

Short bio of *Craig Della Penna*

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NorthamptonRealtor.com TrailsideCompanies.com

I have had an interesting life journey. Today, I have a unique niche real estate practice, specializing in houses near to walking or biking pathways and antique or historic houses.



I am the 1st REALTOR in the U.S. with this niche, and I have been featured in two National Realtor Association magazines—twice in the Certified Residential Specialist Magazine, and twice in the Mass. Assoc. of Realtors magazine.

I've also been written about in an editorial for the *Boston Globe*, an article in the *Street Journal*, and even a story for the *United Airlines in-flight magazine*, *Hemispheres*, called *Roads Less Traveled*.



In August of 2017, at the National Association of REALTORS conference in Chicago, I was awarded the 2017 Ever-Green Award for not only being the 1st REALTOR in the U.S. to have this special niche real estate practice, but also for my accomplishments in getting trails built all over the Northeast U.S.



I am also one of only a small handful of Realtors in the Northeast to

receive Green designations from both the National Association of Realtors and the U.S. Green Building Council.

I also hold the Certified Residential Specialist designation—CRS. Only 2% of Realtors in my service area have this designation. How I got here is quite different from most people in this industry.

I worked in the railroad industry for many years, marketing rail freight and planning the start-up and management of large scale, contemporary, transloading facilities. In the mid-1990s, while working for the railroad, I was invited to write a series of books on the history of old railroad lines converted to walking and biking trails (rail trails).

Two years after the first of three books on this subject came out, I got involved in the politics of how these paths did or did not get built and I began to actively organize “friends of the trail” groups in scores of communities all across New England and eastern New York.

In the late 1990s, I was hired by the national organization, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, [RTC] as a political organizer/lobbyist in the New England region to not only prevent bad policy at the state and local level, but to also “parachute” into some of the most notable rail trail wars in the northeast. I am a “battle-hardened veteran” of nearly every rail trail war within 150 miles.

In late 2001, while working for RTC, my wife Kathleen and I bought a badly run-down, circa 1865, farmhouse next to (eight feet from) the rail trail in Northampton’s historic Florence village center.

We began a far-reaching renovation and had contractors there for fourteen months.

Then, in the spring of 2003, we opened as a bed & breakfast



called **Sugar Maple Trailside Inn**. The renovation was even featured on HGTV’s *Restore America* television program.

In 2004, I left RTC and entered the real estate field and focused on developing my niche—selling houses near trails and greenways. This was of course in spite of what all those anti-path folks said was possible.

In 2005, I set up two entities. One was the Northeast Greenways Solutions (NEGS) to teach communities and groups how to get their projects moving forward. It is under the flag of NEGS that I’ll usually do my lecture series. I also set up Central Highlands Conservancy LLC (CHC) as a hybrid land acquisition vehicle to purchase former railroad corridor in Mass to block sales to adjacent landowners.

We purchased 3.2 miles, including 3 large former RR bridges of the developing 100 mile trail called Mass Central Rail Trail. We gave the local land trust 2 years to buy us out, and after purchasing it from us, they then got grants to build out the trail and rehab the bridges to be safe and proper. We have also used CHC to teach others how to do this.

In their 10th anniversary issue, *The Ride* magazine named me as the most effective advocate for rail-to-trail issues on the Eastern seaboard, and I have helped build over 1,000 miles of rail trails in scores of communities in New England and New York.

Today, having given over 1,200 lectures in twenty one states, I am one of the country’s most in-demand public

Your expertise, wisdom and delivery of the key facts was impressive. You no doubt helped to propel us on to victory at last evenings town meeting vote on the Rail Trail initiative. Thank You! Vincent Inglese, Chair of the Friends of the Lynnfield Rail Trail.



speakers on the subjects of rail-to-trail conversions and their tie-in to the issues surrounding smart-growth, land preservation, brownfield redevelopment, place-making, effects on nearby residential real estate values, sustainability and other similar topics.

In just the past few years, I have been the keynote or plenary speaker at state or regional conferences in New York, California, Virginia, Connecticut, Missouri, Michigan, and Massachusetts.

And in 2016, I became an accredited teacher of REALTORS in both Massachusetts and Vermont, where I began teaching a course about these issues to scores of Realtors for their Continuing Education requirements.

