



## **Filming Administrative Procedures – City of Wilmington**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for choosing to film your production here in Wilmington! Our beautiful and historic City has welcomed filmmakers since 1983, with hundreds of features, mini-series, episodic series, movies of the week, music videos, and commercials shot within our city's limits. Our residential, business, and historic districts, and our parks, streets, and sidewalks are at your disposal nearly year-round, with few exceptions.

In 1993, guidelines for filming inside Wilmington's city limits were drawn up with the participation of film industry representatives, downtown merchants, City officials and the City's Film Services Office, and the Wilmington Regional Film Commission. In 1999, these guidelines were updated to reflect the growth of the Film Industry and its impact on the growth of our Downtown Business Districts including N. Fourth Street and Castle Street, and the concerns of residential neighborhoods. The City's Film Services Office, a governmental agency not connected with the Wilmington Regional Film Commission, consists of a City Film Liaison who interfaces with City Departments that provide needed production services, and is entrusted with upholding and interpreting these administrative procedures in the issuance of filming permits within Wilmington's city limits. Our decisions reflect an attempt to balance the needs of filmmakers with those of businesses, residents, and the public interest, and to arrive at solutions that are favorable to all.

We hope that your filming experience in Wilmington is a positive one, and that you'll be back again soon.

Revised March 2023

**City of Wilmington Film Administrative Procedures**

**I. Permit Required When Filming Inside City Limits:**

A permit application is required for any filming activity taking place within Wilmington’s City limits, whether on public or private property, excluding Screen Gems Studio. For filming entirely contained on private property this is merely a formality, but notification using the City’s approved permit application form is nonetheless required.

Prior to the application process, a pre-production meeting is required between the City Film Liaison and the Location Manager. The Production Manager, the Wilmington Regional Film Commission, and the Wilmington Police Department may also be included in this meeting. A complete listing of all anticipated locations with tentative dates is requested at this time, as the City Film Liaison may know of possible conflicts with City services, local events and festivals, or other filming activities of which the location manager and Wilmington Regional Film Commission may not be aware. The City Film Liaison will enter these dates and locations on the City’s official Production Calendar, to ensure that your dates and locations are held for you, as all locations within the city are treated on a first notified, first served basis. An insurance certificate will also be requested at this time. All productions are required to maintain public liability insurance policies for filming on location within the City. The following policy amounts are required:

General Liability Insurance	\$1,000,000	Automobile
Liability	\$1,000,000	
Worker’s Comp and Employer’s Liability	\$1,000,000	

An application must be submitted on the City’s standard form and presented to the City Film Liaison for review a minimum of three working days before the filming activity takes place. Earlier application (3 - 5 business days for non-downtown, and a minimum of 5 business days for downtown shots) is recommended and may be required, as all permits are issued on a first come-first served basis, and time may be needed to work out any difficulties, city services, or lettering associated with the planned activities. Exceptions may be granted due to weather constraints or other emergencies. Notification of affected residents and/or businesses should take place following the City’s review of the application, and no less than 3 business days prior to the planned activity. One application per location per day is requested; multiple locations listed on the same application, or illegible applications will not be accepted. Incomplete applications will also not be accepted.

A minimum of three blocks separation will be maintained between any two locations, including base camp and crew parking, occurring at the same date and time.

No more than two filming permits will be issued within any neighborhood or business district for any given time or date. Exceptions may be made for low impact filming.

The Production Company shall limit the activities at each location to those outlined in the permit, within the time frame specified in the permit. Failure of the Production Company to comply with the administrative procedures and conditions set forth for each permit or the use of any location not specified in the permit shall give the City Film Services Office grounds to revoke the permit or take other restrictive actions as necessary.

Productions are not authorized to directly arrange towing/moving of vehicles. Vehicles may only be towed at the discretion of the Wilmington Police Department. Production shall make all attempts to locate the owner and request they move their vehicle.

