

A close-up, low-angle shot of a blue electric car's charging port. A white and black charging cable is plugged into the port. The car's body is highly reflective, showing a clear reflection of the sky and the charging station. The background is a bright, clear blue sky.

EV Stations A Powerful Amenity

*Apartment communities'
marketing efforts
getting a boost.*

BY PAUL R. BERGERON III

Skeptics may chuckle and environmentalists may cheer about the prospect of electric cars taking over the roads nationwide in the not too distant future. But when Consumer Reports proclaims that its “Car of the Year” is run by a battery, the public—including apartment residents—will take notice.

Out of necessity or novelty, many owners and managers are creating car-charging stations at their communities, finding that programs are priced more affordably than imagined.

Los Angeles-based owner Linear City Development, in what it says may be a first-of-its-kind deal during its current lease-up period, offers free charging “fill-ups” for the length of every original resident’s lease.

Sequoia Equities has announced that it will install car-charging stations at 28 of its 40 California communities in May. The entire installation cost was picked up by NRG Energy’s eVgo subsidiary.

While approximately one-third of all electric vehicle (EV) sales in the United States have occurred in California, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, this is not simply a Golden State phenomenon.

Mid-Atlantic-based Bozzuto, for example, is investing in the car-charging amenity at three of its communities. Two were installed at newly opened Flats170 in Odenton, Md.

“We saw a need,” Peter Zadoretzky, Sustainability Project Manager, Bozzuto, says. “We also knew that sustainable, healthful living was a focus at Flats170, and that focus brought like-minded residents. After a few calls from prospective residents looking for a new home with EV chargers, we decided to be ahead of the curve in Odenton and bring them in.”

Trammell Crow Residential is installing three or four basic stations on all of its new properties. TCR Vice President Nyla Raphael Westlake, CPM, says each costs \$700 to \$800. Its new communities with stations are still in the lease-up phase, and Raphael Westlake estimates that TCR will charge residents \$50 to \$75 per month for a decal to park and charge vehicles in those designated spots.

“We’re keeping it really simple right now,” Raphael Westlake says. “The infrastructure cost at construction is close to zero if designed and considered [in advance], but it can be \$5,000 to \$10,000 if implemented after the fact.”

Raphael Westlake says TCR is not looking for these stations to be a huge income source, but rather “an amenity that we look to provide to the residents while offsetting our cost.”

Communities that have car-charging stations say it’s too early to deliver a comprehensive ROI on their value. Programs involve many installation, cost and operational variables. Those with stations are watching the trend and crunching the numbers—saying they provide a risk-free, cost-effective amenity that could become commonplace sooner than most think.

Who Can Afford It

Receiving the highest score in the Consumer Reports automobile evaluation history, this year’s winner, the Tesla Model S luxury sedan, grabbed 99 out of a possible 100 points. Its base price starts at \$64,000, and apartment owners/managers with stations admit they are not catering specifically to those deep-pocketed consumers.

Instead, they are focusing longer term, sensing that urban residents, in particular, might soon find electric automobiles more

appealing. The federal government continues to subsidize EVs and strives for cleaner air through higher emissions standards while the cost of gasoline inches higher and battery-powered engine technology improves.

Linear City Partner Yuval Bar-Zemer says he is an electric car advocate.

“I am fairly convinced that, in the near future, the reality of driving in the city will change dramatically and gas-powered cars may be a part of our past,” he says.

Bar-Zemer says the communities that Linear City develops, such as recently repositioned The Elysian, located in Victor Heights at the gateway to downtown Los Angeles, are part of a portfolio with a planning



eye on the next 20 to 30 years.

“With that in mind, it is very clear why developing this capacity is an obvious strategic move,” he says. “By making parking optional to the lease, we’re broadcasting to residents that it might not make sense to even own a car. By providing easy and cost-effective EV charging and ride-share alternatives, we hope to change the way people think about urban living.”