In late 2016 and early 2017, I was invited to do a series of national webinars by American Trails about trail development tying in the effects on nearby real estate.

In the past 5 years, 4 books have been written that feature me in them as a case study in creative marketing or 21st century branding.

Also in early 2017, I launched a free, monthly e-newsletter that now goes out to over 10,000 readers. In fact, in the spring of 2019, Constant Contact, the company that hosts the newsletter, told us that it has won an award in that it is in the top 10%



of all the thousands of e-newsletters they host world wide

Top 10% in terms of engagement with the readers, in opens, click-throughs, forwards to friends, or social media. Amazing!

In the summer of 2019, I came onboard the Norwottuck Network as their Executive Director. This is a 501c3 NGO micro-funding organization set up to provide critical initial funding of early studies to determine the feasibility of developing the Mass Central Rail Trail in places where the trail is still nascent. I am in the process of enlarging the board and we’ll start doing some grants in early 2020.

Curriculum Vitae for Craig Della Penna

Work History:

The Murphys Realtors, Inc. Associate Broker

www.CraigDP.com 2003-to present

I am a Realtor based in Northampton, MA, but with a special, niche practice. I specialize in properties near to bike and pedestrian pathways and other conservation lands. I also specialize in historic or antique houses in walkable or bikeable neighborhoods. Because of this, I'm generally the top realtor at one of the largest firms in the area and am in the top percentile of Realtors in the Five College Area of Western Massachusetts.

Sugar Maple Trailside Inn Owner

www.sugar-maple-inn.com 2003 to present

SMTI is an award-winning renovation of a Civil War era residence that we operate as a two-room bed & breakfast. The house sits 8' away from one of the oldest muni-built rail trails in the state. This is the closest B&B to Smith College and we typically book-up the entire summer by the end of April in a given year. I get several real estate transactions a year from people who start off as B&B guests and they love our valley so much, they end up relocating here.

Northeast Greenway Solutions Executive Director

www.GreenwaySolutions.org 2005 to present

NEGS is a small consulting firm set up to assist communities or local groups in the conversion of former steam railroad or electric trolley corridor into linear parks. I've been in the background of most of the rail trail efforts that began to organize since the early 2000s and have helped convert about 1,000 miles of former railroad corridor into trails.

Central Highlands Conservancy, LLC. Manager

2005 to present

CHC is a hybrid land acquisition vehicle I set up to prevent the sale of former railroad corridor in Massachusetts to adjoining land owners. Since its inception, CHC has directly saved 3.2 miles and indirectly saved another 9+ miles of former railroad corridor that would have been sold to adjoining landowners. As a part of the land transactions, CHC has also saved several rare railroad bridges. Info on all the above entities can be found at:

www.TrailsideCompanies.com

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy New England Representative 1998 to 2004 I was an organizer for a national non-profit based in Washington DC. I prevented bad policy from happening at the state level and travelled to communities

all over the 6-state region to assist them in developing linear parks.

Railroad Distribution Services Terminal Manager 1986-2000

I planned the start-up and managed the operations of several railroad-owned transloading facilities. One of which was the largest single-wholesaler, forest-products distribution center in the northeast.

Education

Holyoke High School. 1970

UMass Amherst. Attended several courses but dropped out.

Professional Qualifications

1. Certified Residential Specialist [CRS] Only 1-2% of the Realtors in my market place have achieved this designation.
2. Graduate of Realtor Institute [GRI]
3. Eco-Broker
4. Green Realtor
5. I am an accredited teacher of Realtors for their CEU credits.

Awards

> In their 10th anniversary issue, THE RIDE MAGAZINE named me as the most effective advocate for bicycle and rail-to-trail issues on the eastern seaboard.

> In November 2008, American Trails--a national organization--gave me a similar award for advocacy work in Massachusetts.

> The extreme makeover / renovation of our historic house and B&B was featured on Home and Garden Television's [HGTV] Restore America program and we were awarded the Historic Preservation Award from the City of Northampton's Historical Commission.

> Since 2009, four books have been written that feature me in them as a case study for 1. courage to quit a corporate job, 2. creative trail-building, 3. 21st century marketing and branding, 4. for helping found two NGOs in Holyoke. [see below.]

