



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Region 1 Planning Council Helps Rockton, Poplar Grove Earn EV Readiness Designation

ROCKFORD, IL – Rockton and Poplar Grove are the newest communities in northern Illinois to earn a “Charging Smart” electric vehicle readiness designation with support from Region 1 Planning Council (R1). R1 guided both villages through the steps to align local policy to make EV charger installation easier and encourage charging station investment. This service is provided at no cost to local governments and can take as little as a few months to achieve.

“This achievement reflects the Village of Rockton’s forward-thinking approach to transportation alternatives. It is the result of our citizen commissions, boards, and elected officials’ dedication to provide EV information to the community, paired with R1’s skilled guidance,” said Happy Welch, Rockton Village Administrator. “We would like to thank R1 for their guidance in achieving this designation.”

Charging Smart is a program operated by the Illinois Renewable Energy Council (IREC) to help municipalities adopt policies to encourage investment in charging station infrastructure and make installing EV charging stations easier.

“This designation reflects our commitment to preparing Poplar Grove for the transportation needs of the future while creating new opportunities for residents, businesses, and future development,” said Kristi Richardson, Poplar Grove Village President. “We appreciate R1’s continued partnership and dedication to helping communities across our region plan for a changing transportation landscape.”

As an official Charging Smart partner, R1 shows local municipalities how to reach their goals to become EV-investment ready. R1 leveraged the Charging Smart program to help Rockton and Poplar Grove administrators craft EV infrastructure policy, strengthen relationships with electric utility providers, and develop publicly available EV educational materials.

“R1 appreciates the International Renewable Energy Council’s assistance, allowing our staff to provide technical assistance through the Charging Smart program to help Rockton, Poplar Grove, and other Northern Illinois communities prepare for the future of mobility and improve regional transportation infrastructure,” said Michael Dunn, R1 Executive Director.

As EV use grows and sustainability remains a priority, local government support is key to expanding access. R1’s deployment of the Charging Smart program offers a ready-made roadmap to get there.

In addition to pursuing a Charging Smart designation, R1 can help municipalities identify:

- Optimal locations for EV charging stations
- Site-specific infrastructure that supports charging stations
- Improvements to zoning, permitting and other regulations
- Available grants and funding for EV readiness

How to Get Started

R1 is currently accepting new municipalities for the Charging Smart program. Any city, village, or county government is eligible to participate. Contact Hailey Blanchard, R1 Economic Development Planner, at hblanchard@r1planning.org to get started.

ABOUT R1 – [Region 1 Planning Council](#) is a special-purpose, regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, government-to-government collaborative planning for Northern Illinois. The regional planning model provides an efficient means to promoting a well-informed, comprehensive dialogue that holistically addresses regional issues by fulfilling the needs of government entities for long-range planning, securing funding, and analyzing and providing data in support of regional projects and initiatives.

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