

“Our Community CarShare Sacramento” Provides EVs to Affordable Housing Community

Because cars, motorcycles and small trucks account for 33 percent of greenhouse gases in California, people are switching to cleaner hybrid and electric vehicles.

The state government plans to put 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles on roads by 2025. By 2050, all personal vehicles should be zero-emission.

Thanks to the support of the California Air Resources Board’s Cap and Trade program, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, Zipcar and other partners, Sacramento-based nonprofit Mutual Housing California now recently became the site of an electric car-sharing program for residents of one of their affordable housing communities.

For people with little money who struggle to pay for gas—if they even own a car—sharing could be an answer, especially if the vehicle causes less pollution.

The first 300 program participants receive their CarShare membership for free. Vehicles are available for short trips, up to nine hours per week.

With two Kia Souls and two electric chargers, the residents of south Sacramento’s Mutual Housing at Lemon Hill can use the cars for trips to the grocery store, doctors’ appointments, job interviews and other errands.

The program has three other sites: two Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency locations and the intermodal train station downtown.

“The adoption rate of new, green technologies is much slower for low-income communities,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing’s chief executive officer. “The challenges for them are not only cost and access, but the lack of solar energy and electric car chargers in rental housing and marketing directed to them about new technologies.”

A study from the Transportation Research Board/National Academy of Sciences found that each shared car takes about 15 private cars off the road.

“Zero-emission transportation will play a vital role in improving Sacramento’s air quality,” said Larry Greene, Sacramento Metro AQMD’s executive director. “We can’t afford to make these vehicles available only to those who can afford a new car. This pilot program gives electric vehicle access to a population that otherwise may not be able to benefit from these zero-emission vehicles.”

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Resident members are registering for the program and receiving hands-on orientations to the Zipcar electric vehicle fleet and SMUD connected car charger stations.

Since electric vehicles pollute less than any others on the road, it's a win-win situation for the affordable housing developer's residents. "Mutual Housing can now help our residents become electric-car users through a convenient, on-site sharing program at a time when most low-income communities lack any access to car battery chargers," said Iskow.

Iskow noted that there are no publicly accessible electric car chargers within two miles of Mutual Housing at Lemon Hill. "As a sustainable housing developer and community builder, Mutual Housing is in a unique position to help our Mutual Housing residents become early adopters of green technologies."

Mutual Housing was the first developer in the nation to obtain a Zero Net Energy certification for a rental housing community from the U.S. Department of Energy and the first multifamily developer in Sacramento County to incorporate solar photovoltaic panels in a rental property.

The developer also sponsors a green education and green leadership program for youth and adult residents.

To reduce greenhouse gases, the California Air Resources Board is distributing Cap and Trade funding across the state. The funding can be used by local air districts to create pilot programs such as this in affordable housing communities.

This grant funded eight electric vehicles, which are provided and maintained by ZipCar.

The nonprofit is contributing \$31,400 for charger and parking space maintenance, outreach to residents and orientation to the program.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable housing for the diversity of the region's households.

A member of NeighborWorks America—a congressionally chartered nonprofit organization that supports community development nationwide—Mutual Housing has more than 3,200 residents, nearly half of whom are children.