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**YOUR COMMUNITY ON FILM**

**An Introduction to On-Location Shooting**

Welcome to the Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Office's Entertainment Friendly program! The purpose of this program is to help you put your community on the map for entertainment producers looking to bring projects to Georgia.

This document will help introduce the program to you and give you an idea of what to expect when a company wants to shoot in your community including:

- Impact of Production
- Production in Georgia
- The Phone Call
- The Location Scout
- Preproduction
- Filming on Location
- Production
- The Wrap

Keep in mind that our office is always here to support you and answer any questions you may have. After all, it is in all of our best interest to leave visiting producers with good memories of shooting in our state.

## **IMPACT OF PRODUCTION**

Why should you be interested in film and television production? Because it is a temporary, non-polluting industry that offers high paying jobs and spends a good deal of money in the areas where shooting takes place. Think about what a typical shoot might need – hotel rooms for cast and crew, construction supplies for sets, warehouse space, groceries, restaurants, dry cleaners, rental cars. This could be money left in your local economy!

Once a production has wrapped, producers share information with their colleagues about how their experiences were in Georgia. If things go well, more production comes our way, which in turn creates more jobs, more local expenditures and more support businesses opening here.

Also consider the tourism impact this industry can bring. Long after a film or television show has been released, many fans seek out the actual shooting locations. Thanks to DVD, cable television, the Internet and other distribution channels, movies and TV shows have long shelf lives after their initial release, meaning tourists could travel to your area for years to come (check out our Resource Page for a tourism impact study).

While certainly fun and exciting, film and television production is also an intense, expensive and deadline-driven business. The old cliché comparing production to the circus coming to town is not too far from the truth in some cases. Large studio feature films typically bring in a convoy of large trucks and bright lights along with a small army of crew, shooting day or night, sometimes blocking roads or inconveniencing citizens. No matter how prepared the company might be, logistical issues can and do arise.

As helpful as our office tries to be when questions or issues come up, your representatives have the most influence on things running smoothly in your area. After all, you know your community much better than we ever could. By joining this program, you will be telling visiting producers that you support and encourage their business.

## **PRODUCTION IN GEORGIA**

The Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Office is a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). Our mission is to market Georgia as a location for media production, both short-term (such as the shooting of a feature film) and long-term (such as the creation of a local television production company or video game studio). We are one of the oldest film commissions in the world, created in 1973 around the time “Deliverance” was shot in North Georgia. At that time, state representatives could see the economic impact that “Deliverance” had on Northeast Georgia, and saw the value in attracting more production to Georgia.

Since then, our office has helped bring in nearly 600 major film and television projects to the state, generating more than \$4 billion for the state’s economy. This figure does not take into account the thousands of commercials, music videos, still photography shoots and other media projects that we

have also worked with. Our office has even expanded its mission to recruit music and video game production studios.

Why does so much production take place in Georgia? Because the state has a reputation as one of the few locations where production companies can get everything they need, and at a lower cost.

Georgia has a wide variety of landscapes that work as backdrops for just about any movie or TV show. We also have a deep and experienced crew base along with production infrastructure (such as equipment rental companies, film labs, soundstages, etc.) that saves production companies from having to bring everything in from New York City or Los Angeles. Georgia's vast transportation network is also a major plus, with miles of highway and rail connecting our cities, along with Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, with numerous direct flights daily to wherever our clients need to travel.

In recent years, production has exploded in Georgia thanks in large part to tax incentives that were passed to make our state competitive with surrounding states and countries. Everyone now knows the economic benefits that production can bring, so competition is fierce. For productions costing millions of dollars to make, studios frequently compare different areas based on what financial incentives they have to offer. As of this writing, Georgia offers a flat tax credit of up to 30% against a company's Georgia spend, along with a sales and use tax exemption on production-related expenditures.

With such volume also comes a wide variety of projects needing different scenic backdrops. Sometimes Georgia plays for Georgia, other times we are asked to stand in for a myriad of places – Midwestern plains, New York City, Vietnam jungles, even other planets! As a result, production companies are looking throughout the state for different locations. While Atlanta and Savannah have always seen a lot of production, cities and towns as widespread as Albany, Macon, Valdosta, Newnan, Crawfordville, Monroe, Covington, Douglasville, Perry and Columbus have seen major shows shoot in their areas in recent years. Commercials, documentaries and still photography shoots, which are generally more mobile than a major Hollywood feature, frequently travel throughout the state for a specific look.

