

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: April 11, 2022
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Eric Stepura, Director, Recreation & Culture
SUBJECT: Film Attraction Strategy 2022

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council adopt the “Film Attraction Strategy 2022”..

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few years, City staff have researched ways to build White Rock’s film friendly reputation to generate more revenue for the local economy from British Columbia’s booming film industry. Staff have implemented several changes to improve the City’s ability to attract and quickly process film inquiries. The attached Film Attraction Strategy 2022 (Appendix A) prioritizes actions grounded in best practice research, with input from local film industry experts and interested community members.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2020-585 Nov 23, 2020	Governance & Legislative Committee Recommended Council to endorse the Filming Policy dated November 9, 2020 - CARRIED

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In 2019, the City of White Rock’s Arts and Culture Advisory Committee requested a Film Working Group be convened. The group included the City’s Special Events/Film Coordinator, the Manager of Cultural Services, members of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee, local business representatives, and local film professionals.

During their time together, the Film Working Group discussed how to create opportunities for growth in local film activity by examining the history and current state of filming activity, the factors needed for success and gaps to be addressed.

This group was instrumental in helping develop the City of White Rock’s Filming Policy Number 711, adopted on November 23, 2020.

At its last meeting, the Film Working Group invited film location experts from CreativeBC to provide their ideas for the creation of a strategic plan to increase filming in White Rock.

As laid out in detail in the attached Film Attraction Strategy 2022 (“Strategy”), the group reviewed the common factors that lead to filming success in municipal jurisdictions and compared these to White Rock’s current situation.

Challenges with Filming in White Rock

The larger BC municipalities have more locations to offer including film studios. Many have been hosting productions for years. This means they are more established in terms of location resources and have a longstanding trusted working relationship with the film industry. Many of these municipalities already have a “one-stop shop” film application process and a wide variety of locations for productions to choose from. There is comfort in familiarity and established rapport with these locations, and process fluidity, so it’s easy for Film Location Managers to utilize the same locations.

Motion Picture Industry representatives were surveyed for their opinion on the specific challenges in White Rock. They identified the following factors:

- Lack of awareness of White Rock City boundaries vs. Surrey City boundaries.
- Lack of suitable and available locations.
- Lack of available locations near each other (clusters of properties).
- Lack of awareness of the types of locations available (residential, commercial, civic).
- Lack of awareness of City amenities such as electrical tie-ins.
- No ability to see a White Rock location inventory in one place for easy scouting and prepping.
- Lack of summer availability, especially along the waterfront.
- The City is “in the zone” and therefore productions don’t receive tax credit incentives. Langley and Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge are “outside the zone” and do receive tax incentives for productions. There are pros and cons to being “in the zone”. Productions with lower budgets, such as TV movies, may prefer being outside. One day of filming for regular studio shows may prefer not to travel so far.
- Production company offices want the costs to be simple to approve and quick approvals from the City.

Opportunities to Encourage Productions to Come to White Rock

Notwithstanding the challenges noted above, the industry has stated that they are curious about new locations to “freshen things up”. While White Rock does provide some new locations for the motion picture industry, the City does not have a long list of potential locations that are registered in the CreativeBC library. Below is a breakdown of the property mix registered as of February 2022:

- Commercial Properties: Twenty-Two (22) locations
- Residential Properties: Twenty-Four (24) locations
- Civic Owned Locations: Thirty-three (33) locations

Recommendations

With input from the Film Working Group, City Council approved the White Rock Film Policy to aid in streamlining the film permitting process. The main priority since then has been to establish a “one-stop-shop” service to the Motion Picture Industry. In late 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, further input was sought from the Film Working Group adding industry

representatives from CreativeBC. At this meeting, the Film Working Group identified considerations and needs to improve the existing service delivery including improving the tools and systems the City Film office uses to meet best practice:

- A facility scheduling system whereby the film coordinator can ensure that projects don't conflict when scouts ask about availability.
- An efficient and cooperative process for quick turnaround on approvals from other municipal departments.
- Accounting systems integrated better with the filming permit process.
- Clarity and decision making-authority on filming at desirable locations that are high profile (e.g., Pier, Promenade).
- Portable power generators are the norm, but an advantage exists if the City can increase the number and capacity of electrical power tie-in options.
- Limited inventory of film locations on Creative BC website.
- Limited marketing of White Rock locations on the City's website and CreativeBC website.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2022 Financial Plan anticipates film office revenue of \$10,000. The direct costs to implement the strategic activities such as marketing and networking plus manage the film office efficiently are anticipated to be about \$4,000 using existing in-house staff resources. Considering the activity across the region, this is a very conservative estimate of revenue and expenses but achievable considering our current level of activity. No additional staff resources are required, and all direct costs supporting film productions are recovered, including film set supervision, RCMP, and Fire Department as needed. Existing staff in the Recreation & Cultural Services Department maintain the portfolio of filming coordination as part of their regular duties.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Film Office will continue to work closely with the Communications Department as well as productions to communicate to the public.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

The importance of quick and responsive interdepartmental cooperation, and a "we can" attitude, is crucial to ensure that the film industry representatives who film here are pleased with the service they receive, want to return, and will help spread the word and build the City's reputation as a film friendly community.

The following municipal departments had input into the Filming Policy and will continue to be engaged as the Film Attraction Strategy rolls out:

- Recreation and Culture
- White Rock RCMP
- Parking
- Finance
- By-Laws

- Engineering and Municipal Operations
- White Rock Fire Rescue
- Planning and Development (Economic Development)

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

The use of green technology on film sets will be strongly encouraged. Filming is considered a green industry and as such, is widely supported by most BC municipalities and the Province of BC.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

An increase in on-location filming aligns with Council's Strategic priority of Economic Development, which is to grow a sustainable, livable, and prosperous community, including making purposeful efforts to foster an environment that supports business, creates employment, and encourages improved living standards.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

The following options are available for Council's consideration:

- Direct staff to give on-location filming less focus.

CONCLUSION

While White Rock is not currently a destination of choice for the motion picture industry, staff are working diligently to change that. To build the City's reputation as film friendly and showcase White Rock as a desirable location it will require a focused and strategic effort. The best approach is to work collaboratively with other departments and the impacted residents and/or businesses in an efficient and timely manner to optimize our potential as a filming destination.

The desired outcomes from the successful implementation of the Strategy include:

- Productions are touring/considering White Rock more often, in person and virtually.
- White Rock has more location inventory listed on the CreativeBC database.
- White Rock's filming webpage is comprehensive to assist productions, residents, and businesses with relevant film-related content.
- The City's Film Coordinator has an increased database of contacts and relationships within the industry.
- The City has the efficient systems and tools to increase activity while ensuring decisions are quick and film friendly.
- Tactics are informed by and align with Council's strategic priorities and approved strategic plans, including the Creative City by the Sea Cultural Strategic Plan.

As the City continues to make investments in communications and outreach, including building a deeper locations inventory, the effort will be rewarded with an increase in film inquiries, completed commercial film, television, and streaming productions, and increased film business revenue for local businesses and the City.

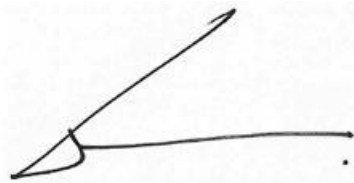
Respectfully submitted,

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Eric Stepura
Director, Recreation & Culture

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendation of this corporate report.

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Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer