

Date: October 15, 2021	Originator's files:
To: Chair and Members of General Committee	
From: Jodi Robillos, Acting Commissioner of Community Services	Meeting date: November 17, 2021

Subject

Revised Filming on City of Mississauga Property Policy

Recommendation

That the revised Corporate Policy and Procedure - Filming on City of Mississauga Property (06-03-02), attached as Appendix 1 to the Corporate Report entitled "Revised Filming on City of Mississauga Property Policy" dated October 15, 2021 from the Acting Commissioner of Community Services be approved.

Executive Summary

- The City's current Filming on City of Mississauga Property Policy was last reviewed in 2016 and needs to be updated to bring it into alignment with industry standards.
- This much needed policy update is included as a priority in the City's Economic Recovery Plan - Creative Industries plan (2020) as well as Culture's Master Plan (2019) and Creative Industry Strategy (2016).
- One of the greatest barriers to filming in Mississauga is the required threshold percentage of approval for filming in residential areas; the City's approval requirements are the highest in Ontario.
- Staff also recommends adopting COVID-related process changes that have proven to be more effective, are used by the majority of Film Offices in the province and ensure safe filming.

Background

In fall 2016, Council approved Culture's Creative Industries Strategy. One of the recommendations in this strategy targeted sector-specific measures for film and TV "to align policies and processes with the Toronto Film Office and other municipalities including residential approvals." Culture's Master Plan, approved in 2019, further reiterated the potential to grow this creative industry by focusing on the removal of barriers, as well as promotion of studio development.

In early 2019, a Steering Committee and Core Working Team were formed with staff from divisions having the greatest impact and interaction with day-to-day film office operations (namely Traffic Management, Works Operations and Maintenance, Corporate Innovation and Performance - Corporate Policy, Recreation and Parks Operations). This project team facilitated the change required to processes and policy. A Project Charter was developed that identified two phases of this project:

- **Phase One** – develop a list of barriers and recommended solutions to minimize or remove barriers based on client engagement and feedback.
- **Phase Two** – develop recommendations to update the policy and operational processes to remove barriers.

This project was also endorsed by the City's Economic Recovery Task Force and approved by Council as a priority in the **City's Economic Recovery Plan - Creative Industries**.

Present Status

The City's current Film Policy (06-03-02) is creating barriers for film production and does not align with industry standard processes in the areas of:

- Approval of residents (percentages)
- Process for obtaining resident approvals
- Exception required for Sunday activity
- Winter Maintenance and Operations (i.e. Snow Removal and Parking Restrictions)

See Appendix 2 - Policy comparison chart and rationale for details.

Comments

Film production clients said one of the greatest barriers to filming in Mississauga is the required threshold percentage of approval for filming in residential areas. Mississauga's approval requirements are the highest in Ontario.

The new Film Policy recommends closer alignment to industry standards. Staff recommends the approval percentage drop from 80 per cent to 66 per cent; this would bring the process in line with current operational standards in Transportation & Works; staff recommends adopting the same approval/objection parking petition process to ensure consistency

In addition, staff is recommending adopting COVID-related process changes and efficiencies that are currently working well and are used by the majority of Film Offices in the province to ensure safe filming. Specifically, this new process records objections rather than approvals; it requires less face-to-face contact and leans the process for both the client and the Film Office staff. See Appendix 3 - Have Your Say – Sample Objection Letter.

To address possible concerns in residential neighborhoods where there is increased volume and sensitivities to filming, staff will continue to work with Members of Council on a case-by-case basis.

Strategic Plan

Removing barriers to film and television production by updating this policy to better align it to industry standards falls under the Prosper pillar: “Attract innovative business – to be a dynamic, urban environment that is the preferred location for innovative, creative and knowledge-based businesses and emerging industries.” Culture’s 2019 Master Plan reinforces goals to attract and retain talent to foster innovative businesses while reiterating the need to “collaborate with business and other City departments to achieve these goals.”

Engagement and Consultation

Extensive benchmarking, engagement and collaboration was undertaken with municipal film offices as well as internal and external industry stakeholders to inform the policy changes as follows:

- In 2018, 14 municipalities were reviewed as part of the benchmarking exercise (12 Ontario municipalities, Vancouver and Calgary); 28 film clients were surveyed confidentially to identify ‘pain points’ and challenges with local filming. Based on this feedback, staff developed a list of ‘pain points’ and challenges that required review.
- In 2019, dialogue and working meetings with internal stakeholders, from staff in affected Divisions and Departments, assisted in creating workable solutions to improve processes.
- All relevant and associated City by-laws were reviewed to ensure appropriate changes were incorporated and aligned (namely Noise Control By-law 360-79).

Financial Impact

In 2019, the City's film revenue reached a record setting high of \$727,000. Despite the pandemic, revenue targets for 2021 are expected to exceed these targets and continue with upward trends. Staff anticipates the recommended policy changes will make it easier for production companies to film in Mississauga and result in increased filming revenues to the City.

Conclusion

Extensive benchmarking, engagement and collaboration was undertaken with municipal film offices as well as internal and external industry stakeholders to inform the recommended policy changes. With the opening of an eighth and ninth studio in Mississauga this year, as well as proposed developments in discussion, the policy changes will remove barriers to location filming, align to provincial industry standards, improve customer service and ensure Mississauga remains competitive in this sector.

Attachments

- Appendix 1: Draft Filming on City of Mississauga Property policy revision
- Appendix 2: Policy comparison chart and rationale
- Appendix 3: Have Your Say – Sample Objection Letter



Jodi Robillos, Acting Commissioner of Community Services

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