



It was December 2016, and I just accepted an offer to work at a commercial real estate appraisal firm in Encino, California. Like most folks, I didn't have the faintest idea of what the right of way industry was, nor what eminent domain, larger parcel, USPAP or what the different types of takings denoted.

My senior appraiser came into the office during my first day with 23 of the largest sets of what I came to know as right of way maps I had ever seen and plopped them down on my desk. I remember thinking at that point whether I should head for the exit and look for a new career! There was so much information on the maps with all kinds of symbols I hadn't seen before. I was intimidated and not sure I would be able to succeed in the field. But slowly, over the course of the next year, I grew familiar with these maps and understood the contour lines, elevation points, all-important take areas and other topographical aspects that give more clarity about the site.

At an early point of my appraisal career, my supervisor recommended I pursue the real estate appraiser's Certified General License (AG) with the California Bureau of Real Estate Appraisers due to the level of complexity right of way appraisals contain, as well as the more advanced education required to obtain an understanding of the myriad of concepts of these types of appraisal reports. With this particular license, I would be able to provide value opinions on any property type, regardless of complexity and dollar amount. In other words, there are no restrictions or appraisal problems that would be off the table; any land or building (improvements) can be valued with the Certified General License.

Like most of the general public, my idea of what a real estate or real property appraiser does is prepare reports on single-family homes. Little did I know, a more complex license can lead to much greater opportunities such as preparing appraisal reports for high-rise office buildings, golf courses, the neighborhood grocery store, large malls, automotive dealerships, numerous public agency buildings and much more!

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN APPRAISER?

A valuation journey

BY RAY MEHTA, RWA

During the course of my research of obtaining the real estate appraiser's Certified General License, I found each state has its own education, experience and testing requirements to obtain the license. The table below shows the licensure requirements for four states as of October 2022. As one can see, many of the requirements shown within the four states are similar to obtain the Certified General License. Contact your state's real estate appraiser board or bureau for further qualifications required as they may differ from the state's shown in the table.

State	Education	Experience	License Application	Exam	Fees	Term
California	Bachelor's degree and 300 hours of qualifying appraisal education	3,000 hours of experience in no less than 18 months of which 1,500 hours be non-residential experience	Yes	Yes	\$1,110	2 years
Nevada	Bachelor's degree and 303 hours of qualifying appraisal education	3 years; 3,600 hours including not less than 1,500 hours of commercial appraisal experience	Yes	Yes	\$535	2 years
Indiana	Bachelor's degree and 300 hours of qualifying appraisal education	3,000 hours, of which 2,000 hours must be in the general category	Yes	Yes	\$100	2 years
Oklahoma	Bachelor's Degree and 300 hours of qualifying appraisal education	3,000 hours of experience in no less than 18 months of which 1,500 hours be non-residential experience	Yes	Yes	\$200	3 years

** This information was pulled on October 7, 2022, from the following websites: California Bureau of Real Estate Appraisers; the Nevada Department of Business and Industry; Nevada Real Estate Division; Indiana Professional Licensing Agency; and the Real Estate Appraiser Board of the Oklahoma Insurance Department. Be sure to check your state's resources for the most up-to-date requirements.*

I found it extremely invaluable to concurrently complete the work experience and courses. While there can be many late-night studying sessions and long work hours, the two go hand in hand, which makes for a seamless certification process, as the practical work done in the office combines well with the theoretical aspect of the courses. It is important to work under a supervisory appraiser who really understands the appraisal process, writes persuasively, is well received in their respective niche and is readily available to answer client questions. I was extremely fortunate to be able to go into the office and have mentors who answered all of my questions patiently with a vested interest in my success. It is also essential to ask the company for financial assistance to take the appraisal courses, but if those resources are not available, try spreading the classes over a quarterly basis in order to complete them in time by exam time. The process was long and grueling at times, but the rewards are well worth the time and energy put in.

