



Outlook 2016: Filming in Santa Clarita

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Q&A with Evan Thomason, Economic Development Associate, Santa Clarita Film Office. The interview was conducted in mid-December for the January edition of the SCV Business Journal. The numbers cited below apply only to "location filming" - filming in and around the city of Santa Clarita - and not activity that took place in the studios.

SCVBJ: Measuring January through November of this year, year-over-year how did the city fare with regards to filming?

Evan Thomason: We had a really good year; we already exceed what we did in 2014 which was a record-breaking year.

SCVBJ: Compare the number of film permits issued in that same period during 2015 vs. 2014.

Thomason: Through November of this year, we issued 533 permits vs. 460 in the same time period last year. In all of 2014, however, we issued 502 permits and we're already ahead of that number.

SCVBJ: What about the number of film days then?

Thomason: We're on pace to beat the 2014 numbers, too. We had 1,292 film days in the first 11 months of 2015 vs. 1,256 during the same period in 2014. In all of 2014, there were 1,339 film days. (Editor's note: In the calendar year 2015, there were nearly four film or TV projects per day, for every day of the year. Even more productions took place at local studios and movie ranches.)

SCVBJ: How do you think those numbers will affect the estimated economic impact to Santa Clarita businesses and residents?

Thomason: We don't know if we'll beat last year's numbers, but we're on course so far to be over \$30 million. In 2014 \$32 million flowed out to local businesses and residents who either rented their property for filming or worked in the industry and received a paycheck.

SCVBJ: What would account for the lower number?

Thomason: We had more feature films in 2014. And the economic impact from feature films tends to be higher.

SCVBJ: So if you had a crystal ball, what's the outlook for filming in 2016?

Thomason: If I put my fortune teller hat on I see great things for filming in Santa Clarita in 2016; we're looking for another great year of activity. There's no indication of any downward trends, so we are hoping to maintain the activity. It's great for the local economy.

SCVBJ: Do you think the state's revamped film and TV incentive will help since, for the first time, it will be in effect for the full year in 2016?

Thomason: Yes, not just for us, but for all of California. And certainly Southern California is going to benefit. We've talked about it quite extensively in trade groups – the state film program is breathing new life in terms of film production returning to the state. And with the annexation of the seven movie ranches into our overlay zone, we're breaking new ground in the film office in terms of numbers. The movie ranches saw an increase in filming activity.

SCVBJ: Any trends you see emerging such as the two smaller studios that opened out here in 2015?

Thomason: Studio space, sound stage space is at a premium throughout all of L.A. County and we've certainly seen productions take advantage of Santa Clarita in that regards. There's only so much room for production studios in L.A. and we have seen a few of them move to Santa Clarita in the last year. We're also seeing an uptick with web-based production, as well.