

Special, Protected, and Even 3rd Places

By Craig Della Penna, Realtor

Do you ever wonder why our beautiful valley looks a bit different from other similar river valleys? From a high-altitude vantage point, one thing that sticks out is that most mountain ranges in North America run north to south. Here, however, the local mountain range runs east to west. I like to say that this influences our relationship with the land. The culture of this area is driven by land preservation. Did you know that Massachusetts has more land trusts than any other state in the US except California? However, California is 20 times larger than Massachusetts.

Around 1890, the land trust movement began when The Trustees of Reservations was formed in Massachusetts and they began to assemble iconic parcels of land into a hybrid of public parks. Their parcels today range from mansions owned by notable residents to places with rare geological features. Almost 200 such places are open to the public, spreading the word on the importance of not only land preservation, but historic preservation too.

Circling back to our valley, Hadley is an area that has a rich history of land preservation. It has the longest village green in the US. It also has more acres of agricultural land preserved forever than any other community in the state. Farmers here in the Valley have many tools and resources available to allow them to not only continue farming, but to continue farming for generations to come. Farmland here doesn't automatically get built into McMansions.

One of the state's premier land trusts, Kestrel Land Trust, has been quietly, often without fanfare, protecting farmland and other key lands here for over 50 years. There have even been examples where a ground swell of citizen action prevented over-development from taking place on Mt. Holyoke.

There is another land trust in the area doing innovative work that is outside the box. The East Quabbin Land Trust is one of a dozen partners developing the Mass Central Rail Trail. At 100+ miles long, the MCRT is the longest rail trail in the Northeast. EQLT has bought about five miles of the corridor that included three large bridges and they are transforming it into a safe trail for families. They are also aware of the "3rd place" concept and have taken action to preserve that 3rd place in a small community in their service territory.

The 1st place in your life is your family. The 2nd place is your work place. The 3rd place is a place where you meet people outside of the first two. In the small community of Petersham, the all-important 3rd place was the more than 180-year-old Country Store. Badly run-down and in danger of closing, it was purchased by the EQLT. They took on all the deferred maintenance capital projects and then leased the store to a young couple who loves their crucial role in the community. Kudos to the EQLT.

Small town charm, BIG picture thinking. . .

In a place where land preservation, smart growth, and sustainable development are the watch words, shouldn't your real estate agent also be a change agent? Someone who has done inspirational things? Shouldn't you be dealing with a Realtor who gets it, and doesn't just talk-the-talk?

Give me a call.

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