## **II. Notification of Affected Businesses and Residents**

The Production Company is responsible for notifying all businesses and residents affected by the filming activity. Notification shall take place following the City's review of the application, no less than three business days prior to the planned activity for residential filming, and no less than five business days for downtown filming. Earlier notification, including sign-off sheets, may be required in places where planned activities may have a significant impact on normal activities of the area. (Example - activities affecting parking or traffic in the downtown business district, or base camps in residential neighborhoods.) Exceptions may be made for low impact filming. The area to be covered by notification may vary depending on the impact of the proposed activity but will be a minimum of one to two blocks in each direction of the activity, including parking areas for equipment and base camps, if necessary.

*The City Film Services Office reserves the right to deny, or revoke permits where insufficient time has been allowed for proper notification, or when the notification process has been improperly applied.*

## **III. Traffic Control and Street Closure**

Approval must be obtained a minimum of 3 - 5 business days prior to any film activity which would disrupt the normal flow of traffic. Traffic control, if needed, must be handled by off-duty police officers (City of Wilmington, New Hanover County Sheriff's) and/or NCDOT approved contractors hired by the production company. Police officers shall be utilized for traffic control along major corridors and in high crime areas. The City retains the right to determine the number of officers and/or NCDOT approved contractors needed. Intermittent holding of traffic shall not exceed three-minute intervals except when specifically approved by permit.

No holding of traffic is permitted during morning and/or evening "rush" hours on streets which experience congestion during these times, or on streets affected by school traffic during their opening and closing hours. Each case will be evaluated individually by the Film Services Office. In general, "rush" times are defined as follows:

Morning:	7:30 am – 9:00 am
Lunch:	12:00 noon - 1:30 pm (dependent upon location)

Evening: 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Elementary Schools: 7:30 am - 8:30 am, 2:15 pm – 3:00 pm

Middle/High Schools: 7:30 am - 8:30 am, 3:15 pm – 4:00 pm

Interruption of traffic on State maintained streets requires additional approval from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

Street closures during business hours are strongly discouraged, especially in the downtown business districts. Requests for street closures or diverting of traffic should be made well in advance to allow for planning of alternate routes and proper signage. Production companies who wish to detour traffic inside the City's limits must submit a plan in writing ten working days in advance to the City Film Office and is subject to approval by the Wilmington Police Department, the City's Traffic Engineering Division, and the NCDOT (if necessary).

#### **IV. Special Effects, Explosives, and Similar Devices**

No film activity, which involves the use of explosives, pyrotechnics, fire, smoke making machines or other special effects of this kind, may be undertaken unless specifically approved by permit from the Wilmington Fire Department.

#### **V. Removal of Vegetation**

Removal or alteration of vegetation in the public right of way or on City owned lands is prohibited unless specifically approved by permit.

#### **VI. Residential Areas**

The city has certain expectations regarding the presence of Film Companies in our residential neighborhoods. Film Companies should always remember that they are guests whose continued presence in these neighborhoods relies solely on the goodwill of the affected residents, and act accordingly.

Filming in residential neighborhoods may be defined as either low impact or high impact. In general, low impact residential filming is defined as any filming activity which has a minimal impact on the activities of the neighborhood in question, has a minimal impact on traffic and pedestrian flow and parking, and takes place between the hours of 6:00 am to 11:00 pm.

High impact filming activities may be defined as those which involve extenuating circumstances including, but not limited to, extended hours, displacement of more than 50% of residential on-street parking in neighborhoods where on-street parking is customary and essential to residents, special effects, period shots, extensive set dressing, extensive nighttime lighting, loud noises, gunshots, street closures, and larger than average base camps and/or base camps or larger than average working trucks

parked on residential streets. This determination will be made by the City Film Services Office in consultation with the location manager on a case-by-case basis.

Low impact filming in residential neighborhoods may happen without restriction between the hours of 6:00 am to 11:00 pm, including the arrival and departure of base camps and equipment trucks. Affected residents within a one-block radius minimum (including equipment trucks and base camp) must be notified by letter no less than three working days in advance. Notification shall include a copy of the Application for Filming Permit accompanied by a cover letter from the production company and should include information concerning the location and duration of the filming activity in question, as well as specifics regarding lights, noise, traffic, and parking, where applicable, and contact phone numbers. Maps and other pertinent information may be included as well. Signatures are not required for low impact notification.

