

# DAILY NEWS Los Angeles

## Disney plans expansion in Santa Clarita

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**FILMING:** High-tech complex at Golden Oak Ranch would create more than 2,800 positions.

For out-of-work stage-hands and aspiring actors, Santa Clarita could soon become the happiest place on Earth.

The Walt Disney Co. and ABC Studios filed plans Wednesday to expand Disney's legendary Golden Oak movie ranch, creating a massive high-tech soundstage and production complex that would bring more than 2,800 new full- and part-time jobs to the booming Santa Clarita Valley.

Plans filed with Los Angeles County call for six soundstages, plus production offices and storage areas for props and costumes, according to a statement from ABC.

"By connecting the sound-stage to an array of opportunities at the movie ranch, we're creating a synergy," said Richard Ballering, executive director of production for ABC. "The proposed plan would allow us to have four established productions and six new ones."

While the estimated cost of the project was not released, officials said the expansion could generate an additional \$1.3 million in annual revenues for Los Angeles County coffers.

If the project is approved, it would be completed by 2013 at the earliest, officials said.

The 890-acre Golden Oak Ranch at the 14 Freeway and Placerita Canyon Road has been owned by Walt Disney Productions since 1959. Its sets have been used for movies, television and commercial productions including "Lassie," "Bonanza," "X-Files" and "Sons of Anarchy."

Ballering said the complex would increase efficiency and help stem the flow of production to venues outside of Southern California.

Production also will continue at the companies' studios in Burbank, he said.

News of the project was met with enthusiasm by those in the industry and within Santa Clarita, especially since production in Los Angeles has been declining for about a dozen years as companies were lured away by other states and countries offering tax incentives.

The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. has estimated that 117,000 jobs are connected to the industry, which generates \$38 billion annually to the region.

"That's pretty cool," said Paul Audley, president of Film LA, which coordinates and processes permits for on-location motion picture, television and commercial production.

"I think it's very good news for the region that Disney is adding space," he said. "We've seen some increase in the productions of TV dramas, which tend to occupy soundstage space. We hope that this is a harbinger that they are beginning to look back at home as a place to do their productions in the future."

'An amazing thing for Santa Clarita'

Santa Clarita leaders, who boast of the community's rise as a film and TV production hub, were thrilled by the Disney announcement.

"This will probably have the biggest single impact of anything I've seen in the Santa Clarita economy since I've been working here for the past eight years," said Jason Crawford, the city marketing and economic development manager who oversees the Santa Clarita Film Office.

"It's huge for us, and at a time when there's been runaway production in other states, it's an amazing thing for Santa Clarita, Los Angeles and California."

Crawford said about 6,000 Santa Clarita Valley residents work in the film industry and have to commute to Los Angeles.

In addition, the surge in production should attract post-production and other entertainment-related businesses, Crawford said.

Santa Clarita is located within the "Thirty Mile Zone" of the largest concentration of filming and studio-related activities in California.

'Different from Los Angeles proper'

Recent movies filmed there include "Zombieland" and the soon-to-be-released "The Men Who Stare at Goats," "Marmaduke" and "Brothers," according to the city's film office.

The area has an advantage of being "different from Los Angeles proper," Crawford said.

"We have a community that is still excited about film production. We have a lot of different looks - we double for locations all around the globe."

The proposed project is a positive sign that the entertainment industry is committed to working and staying within Los Angeles County, said county Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.

"The proposed expansion will be a significant economic boost for the Santa Clarita Valley," he said in a statement. "Although the county must review and analyze Disney's application, it is encouraging that one of the world's largest and most successful entertainment companies is making this commitment to film here in Los Angeles County."

Larry Mankin, president and CEO of the Santa Clarita Valley Chamber of Commerce, said Disney had been developing its plan for 26 months but that he became aware of it only recently.

Mankin said he knows people who will benefit from the decision.

"I have friends ... who are always on the road, traveling to film productions in Boston, Philadelphia, New Mexico," Mankin said. "This announcement keeps a lot of those people here."

Staff Writer Greg Wilcox contributed to this report.

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