To work in the right of way industry, my mentors advised me to obtain the Certified General License, since most work is comprised of various property types such as land, industrial, commercial, agricultural, etc. In many cases, it defines the work a right of way professional would conduct. The Certified General License affords the appraiser the flexibility to perform appraisals of all property

types without regard to transaction value or complexity. One of my first appraisal assignments within right of way was to value 23 land parcels in the cities of Mission Viejo and Lake Forest for the California Department of Transportation's freeway-widening project. I spoke with property owners, explained who I was and why I was there, took their questions and photographed numerous properties. Land areas most people would not give a second thought to, such as commercial driveway areas, open space land, hillside and excess land off freeways, are the focal points of many appraisal reports and definitely captured my attention. Certified General Licensed appraisers are able to tackle these types of assignments, which is why existing residential appraisers seek to upgrade their licenses to the certified general level.

My supervising appraisers were extremely supportive and showed much enthusiasm in filling out my work experience log and reminding me to fill out my assignments after completion, rather than completing the document at one time. This proved helpful, as it would be a difficult exercise to remember all of the assignments going back in excess of two years. Having supervisory appraisers who have numerous years of experience and property types is a tremendous benefited me



tremendously whenever I had a question about report nuances or other stumbling blocks and obstacles. I highly recommend seeking out potential supervising appraisers who not only understand the appraisal process and are highly respected in their fields, but also who have taken on trainees in the past and know the licensure process to assist with overcoming potential obstacles and stumbling blocks that can easily discourage a trainee.

Once completed, the assignment log along with other documentation is then sent to the Bureau of Real Estate appraiser's office for review. Upon preliminary completion of review, the bureau will then send the candidate for the appropriate licensure level an eligibility letter to take the appropriate exam for licensure level the individual applied for. I feel very fortunate in obtaining my license, and when an opinion is requested regarding any type of valuation document, I'm be able to proudly state that the document or report in question was reviewed by a certified general real estate appraiser.

In April 2021, I successfully completed the exam and work experience validation from the State of California Bureau of Real Estate Appraisers and secured the Certified General License.

The Future of Appraisal

When most people think of appraisals, one pictures an individual with a measuring wheel or laser pointer measuring residential properties and then producing reports based on their observations. With shifting demographics, population and household size, legislation and regulatory changes, different states experience robust growth or decline that makes markets fluid and the world of appraisal much more interesting. Every assignment is different and has its own nuances, which largely protects the appraiser from automation that leads to professional dissatisfaction and even layoffs in corporate environments. According to The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, there are forecasted 6,800 job openings for property appraisers and assessors annually over the next decade, due primarily from the need to replace workers who change occupations or exit the labor

force, due to retirements. If there was an ever a time to consider a career as a real estate appraiser, check your state's appraisal board's requirements and start the process today.

The importance of obtaining a professional designation and continuing education requirements cannot be overstated. In numerous industries, ranging from law to engineering, continuing education is vital to ensure standards, best practices and peer interaction, as well as license renewal requirements take place. The licenses offered by IRWA are extremely practical and necessary for all right of way professionals, especially those practicing in the field of appraisal. The 400 series level courses offers instruction for those who would like to enter the field of appraisal, easement valuation, Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) and Uniform Standards of Federal Land Acquisitions (Yellow Book) among many others that have and continue to aid me in the field of appraisal. Ensure to check the IRWA website for designation requirements.

Now that I have gone through the process of obtaining my certifications, I'm very happy with the decision to move forward with this career path and am excited to be a part of the future changes within the appraisal industry. 🌟



Ray Mehta, RWA, is currently employed within the Real Property Group with The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in downtown Los Angeles at Union Station. He specializes in real estate appraisal and assists in the valuation of fee simple estates, permanent and temporary easements, cost studies and feasibility analysis. Ray graduated from California State University Northridge with a bachelor of science in business administration with a finance concentration and was

a 2018-2019 IRWA scholarship award recipient. Ray is a commissioned notary public for the state of California and obtained his appraiser's Certified General License in April 2021 and has his SR/WA application pending for October 2022. He gained invaluable right of way appraisal consulting experience with Integra Realty Resources in Encino before joining the District in January of 2018.