



# COMMUNITY BUILDER

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## Electric Vehicle Charging and Community Associations

From Karl Benz to Henry Ford to Elon Musk, the automobile industry has changed significantly over the last 100+ years. The industry is undergoing one of the most significant changes yet - the transition from primarily gas-powered to electric-powered vehicles. No longer is the electric vehicle synonymous with Tesla. Other major automobile manufacturers are diving into the electric-powered arena at a fast pace. GM has indicated they aim to produce only electric vehicles by 2035. Ford has indicated they desire to have 40% of vehicles electrified by 2030. Other major manufacturers are moving in the same direction.



What does this mean for community associations?

Boards will need to begin considering the infrastructure that will be required for owners to charge their vehicles. For single-family homes, the solution is simple: owners can run the charger off their own electric service. For shared parking areas such as garages and parking lots, the solution gets more complex. How will the community monitor electric usage and bill owners accordingly? Is the existing electric service to the building sufficient to power a garage or a parking lot full of vehicles? Are there available areas to implement common element charging stations? And of course, the big one... what will this cost the community, and can the community afford it?

Polling the community is an excellent place for the board to start. This will help gauge the temperature of the community and determine the subsequent steps to take. It will also give the ownership a sense of security, knowing the board is proactive and actively working to protect property value in the community. Through this process, boards may even find owners willing to form a committee to work through potential solutions.

When exploring electric vehicle charging solutions, most communities will have two options: installing shared EV charging stations in common area spaces or installing stations in individual owner parking spaces.

### **Shared Charging Stations:**

Shared charging stations are a fantastic approach if the community has available areas to implement them. In many cases, there is already available electric service to bring to the

parking spaces, and the community will need a way to bill for the electric usage. EV charging stations on the market can handle this function and much more without any extra work from the board. Some of the market leaders include ChargePoint, Tritium, FreeWire, EVBox, and others. These stations allow communities to set the price for electric usage and bill directly through the software rather than handling manually. They also offer other vital functionalities to help manage the spaces, such as charging waitlists, full charge notifications, penalties for staying in the parking space too long, passwords to restrict usage to only those in the community, and many others. Depending on the frequency of use, these spaces could even become a profit generator for the community. Be sure to check with local electric service providers because there may even be rebates available to help offset the costs for these installs.

### **Individual Owner Charging Stations:**

Suppose the community doesn't have common areas to implement shared charging stations or a more significant need for charging stations. In that case, the board may need to explore the possibility of allowing owners to have stations installed in their deeded or assigned parking spaces. In most cases, the owners can't run these stations off their unit's electric service, so the board will need a solution to connect the stations to the common electric service to the building. When exploring this option, the board should consult with a local electrical engineer or electrician specializing in EV charging stations. These specialists will be able to calculate the electric load requirements to power the charging stations. If needed, they can work with your electric service provider to develop a plan for bringing in additional electric services to the community. Once the community has sufficient electric service in place, the board can establish a process for owners to request and have charging stations installed in their parking spaces. The board will likely want to consider selecting an approved charging station for owners to use. This will allow for ease in the electric service usage billing and can increase the overall charging efficiency through throttling when many users are charging simultaneously.

Boards should consider updating their association rules and architectural guidelines to encompass EV charging stations. As with any change to community guidelines, it is always best to consult with industry experts and the association's legal counsel. Regardless of the community, the question is no longer whether, but when, electric charging stations will be needed. As a board, being proactive now will minimize challenges in the likely not-so-distant future.

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