a space that we can work with and can implement our specific touch. It has to fit into our overall aesthetic, therefore it's not that complicated for us. We basically know if it's going to work or not as soon as we see the property.

EM: We bring houses back to life - the house doesn't have to be a specific size or have a general style, but it must have the elements to be able to be converted utilizing our designs and style.

Do you have any design influences?

JP: We're influenced by modern designs that have open features and usable space, lots of light and high quality materials.

What have you learned and what have been some of your biggest challenges?

SL: We have learned how important it is to build relationships with all of our partners and all of the people involved throughout the building process. This creates a sense of

ownership and helps us create a beautiful, finished product where everyone is proud of the work that we did together.

What advice would you give someone looking to start their own business?

EM: Spend a lot of time building relationships with employees and make sure they feel rewarded for the good work you do together.

JP: It's all about teamwork. We have a big team behind us and we really depend on all of them to accomplish our goals. We are extremely thankful to our entire team. EJ Home wouldn't be what it is without our team.

SL: It's all about who you work with - finding the right contractors, subs, and employees - it's not just that they represent your company but it's also about the quality of the work and relationship, and what that person brings to the table. The entire team is important, and therefore finding the right fit is important. And so even though EJ Home is technically the three of us, it's not. EJ Home is our entire team - we wouldn't be where we are without them. ●

To learn more about EJ Home, their work and team, you can visit them at 329 Main St, Lakeville, CT, call them at (347) 328-3002, or visit them online at www.ejhome.com.