> The National Assoc. of Realtors awarded me the 2017 Ever-Green Award for my work in both converting rails into trails and my being the first Realtor in the U.S. to specialize in selling houses near these linear parks.

Publications I've authored

1. *TRAILSIDE family of companies: "What They Are: How They Came to Be: And Why I Just Might be Living Your Dream Life."*
2. *Home Sales near Two Massachusetts Rail Trails*
3. *Life adjacent to a rail trail: the Sugar Maple Trailside Inn*
4. *Where rails cross trails: the safety solution*
5. *Railroad rail: should it be preserved on rail trails?*

All these can be found on www.AmericanTrails.org I've also written several Op-Ed pieces in various newspapers in the northeast. And my real estate practice and trail advocacy has been featured in two National Assoc. of Realtors trade magazines, the Massachusetts Assoc. of Realtors trade magazine,

the *Wall St. Journal*, the *Boston Globe*, and even United Airlines in-flight magazine, *Hemispheres*.

Books I've authored or co-authored:

1. *Great Rail-Trails of the Northeast: Guide to 26 Rec Trails and their RR History*. 1995 Northeast Cartographics
2. *24 Great Rail-Trails of New Jersey*. 1998 Northeast Cartographics
3. *Rails-to-Trails: New York: The Official Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Guidebook*. 2002 Falcon Press
4. *Images of America: HOLYOKE*. 1998 Arcadia Publishing
5. *Images of America: FLORENCE* 2013 Arcadia Publishing

Books I've written the forwards for:

1. *New Hampshire Rail Trails*: by Charles F. Martin 2008 [and 2015] Branch Line Press
2. *Marblehead's Emerald Necklace*: by Dennis Curtin. 2012 Marblehead Conservancy

Books that have featured me in them as a case study in four different realms:

1. *Why Not Do What You Love*. Martha Johnson. Pearl Meadow Press. 2010
2. *PATHFINDER*. Ron Strickland. Oregon State University Press. 2012
3. *Re-Inventing You*. Dorie Clark. Harvard Business Review Press. 2013
4. *Legendary Locals of Holyoke*. Jacqueline Sears. Arcadia Publishing. 2015

Professional Memberships

National Association of Realtors
Massachusetts Association of Realtors
Realtor Association of the Pioneer Valley
Former member of the Massachusetts DOT Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Board
Former Board Member for Mass DCR's Recreational Trail Advisory Board
Former Co-chair of MassDOT's Trails & Greenways Task-force
Former Chair of the East Coast Greenway's Massachusetts Committee
Volunteer Coordinator for the Mass Central Rail Trail Coalition
Member of the Northampton Historical Commission

"The keynote speaker, Craig Della Penna, alone was well worth the day. His depth of knowledge and experience is of international significance. You guys did well to get him." Larry Keniston, NH DOT Bike-Ped Coordinator.

Board Member of the Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council

Keynote speaker at state level or regional conferences in the past five years in: California, Michigan, New York, New Hampshire, Virginia, Missouri, Connecticut, Vermont and Massachusetts.

In 2016 and 2017, I did a series of four national webinars hosted by American Trails.

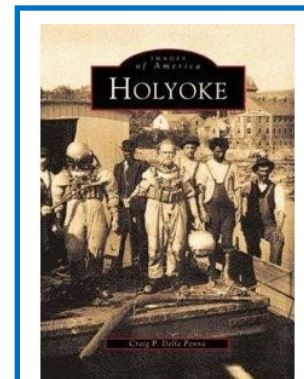
Interests

Public speaking. I have given over 1200 lectures in 21 states and Canadian provinces and am the most in-demand speaker in the U.S. on a number of topics related to rail trail development and impacts on residential real estate. It is common for me to learn that people have driven an hour or more to hear me speak.

Holyoke Initiatives

From 1999 to 2003 I was one of the founders of a group called Save Historic Holyoke set up to slow down and finally stop the spate of muni-sanctioned demolitions there.

From 2006 to 2008, I helped found the Friends of the Holyoke CanalWalk



In its 6th printing. One of the top sellers in the whole series nationally

From 2014 to today. I am on the Board of Holyoke Preservation Trust.

Since 2014 I've been leading tours of both the industrial/canal district and the mansions district in the Highlands.

Website for the tour brochures are here. <http://trailsidecompanies.com/toursforwistariahurst.html>