You probably have an idea of what the most unique shooting locations are in your area. But sometimes it is the locations right under your nose that might be of interest to a visiting producer – an abandoned school or shopping center, a decrepit and spooky-looking house, the old gas station on the side of the road. We have a list of typical location requests on our Resources Page to get you thinking!

Now we will take you through the chain of events that leads to cameras rolling in your area. Although not every project evolves the same way, this is generally what happens:

## **THE PHONE CALL**

The process usually starts when our office receives news of a potential film or television project. These projects are in what is known as the *development* phase—a completed script has been approved by the production company, and now they are looking for potential sites. Sometimes these projects are fully funded and “greenlit,” other times they are still putting funding together but trying to get a head start.

Our location specialists request a script or location breakdown, and then put together a photo package according to the scene requirements. Our office currently uses Reel-Scout, an online database of photos from throughout the state. If you have submitted photos into Reel-Scout from your area, and have tagged them with keywords we are searching for, then your photos will likely be sent in the package (see the Resource Page for more information).

For a still photography shoot or commercial, we are usually asked to send photos based on storyboards or a verbal description. Sometimes our office is not contacted at all, as these types of shoots typically require less assistance from us.

## **THE LOCATION SCOUT**

Once the company has reviewed the photos and feels comfortable that Georgia will work for their show, they will typically send out a *location scout*. The location scout's job is to photograph potential sites depending on what the script calls for. The location scout may be local or from out of state. Occasionally our office's location specialists serve this purpose.

The location scout may or may not contact you for assistance. Location scouts work on a tight deadline, and are normally expected to post photos for company review the same day they shoot them. So if you hear that someone has been in your area, do not worry if you are not contacted – should your community be chosen, you will be hearing from them soon enough!

An additional visit may be called for if the production company reacts favorably to the location scout's photos and wants to see your area in person. This visit could include not only the location scout, but also the *producer, director, location manager, production designer, or unit production manager* (refer to the Resource Page to find out what all these people do). Our office will likely host this scout and drive these people to your area. Much like the initial scout, they will arrive in your area to see the specific locations they have chosen and may or may not need your assistance at that time.

Keep in mind that a location scout in your community does not guarantee that cameras will be rolling soon. Projects are postponed or cancelled for any number of reasons, or the production company chooses another area. Until a commitment is made, you should consider these scouts to be simply research trips and avoid raising local expectations.

## **PREPRODUCTION**

Once the project has selected Georgia, this is when the fun begins!

Now things will move very rapidly – hotel rooms will be booked, production office and warehouse space (if necessary for building sets) will open, and cast and crew will be hired. You will likely receive a phone call from someone needing assistance with some aspect of the shoot. This is why it is helpful not only for you to be willing to help, but to also have other community representatives (such as the local police chief, fire chief, city manager, etc.) ready to respond to any questions the production company might

have. We advise that you prepare these local representatives to receive phone calls from visiting producers and respond as promptly as possible.

You may also want to think about what other resources or “deals” you can offer to the production company. For example, can you help them get a great rate at your best hotel? Or provide low cost office and/or warehouse space? What about free use of city property for shooting locations? It all adds up in the final budget, so anything you can do to help would be greatly appreciated.

Our office frequently sends visiting production companies a copy of the Georgia Film and Video Sourcebook, a local resource guide to crew, vendors and production services. You may wish to look through the Sourcebook for ideas of similar goods and services you might have in your community. For example, maybe you have an antique store that could provide props or a local arts school with available interns, or an office furniture rental business. You can access the online version of the book at <http://www.ozoneonline.tv> (look for the Georgia Film and Video Sourcebook icon on the homepage).

Once news spreads that a production will be arriving in your area, people may begin calling you asking how they can find work on the set, or be an extra, or promote their services to the production company. In most cases, the production company likes to keep their contact information confidential so they are not overwhelmed with phone calls. If you have contacts at the local production office, ask them how they prefer such requests be handled. You can also refer people to our “Help Wanted Hotline,” available on our website or by calling 404-962-4055. There you will find the most recent announcements for cast and crew that we have been asked to post. You are also welcome to refer people to our office for additional information.