Cynthia M. McSherry, Senior-Vice President Director of Portfolio Management, Sequoia Equities, hasn’t calculated the number of electric vehicles per building in her 12,000-unit portfolio, which spreads to Oregon and Nevada. But she says the facts about electric vehicle purchases in California are staggering. She’s taking notice.

Legislatively speaking, she adds that there is a zero percent emissions mandate in California by 2025. “We wanted to beat the

EV Sales Breakdown

There were 96,000 plug-in electric cars sold in the United States last year, which represented a bit more than half a percent of the total market of 16.5 million vehicles, according to greencarreports.com.

Within that competitive set, plug-ins capture:

- a bit more than 1 percent of passenger-car (non-truck, non-SUV) sales;
- almost 2 percent of the \$20,000-plus market; and
- just about 3 percent of the market for \$25,000-plus vehicles.

Last year Tesla sold 22,000 cars, and by the end of 2014 it says it hopes to be making 1,000 cars per week. It plans to develop a Model E car in three years that costs \$35,000 and travels 400 miles per charge.



market demand and be ready to provide a solution for our residents," she says.

Just Pennies a 'Tank'

Bar-Zemer says Linear City's choice to install 20 stations at the 96-unit Elysian was not based on a formula.

"If I can attract 20 residents who have an electric car or will consider changing to an electric car as this feature is provided, I would consider it a good success," he says. "I am hoping that four or five years from now, my residents will force me to add the capacity to 50 percent of the building."

The Elysian re-opened in spring to great fanfare. Offering free electric-car charging was part of its headline-grabbing lease-up marketing campaign, says its public relations consultant Zan Dubin Scott, ZDS Communications. The community, with monthly rents ranging from \$1,500 to \$6,500, comprehensively emphasizes energy efficiency.

Linear City did not disclose its cost to install the 20 car-charging stations. It estimates that each would cost 20 cents per kilowatt hour (which translates to \$1.50 per hour) to use. Bar-Zemer estimates that an all-electric Nissan LEAF would need 3.5 hours to fully charge.



Linear City Development's Partners, Yuval Bar-Zemer (left) and Leonard Hill.

Nissan says a LEAF will travel an EPA-estimated 84 miles per charge, up from last year's 76 miles. Tesla suggests its Model S will take 6.5 hours to fully charge and will travel 208 to 265 miles per charge.

Generally speaking, Linear City can reasonably assume that it will absorb minimal cost each month to provide this amenity.

Sequoia's program includes unlimited charging and is priced based on a requirement that residents subscribe to a monthly agreement with eVgo at \$99 for activation and \$39 per month, which includes installation and maintenance. Each charger is assigned to a single person, to alleviate any conflicts of residents wanting to charge at the same time.

Bozzuto estimates that the average electric car, if fully depleted, will take about four hours to charge. Zadoretzky says most drivers do not fully deplete their battery, instead needing a charge of about two hours. Bozzuto's stations charge \$0.20/kWh, which equates to about \$1/hour for most models, meaning a typical "fill-up" will cost customers about \$2.

Raphael Westlake says that for its communities in Texas, TCR plans to

be strategic about “time-of-use” plans that allow it to secure discounted charging rates during the overnight hours, which is when she says most residents would be using the stations.

The positive PR it could deliver is paying off. Zadoretzky says Flats170 is a LEED community and comes with many efficiency and sustainability initiatives, which are prime selling points. He says the EV stations can leave a lasting impression.

“Not all environmentally friendly elements onsite are visible,” he says. “But the EV chargers at Flats170 are one of the most visible reminders of Bozzuto’s commitment to healthy living and to our environment.”

Resident William Malloy and his wife Raluca recently moved into Flats170. He says one of the main things that attracted them to the community was its attention to efficient and eco-friendly building practices.

“After seeing the space and taking a tour, we were sold,” says Malloy, who owns a 2013 Ford Fusion Energi, a partial hybrid-electric vehicle. “Thanks to Bozzuto and Flats170, I am able to drive to and from work on 100 percent electric power. This not only saves me a lot of money, it is also a huge win for the environment.”

Zadoretzky finds charging-station installation costs reasonable. He spends approximately \$8,500 per unit for a turnkey product. “We are seeing that price come down as we install more stations across our portfolio,” says Zadoretzky, who is pricing the residents’ charging costs based on demand.

Part of the Marketing Mix

Raphael Westlake says she has seen postings by residents on a few EV blogs that they wish they could search/filter apartment communities that offer the service.

“I believe there is untapped marketing potential through the ILSs and direct marketing of communities for those who do offer this amenity.”

Through its REV program, eVgo provides the charging equipment at no cost to an apartment community, handles everything from the initial site assess-

ments to ongoing management and maintenance of the provided chargers, reimburses electricity consumed and provides affordable, easy to understand charging plans with 24-hour customer support to community residents.

Additionally, eVgo supplies REV-certified marketing materials for property management to promote the availability of the amenity to existing residents, as well as to attract future residents and EV drivers.

NRG Energy Inc., provides access to hundreds of public charging sites across California, Texas and the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

NRG, based in New Jersey, was required by a legal settlement to build a network of electric car chargers throughout California. NRG eVgo has partnerships and agreements in place to have more than 200 fast-charging sites built throughout California by the end of 2016. Currently,

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NRG has a total of 46 fast-charging sites operational, under construction or currently being permitted in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Also advancing charging at apartment communities and workplaces, it has more than 50 sites under contract, representing more than 400 parking spots. Additionally, NRG has completed site assessments and construction drawings for hundreds more sites, which could ultimately result in 2,000 more EV-ready parking spaces.

Zadoretzky says Bozzuto's stations require minimal maintenance "except for occasional wipe-downs to keep the station looking nice, which are completed by our onsite team." He says that all transactions are handled via a secure Web-based system, with usage monitoring available at both the site and Bozzuto corporate level.

Installing the stations is not as simple as finding an outlet with a sufficient power source, particularly when retro-

fitting them to an existing property.

McSherry says Sequoia's decision on the number and location of its stations was based on site assessments performed by the NRG team. The assessments pinpointed the locations that could best utilize existing electrical infrastructure to minimize installation costs. For example, their due diligence means preventing trenching across parking lots, sidewalks, etc., which are problematic.

The cost per device varies based on each specific location's current electrical capabilities that affect the installation cost, McSherry says. "Through our program, we are being provided an investment matching up to \$20,000 per property for these electrical upgrades," McSherry says. "In some locations, there is no cost. In others, there is an average cost of up to several hundred dollars."

She says the electricity used by chargers is metered separately and eVgo reimburses each property for the usage, under its plan.

Raphael Westlake says she knows of some developers who have not installed the stations, "but not because they have purposefully resisted; it ended up being an afterthought and has proven to be much more expensive after the fact."

The Elysian has 196 parking spaces and Linear City chose to place stations to accommodate 10 electric cars in its underground parking area and 10 additional cars on its surface lot. It installed its own stations and ChargePoint is responsible for full maintenance service. Bar-Zemer says ChargePoint monitors the system online and responds immediately if there are any problems.

Bozzuto strategically placed the charging stations at opposite ends of the community to make them more accessible to all of its buildings. One is located just inside of the north entrance of the community and one is in the rear, closest to its two mid-rise buildings. The community has an expansive parking lot with almost 500 parking spaces and 48 private garages. There are also designated prime parking spaces for low-emissions vehicles.

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the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater Houston areas a deal to have unlimited access to the NRG eVgo network for public charging stations for their first year of ownership at no cost.

As of October, customers who lease or purchase a new Nissan LEAF in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston markets will receive one year of complimentary access to NRG eVgo's charging network, including 23 locations in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area and 17 in the greater Houston area, including airports. ■

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