



Laurene Weste: City Film Office benefits local economy

Laurene West
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In 2002 the city of Santa Clarita began issuing film permits for location filming within city limits. A decade after assuming this role, filming continues to be a bright spot in Santa Clarita's economy, providing a positive economic impact to local business and putting thousands of residents to work close to home.

Over the last year, the city's Film Office worked with some of television's biggest productions and most-talked about new shows, such as "NCIS," "Switched at Birth," "The Wedding Band," "Jane by Design," "Franklin and Bash" and "Justified" to make filming as easy as possible in our city. These productions not only filmed on location throughout the year at local residences and businesses, but based at local soundstages, they also hired local residents, and sourced materials and services in our city, benefiting our local business community.

All of this business was great for our local economic recovery. The Santa Clarita Film Office issued 372 permits in fiscal year 2012, and facilitated 909 location film days in the city. These numbers represent an 8 percent increase in film permits and a 4 percent increase in film days over last year.

Even more important to our community is the economic impact that resulted from filming activity this past year. In fiscal year 2012, Santa Clarita businesses benefited from an estimated \$21.1 million in economic impact as a result of location filming alone. The last time Santa Clarita businesses enjoyed an economic impact of more than \$21 million for the year was back in fiscal year 2009.

The success of filming within the Santa Clarita cannot be attributed to any one source and I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the City Council to express our appreciation for the many business owners and residents who support productions by opening their doors to filming each year. We consistently receive positive comments from location and production managers who are thankful to work in Santa Clarita — a city they consider to be one of the most, if not the most, film-friendly in Southern California.

Creating a film-friendly city doesn't happen overnight and isn't always easy. Some businesses are able to work around filming, while others close their doors for the day to allow the activity. Some homeowners pack up and stay at a hotel for a few days, while entire streets come together in support to allowing a production to roll cameras for a night, a few days or even for a week. The flexibility of business owners and residents is a huge plus for productions looking to keep their crews and production dollars local.

The City Council continually receives comments from business owners and residents who have told us filming is a bright spot for them economically. Filming helps many business and homeowners supplement a sluggish economy and Santa Clarita's reputation as Hollywood's back lot of choice continues to grow.

As the Disney/ABC Studios at the Ranch project continues to move forward, your City Council will continue to do everything possible to respond to the needs of the community and support positive economic growth for film businesses and those that support the industry. The Disney project promises to add thousands of jobs in our region, which will allow more residents to work close to home in positions that require skilled professionals and offer high wages.

This past March, the City Council approved a three-year extension of the city's Film Incentive Program, which to date has helped us attract 30 productions in Santa Clarita, contributing an estimated \$25.2 million to the local economy. In November, the council approved a new movie ranch overlay zone to streamline the process for filming at local movie ranches, ensuring it is consistent with the procedures for filming within the city. Our goal with permits is and has always been to ensure that the needs of residents, business owners and production companies are all met whenever possible. This policy is another reason Santa Clarita has a strong reputation for being "film-friendly."

If you are interested in listing your business or home for free with the city's Film Office as a potential location for filming, please visit FilmSantaClarita.com or call 661-284-1425. I also welcome you to contact us if you have any thoughts or suggestions about how we can continue to support film production in Santa Clarita while balancing the needs of all parties involved.

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