Residents shall have a three-day call-in period in which to ask any questions or express concerns or objections, which will be addressed by the City Film Office in consultation with the location manager and the Wilmington Regional Film Commission, and at the end of the waiting period, the permit shall be issued. If the permit differs substantially from the original application, the location manager shall distribute new copies of the permit to the affected residents, otherwise, no further notification is required. In case of inclement weather or emergency situations, exceptions to this time frame may be considered.

High impact filming notification shall follow the same procedure and include the same information, but proof of notification in the form of signatures must be obtained from affected residents. In addition, to extend filming beyond the hours of 6:00 am and 11:00 pm, resident's approval must be obtained as follows:

51% to extend by one hour  
66% to extend by two hours  
90% to extend all night

The City Film Services Office shall be advised by the Location Manager of any homes where residents are unreachable. Exceptions to this rule may be made in the case of residents who are not available.

A wider radius of notification may also be required if the nighttime shot involves loud noises, special effects, or more extensive lighting than usual.

Additional administrative procedures for residential areas are as follows:

- A. All equipment or support vehicles not in immediate use shall be parked so as not to cause any interference to pedestrians or vehicular traffic and shall utilize no more than 50% of on-street parking in blocks where it is necessary and customary for residents to depend on on-street parking. Exceptions may be made for period scenes but will require the cooperation of the affected residents.

- B. Production vehicles must not block fire hydrants, driveways, or other access ramps unless authorized by the City and/or property owner. Ten feet of clearance should be left on either side of affected driveways, unless otherwise authorized.
- C. Production vehicles must be parked in such a way as to not impede safe lines of vision at intersections and be in accordance with all City ordinances regarding on street parking.
- D. Lighting for filming, both during the day and at night, should be oriented away from neighboring residences wherever possible, and should not interfere with the safe movement of traffic.
- E. Production companies are responsible for vacating locations used with a minimum amount of noise and disruption at the end of each shooting day. Exceptions may be made for “period” shots or shots that are more than one day in duration.
- F. Production companies blocking or holding traffic on streets scheduled for trash/recycling pickup must allow trucks to access those areas for normal pickup.
- G. Residents may not charge production companies for the use of public rights of way in front of their homes, nor prohibit their use without justifiable cause.
- H. Production companies are responsible for returning any public rights of way used for filming, base camp, or equipment purposes to their original condition in a timely manner, and for repairing damage to foliage, grass, or public property.
- I. Wherever possible, base camps and dressing room trailers shall be parked away from neighboring residences, and/or take steps to control noise from generators, slamming doors, engines, etc., in the early morning before 7 A.M. and after 10 P.M.
- J. Base Camps and equipment trucks moving into residential areas shall not do so before 6:00 am or after 11:00 pm without prior written approval from the City Film Services Office. (See also page 5, under “High Impact Filming.”)
- K. Any filming activity involving holding, delaying, or re-routing of traffic in residential areas must be accompanied by at least one police officer or NCDOT approved contractor.
- L. The City reserves the right to require the presence of a police officer at any filming activity taking place at public parks or utilizing public property and/or rights of way for base camps.
- M. No parking of equipment of any kind in alleys, including generators, shall be utilized without written permission from the Wilmington Fire Department and the City Film Services Office, and the written consent of affected residents.
- N. Productions are not authorized to directly arrange towing/moving of vehicles. Vehicles may only be towed at the discretion of the Wilmington Police Department. Production shall make all attempts to locate the owner and request they move their vehicle. Failure to follow this process may result in the current permit being revoked and/or future denial of permit requests.

## **VII. Downtown Business Districts**

The Downtown Business Districts welcome filming but have special business needs in reference to vehicular and pedestrian traffic and parking, particularly during special shopping seasons and during sales.

To facilitate a positive relationship between downtown businesses and the film industry, special administrative procedures have been established for filming in this area. Exceptions may be granted in special situations.

