

## **Lights, Camera, ACTION! Featuring the Santa Clarita Film Incentive Program**

***Everybody has a unique story for getting into this field. Why did you get involved in economic development?***

I studied film at CalArts, and was hired by the City of Santa Clarita to start their Film Office, a targeted economic development program. I realized I liked it and was good at it, and could use the same concepts I used growing that program to achieve other economic development goals.

***In your economic development work experience, can you think of a specific economic development project or program that you worked on that stood out as making an impact? Can you tell me a little bit about it and when it started?***

The City of Santa Clarita's Film Incentive Program is something that I'm very proud to have worked on and it still continues to be a benefit to this day. We started the program in conjunction with the California Film & Television Tax Credit Program in 2009 which was a response to both runaway production in California and the crippling recession. We were the first City in Los Angeles County to provide a local Film Incentive Program.



Santa Clarita's Film Incentive Program, while much smaller than the multi-million-dollar state program, focuses on attraction and retention of re-

occurring productions filming in the City. The program refunds permit fees to qualifying productions and is meant to entice and reward 'repeat customers' within City limits. Productions can qualify in a variety of ways including those that: pull four or more film permits in a year, are approved for the California Tax Rebate Program, are locally based in a sound stage or movie ranch or are generating room nights at City hotels.

***A lot of projects/programs have ups and downs. Were there challenges you had to overcome to be successful and rewards working on this project/program?***

To get the Film Incentive Program approved we certainly needed to convey the importance of filming to our City Council, leadership and the community. When the program was approved, we were still feeling the effects of the 2007 recession. We were refocusing on everything we did as a City to help stimulate our local economy, but we definitely needed a strong argument to allocate funds to support the program. The funds were approved, and the program has since been renewed and expanded over the years to the point where we can show a decade of positive economic impact for the effort.

***Can you share any impacts the project/program has had or will have on employment, expansion of local tax base & diversification of the area's economy?***

Since the Santa Clarita Film Incentive Program was created in 2009, Santa Clarita has refunded over \$560,000 to over 126 different production companies. The film days attributed to these productions produced an estimated economic impact of over \$125 million to our community. While we don't have specific statistics on employment generated by the program, our research has told us that we have over 6,000 people who work in the entertainment industry and the California Film Commission can site thousands of jobs that have been generated because of their tax rebate program. Our local Film Incentive Program has not only helped us attract and retain production in Santa Clarita, it serves as a calling card letting the film and television industry know they are welcome in Santa Clarita.



***What advice would you give to other economic development professionals when working on a similar project/program?***



For communities looking to benefit from the positive economic impact that comes with hosting location filming it's important to adopt film friendly practices and policies. Certainly a local Film Incentive Program goes a long way in letting the production world know they are welcome, but there are other ways such as having affordable permits, a streamlined process for permitting and the ability to be flexible. Productions spend billions of dollars in the state of California, employ tens of

thousands of workers and are a clean industry. Being film friendly goes a long way in fostering a healthy local economy.

***Don't forget to tell us your social media usernames and websites so that other members can connect with you if you'd like us to tag, like, etc. you on your story.***

Instagram.com/filmsantaclarita  
FilmSantaClarita.com  
ThinkSantaClarita.com

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