## **FILMING ON LOCATION**

While previous visits gave the production company a good enough overview to select your area, now the location manager and scouts will be looking for specific backdrops, securing location agreements and, if necessary, acquiring shooting permits. In general, shooting permits are not required in Georgia for the use of private property unless the shoot impacts public areas like roads, parking lots, town squares and so forth. Certain municipalities and government entities have film permitting procedures, many do not. The local contacts you have gathered should at least be able to answer questions from the production company on your local ordinances and what they must do to get permission to shoot.

While searching for a specific location, especially a house, the location department may leave a letter at a property if the owner is not home and had not been contacted previously. This letter serves to identify the company, state that the property is of interest to their production and to list all contact information in case the owner is interested. Many times they will also leave the number of someone in our office that can vouch for them. But if you happen to receive a call from a property owner asking about this letter, feel free to get in touch with us if you need additional information.

Part of the location manager’s job is to make sure things run smoothly at the shooting sites for both the production company and the property owners. The location manager will explain the details of the shoot to the owner and negotiate a fee for use of the property. While property owners frequently ask

our office how much they should charge, there really is no easy answer as it depends on numerous factors such as number of shoot days, how the property will be used, inconvenience to the homeowners, etc. Each production has a specific location budget which the location manager will be working from.

Through the location manager, the production company will enter into a written agreement with the property owner that spells out the details of the shoot, how the owner will be compensated and liability information (see a sample contract on the Resource Page). Any legitimate production company should be willing and able to provide proof of insurance against property damage and personal injury. Property owners have every right to request this information before any filming takes place.

The production company will also leave letters in the area where filming will take place, letting the neighbors or business owners know the shooting schedule, any streets which may be impacted and a contact number for any questions or concerns. They may also include a “Code of Professional Responsibility” from the parent studio, which outlines to the neighbors the shooting guidelines that the production company must follow – and a contact number at the studio in case they don’t. While not required, it is also advisable for the property owner to reach out to his or her neighbors and let them know what is going on. After all, these neighbors are more than likely not being compensated for the shoot and may be inconvenienced in some way.

## **PRODUCTION**

With locations secure and the company fully moved into your area, cameras will start rolling. As fast-paced and exciting as shooting might appear, it is also a highly coordinated, professional business where potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars a day are at stake. Around the various shooting locations you will likely see a convoy of large trucks, trailers and other support vehicles, both around the set and at *base camp* where the crew parks, grabs supplies, has their meals catered and so forth.

Undoubtedly there will be press interest in what the production company is doing. Should you receive press requests asking to visit the set or speak to someone from the production, your best bet is to refer them to the company’s *publicist*. Major shows have publicists who handle all media inquiries. Sometimes this person is working locally, other times they are in Los Angeles or other areas. If you do not know who this person is, feel free to ask your production office contact or call us.

As coordinated as a film or television shoot is, something can always go wrong and lead to a scheduling conflict. Perhaps the weather has not cooperated, or an actor has fallen ill, or a location has fallen through. Just expect the unexpected, and assist the company as best you can if called upon.

Even if the company has notified everyone in advance about their shoot, there will likely be times where particular business owners or neighbors complain about traffic, noise, bright lights or other issues. We encourage all production companies to notify the affected neighbors well in advance of shooting. But should complaints still come in, encourage the residents to think about the positive economic impact that the shoot is having on the community and the number of Georgians that have been hired. Encourage everyone to be as flexible as possible - and most of all, enjoy the show!

## **THE WRAP**

Once production has wrapped and most of the crew has left your area, a few people will stay behind in the production office to make sure rentals are returned, locations restored and bills paid.

It is in the production company's interest to leave shooting locations in the same or better shape than they found them. But with so much going on during production, damage to property can happen. Any location contract will address the owner's rights should damage occur. Property owners should inform the producer of any damage as soon as possible (usually within 10 days) so he or she can rectify the situation and file insurance claims in a timely manner. Late claims after the production has left town are harder to resolve.

It would be wise to keep a point of contact with the production company after the offices have closed. You never know when an unpaid bill or some other unresolved issue may slip through the cracks. Homeowners or business owners with bad feelings toward the last show may negatively impact the next one you are trying to bring to your community. Offer to be the point person to resolve these local concerns, and encourage affected community members to inform you of their issues promptly so you can help resolve the matter.

*For more information, please contact Craig Dominey, Film Location Specialist at 404-962-4049 [cdominey@georgia.org](mailto:cdominey@georgia.org). Thank you.*