



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** General Purposes Committee **Date:** March 17, 2020  
**From:** Marie Fenwick **File:** 08-4150-09-01/2020-  
 Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services Vol 01  
**Re:** 2019 Richmond Film Office Year in Review

### Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled, "2019 Richmond Film Office Year in Review", dated March 17, 2020, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services, be received for information.

*CM Fenwick*

Marie Fenwick  
 Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services  
 (604-276-4288)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>
Finance Division	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sevenc</i>
Economic Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b>	<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b>
	<i>CF</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>

## Staff Report

### Origin

In 2007, Richmond City Council adopted the Richmond Film Strategy, which resulted in the establishment of a dedicated film office. One of the key mandates of the Richmond Film Office is to provide a “one-stop shop” resource for film productions, as well as provide centralized services to Richmond businesses and residents affected by filming. In 2018, Council adopted Policy 1000–Filming on Location in Richmond which formally acknowledges the economic and social benefits of filming.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the 2019 film activity in the City, as well as to advise of early indicators for 2020.

This report supports Council’s Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #7 A Supported Economic Sector:

*Facilitate diversified economic growth through innovative and sustainable policies, practices and partnerships.*

*7.1 Demonstrate leadership through strategic partnerships, collaborations and exploring innovative and emerging economic practices and technical advancements.*

*7.2 Encourage a strong, diversified economic base while preserving agricultural land and maximizing the use of industrial land.*

*7.3 Attract businesses to locate in Richmond and support employment and training opportunities in Richmond as we grow.*

This report supports Council’s endorsed 2019-2024 Richmond Arts Strategy Objective 3.3:

*Broaden the economic potential and contribution of the arts.*

*3.3.3 Continue to create favorable conditions for the filming industry in Richmond.*

This report supports Council’s endorsed Resilient Economy Strategy Actions 5.6.2.2

*Continue to support film and television work in Richmond.*

### Background

The Richmond Film Office oversees the production of and facilitates filming activities in Richmond. The office processes filming applications, provides permits for filming activity on City-owned properties and assists with location scouting within the City. Staff facilitate all City services required for filming and coordinates invoicing for those services. The most common services include policing, staff liaisons, location rentals and use of city streets.

A core initiative of the Richmond Film Office is to liaise with film industry and community stakeholders on film-related matters in order to promote the growth of Richmond’s film sector. The key objective of these efforts is to attract production crews to shoot on location in Richmond

on both public and private property. In recent years, the film office has also worked to help attract and facilitate the opening of purpose built film studios in Richmond.

### **Analysis**

2019 was an eventful year for filming activity in Richmond with a significant increase in filming days, revenue, and numbers of permits issued by the Film Office from previous years.

**Table 1: Richmond Film Activity 2013-2019**

Year	Filming Days	
	Shoot Days	Prep/Wrap/ Hold Days
2019	238	256
2018	211	209
2017	205	253
2016	276	291
2015	189	380
2014	133	65
2013	147	52

Within Richmond, there are many non-City owned locations used for filming including Steveston Harbour Authority, Metro Vancouver, BCIT Aerospace Technology Campus, and the Gulf of Georgia Cannery. These locations and other private property owners are not obligated to report revenue or filming days to the City. As a courtesy, film production companies generally alert the Richmond Film Office regarding filming to ensure compliance with bylaws, to avoid any traffic or other conflicts in the area and so that the filming can be included in City records. In 2019, there were 179 days of filming managed by staff on City-owned property, 16 days of filming on Metro Vancouver property and 43 days of filming activity at Steveston Harbour Authority for a grand total of 238 shoot days.

This increase in activity can be attributed in part to the opening of a second large scale purpose-built-film studio in Richmond. In addition to the existing 119,000 sq. ft. studio in the East Richmond area, the new studio is located in the South Arm area and features three sound stages and over 106,000 sq. ft. of production space.

Since their openings, both of the studios in Richmond have been fully leased. As productions generally make efforts to keep location filming nearby the studio, the benefits of active studios

extend to increased filming in the community. The studios directly employ an average of 350 mostly local residents per production.

The productions filmed in Richmond for 2019 included:

- **Motion Picture:** Flora & Ulysses, and A Babysitter's Guide to Monster Hunting;
- **Television Movies:** Upside Down Magic, A Christmas Bride, and Love at First Flight;
- **Television Documentaries:** Flood Risks in BC's Lower Mainland, and Mind Set Go!;
- **TV:** Twilight Zone, Home Before Dark Season 1, Terror Season 2, A Million Little Things Season 1, The Hypnotist's Love Story, Man in the High Castle Season 4, Stumptown, Arrow Season 7, The Magicians Season 5, Project Blue Book Season 2, Nancy Drew Season 1, The Good Doctor Season 3, Siren Season 2, and Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist Season 1;
- **Commercials:** Pi Financial, Dominos, Nintendo, In This Together, Foodsaver, and Dreamcatcher; and
- **Commercial Photoshoots:** LinkedIn and Aritzia.

### **2019 Filming Revenue**

In 2019, \$492,342.45 in service and location charges were processed through the Richmond Film Office. This is an increase of 106% from 2018. The breakdown of revenue was as follows:

- \$170,959.00 in location rental fees;
- \$79,243.83 in street use and parking fees;
- \$100,815.95 in various cost recoveries (e.g., staff time cost recovery, fire hydrant permits, special effects permits);
- \$85,786.00 to the Richmond RCMP Detachment; and
- \$55,537.67 for administration fees.

