Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay

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Recommendations for Locating Electric Vehicle Chargers on Private Property in Back Bay

The technology for charging Electric Vehicles (EV) is evolving rapidly. In the interest of facilitating these installations, NABB's Architecture Committee, in conjunction with NABB's Green Committee, has prepared the following recommendations for the Back Bay Residential District.

EV charger installation in the Back Bay must be submitted for approval to the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

Overview of Chargers

The most common chargers are Level 2 (240 volt, which will charge in 4-5 hours). Level 1 (120 volt, which works on household current, are a slow trickle generally used for overnight charging. Level 3 (480 volt or higher) chargers are for EVs built to handle the higher voltage not generally used for residential EV charging, but you may find them in public stations. (Before you use them, make sure your car's battery can take that large a charge. Use of Level 3 Chargers on EVs not rated for the higher voltage is hazardous to the EV's battery pack.)

Charger Installation

Professional consultation and installation is necessary. It is important that whatever system you use, it should have a capacity control mechanism (so the battery is not overcharged) and a circuit breaker in case of damage to the system. EV Charging Systems should be checked at least annually.

EV Chargers may be built with more than one charger cord or more than one outlet. Chargers require a dedicated power line from your household electric panel and should be compatible with your car's battery. You will also have to check the capacity of your home's electrical system, since the charger may require a 50-amp dedicated circuit.

NABB encourages sharing of electric charging stations by multiple owners whenever possible, to reduce the number of installations as well as their cost to the user.

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition prepared an Installation Guide for Massachusetts residents.

Design Guidelines

EV charger installation in the Back Bay Architectural District must be submitted for approval to the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

Chargers may be appropriate on private property in the rear parking area (although not on the 4' public alley sidewalks) or on Back Street, provided that they adhere to the following guidelines:

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- All EV Chargers should be placed so as to be as inconspicuous as possible from the public way. They may not be attached to the original rear facades of buildings.
- They may be attached to an exterior wall or fence, provided that the body of the charger is located on its interior side and all wiring is concealed inside the building or buried in the rear yard or parking area.
- If a freestanding charger is unavoidable, it should be close to the building and concealed from public view as much as possible. All wiring should be inside the building or buried in the rear yard area.
- Cable attachments should be stored in the automobile, not on the charging station. This is not only less visually intrusive, but also better and safer for the cables, which will be protected from weather damage.
- The EV Chargers casing should be of appropriate design and color (black is the most usual) to blend with the historic fabric of the Back Bay.

Related Links

Installation Guide For Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE)
The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition, 2017

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