#### A. Downtown Business Districts Defined

There are two distinct business districts in Wilmington's Downtown area. They are the Central Business District, which includes the North Fourth Street area, and the Castle Street Business District. They are defined as follows:

1. Central Business District: Between Nixon and Chestnut Streets, it is bounded by the river on the west and between 4th and 5th Streets on the east. Between Chestnut and Market Streets, it is bounded by the river on the west, and 4th St. on the east. Between Market and Dock Streets, it is bounded by the river on the west and Third Street on the East. Between Dock and Orange Streets, it is bounded by the river on the West and Second Street on the east. Between Orange and Ann Streets, it is bounded by the river on the west and Front St. on the East. Between Ann and Nun Streets, it consists of the businesses along both sides of Water Street inside Chandler's Wharf.
2. Castle Street Business District: The Castle Street corridor from the river to Wrightsville Avenue is bounded by Dawson Street on the south and Nun Street on the north.

Where residential areas exist within these boundaries, the same rules that apply to residential filming must be followed. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.

#### B. Low Impact Film Activities

Notification for filming in Downtown Wilmington is required seven days a week. Film activities that take place outside of regular business hours and/or have a minimal impact on parking and vehicular and pedestrian traffic can be accommodated in the Downtown Business Districts without a significant effect on normal business activities.

In general, low impact film activities are defined as those which:

Take place outside of regular business hours, (Since business hours for bars and restaurants are different from those of service and retail establishments, this determination will be made on a case-by-case basis), and/or

Have a minimal impact on parking, vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow, and public access to businesses that are open, and/or

Comply with all the following:

1. Allow uninterrupted flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
2. Utilize no more than 2 on-street parking spaces in any linear block containing businesses or resident's dependent upon on-street parking.
3. Utilize no more than fifty percent of the on-street parking in any linear block containing businesses not dependent upon on-street parking.
4. Utilize no on-street parking where there are no marked on-street parking spaces.
5. Produce minimal noise between the hours of 11:00 pm to 6:00 am (or 2 am and 6 am near bars and nightclubs) due to the increased number of residences; residents affected should receive the same consideration and notification as people in residential neighborhoods for nighttime filming.
6. Utilize no more than 50% of the available sidewalk for placement of equipment and provide a clear path around or through such equipment.
7. Utilize no parking in alleys without prior approval by the abutting businesses and residences and the Fire Department.
8. Provide parking for cast, crew, extras, and other non-essential vehicles in off-street lots, as well as alternate parking for those displaced from those lots when the spaces have been previously rented.
9. Provide a private holding area for extras.
10. Provide catering and craft services off the public street or sidewalk; and
11. Conduct prep and wrap activities in accordance with the above.

The low impact determination will be made by the City Film Liaison on a case-by-case basis.

C. Permitting and Notification Procedure for Filming in the Downtown Business Districts

1. A completed Application for Film Permit shall be submitted to the City Film Services Office for review as far in advance as possible. Incomplete applications will not be considered or accepted. The City Film Liaison shall notify the Location Manager as soon as possible when there are conflicts or concerns regarding the application. Generally, the City Film Liaison will issue an official Permit Application on City letterhead for distribution 5 - 7 business days before the proposed filming date. (Earlier notification may be required where filming activities will have a significant effect on the block(s) in question.) A cover letter from the production company, maps, etc., may be distributed along with the official Application, but the official Application is the minimum requirement.
2. The production company shall distribute copies of the application to all businesses and residents within a full block in each direction of the planned activity (minimum, more may be required where traffic flow and parking are heavily impacted), usually no less than 5 business days prior to the planned activity. The production company is responsible for seeing that business tenants and residents on upper floors receive the same notification and consideration as street-level tenants. The production company shall have each recipient initial for receipt of the application on the City's approved sign-off form and shall submit the

original sign-off form to the City Film Services Office. Incomplete sign-off sheets will not be accepted by the City Film Services Office and may be grounds for denying permits.