As per Provincial guidelines, the City charges on a cost recovery basis for the majority of services, however location rentals are billed at market rate.

Film revenue collected by the City in 2019 is higher than 2018 for a variety of reasons such as:

- Productions that have leased local purpose-built-film studio spaces, prefer to film in locations within Richmond; and
- Productions such as "Terror" Season 2 and "Home Before Dark" Season 1, used the City's heritage sites as reoccurring filming locations for the duration of their seasons.

Along with ongoing filming activity, staff also focussed on strategic initiatives in 2019, which are paying off in the first quarter of 2020. Examples of strategic initiatives included:

- Staff worked closely with the Copperwood Studio group to facilitate the processes required to gain final occupancy of the building for use as a film studio.

- Staff are active in the Community Affairs Committee, a group of municipal, provincial, union and studio executives who meet regularly to address issues regarding the film industry.
- Staff participate in regular outreach such as guest instruction at Location Management courses at BCIT, Vancouver Film School and via the Directors Guild of Canada.

### **Early Indicators for 2020**

The first two months of 2020 saw a consistent flow of filming activity, including 25 film days and 37 preparation/wrap up days. Popular locations such as Steveston were at capacity, with the Film Office accepting less than half of the film applications requested for the area. In order to prevent “film fatigue” in popular film locations, it is important to consider film applications carefully.

With productions temporarily on hiatus in the Lower Mainland due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the film industry has seen an unexpected decline in activity. A number of productions are currently lined up to continue filming once Provincial, Federal, and International guidelines regarding COVID-19 are lifted. It is unknown at this time what, if any, long term economic impacts the film sector will face as a result of the COVID-19 downturn. Staff will monitor the situation and continue to liaise closely with the industry

### **Economic Benefits of Filming**

Each year the Canadian Motion Picture Association releases economic impact studies for at least one production filmed in BC. In 2019, a report on the impact of the Metro Vancouver filmed production “Sonic the Hedgehog” was released. Highlights from that report include:

- \$1.6 million on hotels and accommodations;
- \$490,000.00 on catering, baked goods, and food items;
- \$350,000.00 on hardware and lumber supplies;
- \$300,000.00 on wardrobe purchases;
- 1,450 local jobs created; and
- \$22 million spent on local labour.

While “Sonic the Hedgehog” did not film in Richmond, portions of the local crew employed on the show are Richmond residents. The report is a good example of the impact one local production can have on the local economy.

According to Creative BC data, BC continues to be North America’s third largest motion picture hub, with film production expenditures over \$3.2 billion in 2018–2019. The industry also supports 71,140 full-time jobs in the Province, an increase of 10,270 jobs from 2017–2018. In Richmond, beyond the revenue generated by the City and public properties, filming continues to contribute significant direct and indirect revenue to local businesses and land owners.

Metro Vancouver has 2.5 million sq. ft. of studio space and in 2019, nearly all of it was rented out to film productions. Productions are actively seeking warehouse spaces and converting them into temporary and permanent studios for filming. As of 2019, the City has three permanent studios, and one temporary studio.

The film sector is a major employer in the City with an estimated over \$18 million in wages earned by residents employed in 2018. The 2019 wage totals are yet to be released, however film production unions are anticipating that 2019 wage totals will be higher as a result of increased filming activity in Metro Vancouver.

### **Emerging Initiatives**

As filming activity continues to increase in Richmond, staff are working closely with stakeholders at Creative BC, film industry representatives, and neighbouring municipalities on a variety of initiatives including:

#### Community Engagement:

On May 8, 2019 staff partnered with Creative BC, the Directors Guild of Canada, and the Location Managers Guild International to host a Film Open House. The event titled “Big Screen, Big Impact” took place at the Steveston Community Centre. This event was open to residents and merchants throughout Richmond, with a primary focus on Steveston Village as this is the area which continues to be the most popular location for filming in Richmond. Attendees were able to have one on one conversations with key stakeholders in the film industry regarding various topics such as: *how to host a film production, levels of compensation for filming activity, and the economic and social benefits of filming in your neighbourhood*. As a result of the event, the film office has made additional contacts and implemented a number of changes based on the feedback of attendees.

#### Sustainable Practices:

In an effort to advance Richmond’s climate leadership, the film office has been working closely with Creative BC’s Reel Green team and municipal counterparts towards improved environmentally sustainable practices in the industry. The Reel Green initiative strives to “empower and inspire productions to innovate and implement sustainable practices, and industry stakeholders to collectively support this effort”. Staff continue to participate in Reel Green stakeholder meetings, training sessions, and are currently working with other municipalities on long term sustainable industry initiatives.

### **Financial Impact**

None.

### **Conclusion**

There was a significant increase in filming activity in Richmond in 2019. This growth in activity can be attributed to the recent establishment of permanent film studios in the City. As the film

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industry continues to create permanent spaces in Richmond, filming activity in the City will continue to steadily increase. With this projected increase in activity, Staff are committed to working with stakeholders to establish and execute strategic initiatives that enable this growth, while continuously improving on existing services. The film sector is an important economic industry in the City. The financial impact through employment and fees for locations is significant and beneficial to the City and its residents.



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