

Outlook 2015: Filming

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Santa Clarita was on track to break another record for filming in 2014; the fifth consecutive year it has broken film records – which bodes well for 2015 local experts say.

“We just tallied up the film permits and film days in 2014 from January through November and are only three film permits and eight film days behind all of 2013,” said Russell Sypowicz with the city’s film office. “What that translates to is we will break another record for annual film numbers in both film permits and film days in 2014.”

In terms of economic growth, local filming has already pumped an estimated \$30.7 million into the local economy, he said. That number, achieved in 11 months of 2014, already exceeded the impact of \$30.5 million in 2013.

Local filming is insanely busy, particularly for commercials at the end of the year, said Monica Harrison with LA Film Locations, headquartered out of Santa Clarita.

“It’s a lot busier than normal, maybe 20 to 30 percent more,” Harrison said in December.

While much of the ongoing gains can be attributed to local film incentives in Santa Clarita, the diverse backdrops that serve as nearly any setting in the world for location shoots, and the local film studios and movie ranches in the area, Harrison said the city’s commitment to make filming happen makes a difference.

“They’re very helpful; they can push a permit through pretty fast when we’ve been in a pinch. I just need to make a phone call and they’ll get it done,” Harrison said. “They’ll turn it around in 24 to 48 hours. In other cities it can take two weeks.”

Phones are also ringing off the hook at the Rancho Maria and Sable Ranch movie ranches in the area, said owner Derek Hunt. But with the newly enhanced and expanded tax credits program in California, allowing the state to once again compete against runaway productions, those involved in local filming activity predict an even better year in 2015.

“With the expansion of tax credit and recent annexation of three more movie ranches into the city’s Movie Ranch Overlay Zone, we expect 2015 film numbers to continue to rise,” said Jason Crawford, head of the city’s economic development division, which also oversees the film office.

With the changes in the state’s tax credit program, including what kind of project can qualify such as major feature films and allowing for more TV shows to qualify, those changes are expected to help boost local filming in 2015, Sypowicz said.

“TV is our bread and butter due to the number of locally based TV shows that we have,” Sypowicz said. “And we’ve seen a number of people reach out to us to do who are interested in creating even more studio space in Santa Clarita.”

In turn, those stages become anchors to bring in more products, more filming around town, and they hire more local people, Crawford noted. “It’s a circle of life. The more projects we have, the more it adds to the local filming industry,” he said.

The tax credits are probably going to be a big incentive around Los Angeles in general, Hunt theorized. With that in mind, there’s a good chance that the SCV will get a lot of that filming also, he said.

“I get a lot of phone calls, and a lot of people are asking what I have going on (at the movie ranch),” Hunt said. “They are looking to stay in L.A. A lot of people want to be here now that they have this incentive and will make an effort to do that.”

Harrison concurs. Filming activity is only going to be better in 2015, she said. Production companies were just waiting for the incentives to come back, so they could come back home to California.

“Third quarter was up 20 percent overall,” Harrison said of the productions she supports. “Next year’s going to be even higher, closer to 30 percent increase not only in L.A. but in Santa Clarita as well.”

As for 2015, Hunt said only time will tell but he’s betting on a good year. “I’m pretty confident it will be busy here in the coming year.”

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