



REPORT

Chief Administrative Officer

TO: Administration and Special Projects Committee

FROM: Kristi Honey, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 4, 2024

REPORT: CAO 12/24 **FILE NO.**

SUBJECT: Recruiting Film Production to the Township of Uxbridge

BACKGROUND:

The strategic objectives of the Township include identifying opportunities to diversify funding sources and growing the economy. Attracting on-location film projects to the Township is one option to maximize opportunities to realize our competitive advantage. Attracting productions to the Township would provide opportunities for both public and private facility and location rentals.

There are many parallels between the film and tourism industries and the many attractions that draw tourists are also appealing to the film industry. Establishing the Township of Uxbridge as a preferred film location can bring economic development benefits, as illustrated by the success of "*Schitt's Creek*." This critically acclaimed show, filmed partially in Goodwood, demonstrated the opportunity for economic benefit from hosting film productions. When film projects choose the Township of Uxbridge, they generate employment opportunities ranging from an opportunity to be an 'extra', to on-set crew roles, and hiring in hospitality and transport services. The presence of production teams stimulates local businesses, increasing revenue for local shops and restaurants. Moreover, the visibility gained once the show is aired can enhance tourism, drawing fans interested in filming locations, and fueling further economic activity. This approach not only attracts infrastructure investment but also fosters a sense of community pride, leading to a more vibrant local economy and diverse growth opportunities.

DISCUSSION:

Township staff have met with film producers to learn more about what production companies seek when choosing locations. Staff obtained feedback on how to draw filming production to our local community. The Township also works with a film/tv specialist through the Economic Development & Tourism teams at Region of Durham.

Based on these discussions, staff propose the following actions to build our marketing tools and capabilities, and to solicit interest in the Township as a preferred film location. These actions would be taken in consultation with the BIA, North Durham Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Committee, Museum Advisory Committee, Library board, Tourism Committee and Invest Durham and internally with by-law, building officials, clerks, public works, communications, facilities management and tourism staff. These recommendations include working with contracted agents, building marketing and resource materials, and dedicating some staff time to this project. Currently staff in public works and facilities management respond to requests for filming on a best effort basis, in addition to their regular duties.

1. A Filming Location Agent with sales expertise to showcase locations, facilities and properties is recommended by the film industry. Accessibility and responsiveness, including evenings, weekends, and after hours is of highest priority to secure permits. Through a job competition process led by the CAO, staff recommend the hiring of a consultant as a Filming Location Agent for the Township of Uxbridge on a pilot basis at a rate of 8% commission on the facility and/or location booking for Township owned properties. This is the standard industry rate. Staff will ensure the consultant is trained and onboarded and covered under our agreements and insurance and provided keys/access codes to all identified Township facilities for the sole purpose of showing potential film scouts and personnel filming locations.
 - a. Facilities staff will assist during business hours to showcase locations, answer questions, and as needed to support the film location agent.
 - b. Facility management will still respond to requests and assist with permitting.
 - c. the Roads department and Communications will collaborate to ensure resident communications, notifications, road closures, etc. are still being managed in a timely fashion.
2. Develop a *Filming Location Package* with pictures, detailed descriptions of filming locations, and associated infrastructure data such as power/load, generator(s), internet/wifi, and parking.
3. Collaborate more directly with the TV/Film Office at the Region of Durham.
4. Improve self-serve access to information on the website, including permit fees, policies, and procedures with robust profile descriptions highlighting key differentiators and rich photography and videography.
5. Arrange a tour for film scouts and location managers to promote film tourism and raise awareness of our key locations and sites.
6. Update listings on partner sites and work to develop direct relationships with key contacts to leverage opportunities for Uxbridge e.g. <https://www.netflixinyourneighbourhood.ca/>, <https://destinationfilmguide.com/>

Further, to support the additional administrative workload, Township staff recommend a six-month pilot funding of additional staff time (up to 10 hours per week) [\$9,000] to support the marketing and asset development as well as the administration of film permits, resident communications and notifications, road closures and facility booking funded through operational surplus from increased facility booking rentals.

Staff propose the creation of a *Film Tourism Trail* to highlight the many [productions](#) filmed locally. Staff will work with the Tourism Committee, Central Counties Tourism, and Durham Tourism to guide the visitor experience.

The Township of Uxbridge has numerous facilities and locations that are unique and film friendly. The community has enjoyed the benefit of success of Schitt's Creek, and the use of the Foster Memorial in film, among many other locations. With many sites available across the municipality, this is another way to further offer our facilities for rent to drive non-tax levy revenue and offer additional economic development and tourism benefits to our community.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This report supports the strategic initiatives:

- Identify opportunities to diversify funding sources (e.g., non-levy revenue, grants, partnerships),
- Engage business community,
- Align committees with Township strategic priorities,
- Collaborate with Regional and local area municipalities on economic development,
- Explore strategic use of municipal property and assets to promote economic success,
- Identify tourism-related opportunities to establish Uxbridge as a 'Tourism Destination',
- Continue to strengthen existing partnerships with government at all levels, as well as business/industry, community organizations and volunteers,
- Build new alliances with industry and business.

RECOMMENDATION

That Report CAO 12/24 be received for information.

That General Administration & Special Projects Committee support staff's time investment in seeking to recruit film production in the Township of Uxbridge by preparing a package for film personnel and improving filming location information on the Township website.

That Township staff create a "Film Locations Trail" tourism experience.

That as a pilot for six months, fund additional staff time (up to 10 hours per week) [\$9,000] to support the administration of film permits, resident communications and notifications, road closures, and facility booking administration funded through operational surplus created from facility booking rentals.

That through a job competition process led by the CAO, recruit a consultant as a Filming Location Agent for the Township of Uxbridge on a pilot basis at a rate of 8% commission on the facility and/or location booking of Township-owned properties.

That the CAO ensure the consultant is onboarded and covered under our agreements and insurance and provided keys/access codes to all identified Township facilities for the sole purpose of showing potential film scouts and personnel filming locations.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kristi Honey, Chief Administrative Officer