3. Businesses shall have 1 - 2 business days in which to notify the City of any concerns or objections in reference to the proposed film activities.
4. The City Film Liaison shall attempt to resolve concerns or objections reported in consultation with the business and production company.
5. If the permit is altered significantly from the original application, the Production Company shall notify all businesses and residents of the finalized plans in writing, including a copy of the permit.
6. In case of inclement weather or emergency situations, exceptions to these time frames may be considered.

#### D. Restrictions

1. Because the holiday shopping season is crucial to the survival of downtown businesses, the City of Wilmington discourages high impact filming in the downtown business district during the period between Thanksgiving Day and December 31st.
2. A minimum of three blocks separation must be maintained between any two filming locations (including base camp, parking, etc.) occurring at the same date.
3. No more than two film permits shall be issued within any downtown business district or residential neighborhood for any given date. Exceptions may be made for low impact filming.
4. The City reserves the right to restrict high impact filming in streets, neighborhoods, parks, or districts which have experienced undue stress due to seasonal festivals and events, heavy filming, natural disasters, etc. The City will notify all known location managers and production companies when such restrictions are necessary. For this reason, production companies are urged to check in with the City Film Services Office before location scouting begins.
5. In the event of natural or civil disasters, the City reserves the right to cancel all outstanding film permits on both public and private properties within City limits. Should evacuation of a street, neighborhood, or district be deemed necessary by fire, police, or other emergency authorities, all outstanding permits for that area are null and void. Permits will be regranted as soon as possible after the State of Emergency proclamation has been lifted, following a safety evaluation conducted by City, Production Company, and Utility Company representatives.
6. The City reserves the right to change, modify, update, or waive provisions of these administrative procedures where necessary for the public's safety and convenience.
7. The City reserves the rights to cancel filming permits and/or take further restrictive actions where necessary to assure adherence to these administrative procedures.

#### E. Notification of Permitted Parking – Downtown Business District

When a film permit includes on-street public parking, the production company is responsible for placing no-parking signs for all spaces associated with their permit and follow the procedures below:

1. Signage must be placed 48 hours in advance of approved permit times and include the following:
  - a. No Parking Due to Filming
  - b. Dates and times of filming
  - c. Towing Enforced
  - d. If vehicle towed, call WPD non-emergency # (910) 343-3600
2. If spaces are metered, signs should be attached to the meters with a rubber band and placed so that they do not interfere with the normal operation of the meter.
3. If the requested spaces do not have parking meters, no-parking signs should be placed on sandwich board type stands beside the permitted parking spots.
4. Productions should ensure all signage is visible and is removed once filming has been completed.

F. Towing of Vehicles Within Permitted Parking Areas – Downtown Business District

If notification of permitted public parking has been properly placed as outlined in the “Notification of Permitted Parking” section above, vehicles in permitted spaces may be towed. Productions should follow the steps below if this situation arises:

1. Production shall make attempts to locate the owner and request they move their vehicle.
2. If the owner of the vehicle cannot be located, production should then:
  - a. Contact the Wilmington Police Department (WPD) non-emergency dispatch at (910) 343-3600 and request towing assistance.
  - b. Productions are not authorized to directly arrange towing/moving of vehicles.
  - c. Vehicles will only be towed at the discretion of the WPD.

No action may be taken if signage was not posted as outlined in the “Notification of Permitted Parking” section. Failure to follow this process may result in the current permit being revoked and/or future denial of permit requests.

### **VIII. Fees**

There are charges associated with the use of certain City services or facilities. Where set fees are established, production companies are charged the same fee as other for-profit ventures for the service or facility used. Services for which a fee has not been established will be charged at the discretion of the City Film Services Office based on time, equipment, and materials. All fees are subject to change.

Prior to the granting of any filming permits, the City will require Production companies to assure their financial responsibility through one of two methods:

- A performance/security bond in the amount of \$5000.00 listing the City of Wilmington as a payee, or
- A \$5000.00 cash deposit shall be made to the City.

Upon completion of filming, the bond or cash deposit will be returned after the Production Company has paid all outstanding bills owed to the City. Exceptions to this rule may be made based upon the size, duration, and expected impact of the production.

**Additional fees are as follows and current rates will apply:**

**Police**

Police Officers  
Patrol Vehicles

**Fire**

Fire Inspector (Special Inspection, Pre-production)  
Fire Truck  
Fire Personnel (off duty)

**Public Property**

City building, facility and park fees will vary according to use and activity. Fees may not be charged for actual use of buildings and/or public spaces during actual filming; however, attendant fees and additional costs may be incurred to accommodate filming activities including prep/wrap work. Requests that may result in a loss of revenue may also be charged accordingly. Usage of facilities when productions are not filming such as casting calls, rehearsals, etc. will be charged in accordance with the City fee schedule.

**Filming at Skyline Center (both inside and/or outside)**

There is limited opportunity for filming at the Skyline Center. If a production is considering this as a potential film location, please contact the City Film Liaison @ [mary.toffolon@wilmingtonnc.gov](mailto:mary.toffolon@wilmingtonnc.gov) to receive more information as well as a link to a questionnaire that must be filled out in addition to the regular film permit application.

The Skyline Center is a 12-story building occupied by both City of Wilmington government offices and private tenants on every floor. To ensure building security, protect tenant operations, and maintain public access, this policy outlines the process, limitations, and requirements for filming at the Skyline Center.

**Filming Locations**

- Filming is only permitted on the exterior of the building or on the 1st floor.

- Interior filming on floors 2–12 is not permitted.

#### Filming Hours

Filming must not interfere with or restrict public, employee, or tenant access to the building.

Approved filming must take place after normal business hours. Filming may be conducted Monday through Friday between 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Weekend filming may be allowed during daytime hours, subject to prior approval.

Public meetings, events and building construction may limit ability to film.

#### Approval Process and Requirements

- All filming requests must be submitted in advance for review and approval by City management.
- Requests must include a project overview, detailed filming schedule, locations requesting and any proposed temporary modifications (e.g., signage, furniture).
- If approved, parking arrangements must be coordinated with the City's Parking Office at 910-342-2786.
- All rental fees for use of Skyline Center spaces (such as conference rooms, back lobby, and outdoor areas) must be paid in advance according to the current fee schedule.

#### Security Requirements

- The production company is responsible for hiring additional security through the City's designated vendor, Sunstates Security, LLC, for the entirety of the filming.
- The number of security personnel required will be determined by the City, based on the scope and nature of the filming.
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#### Permits and Regulations

- A City issued film permit is required for all filming activities.
- Filming must comply with all regulations and conditions specified in the approved permit.
- The production company must provide proof of proper insurance coverage, naming the City of Wilmington as an additional insured party.

*Failure to adhere to this policy may result in the immediate suspension of filming and possible denial of future filming requests.*

#### **VIII. Holiday light removal/replacement requests for the purpose of filming**

- All requests to take down the City's holiday pole decorations located on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Front Street or Castle Street should be included in the film permit application. Details regarding pole locations and days/times of the removal/replacement request should be included.

- Production must hire a professional holiday light installer that is insured and approved by the City of Wilmington.
- Any damage to the decorations during the process of removal and replacement will be the responsibility of the production.
- The City reserves the right to disapprove of holiday decoration removal if doing so interferes with holiday events in the area.
- Timeline requirements:
  - o Lights should be down for as short a period as possible.
    - If filming begins later than 10am on the day of the requested removal, lights must come down that morning.
    - If filming begins before 10am on the day of the requested removal, they may come down the day before.
    - If the production has completed filming by 3pm on the day of the requested replacement, the lights should be put back up that day.
    - If filming is completed after 3pm on the day of the requested replacement, they may put them back up the following day.

The financial agreement shall be between the production company and the City approved lighting company without any involvement from the City.

Current City approved contractors are as follows:

- Outdoor Lighting Perspectives – Chance McIntyre and Tre Harris (co-owners)

910-356-8203 – [Wilmington@outdoorlights.com](mailto:Wilmington@outdoorlights.com)

All City approved contractors must supply a Certification of Insurance naming the City of Wilmington as a Certificate Holder.

If there are any questions regarding these administrative procedures, please contact the City Film Liaison at (910) 473-7727.