

Is Dallas the New Hollywood?

By Sophie Bergmann



Cast members of *Landman* walk around Knox-Henderson while filming Season 2 (Photo from

[The Dallas Morning News](#))

On a quiet morning in Knox Henderson, a camera crew stands on the sidewalk, while a director calls out blocking directions over the sound of traffic. It's no Hollywood set, but it looks and operates as one. Production companies are deciding to come to Dallas and use this city as their backdrop, bringing lights, cameras and jobs with them. What once felt like a rare sight in North Texas is now becoming a common occurrence. The state's growing film incentives have turned ordinary street corners into blockbuster filming locations.

As Texas increases its financial incentives for film and television production, the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex is becoming one of the most competitive regional hubs for film in

the South, causing producers who once worked in national film hubs such as Los Angeles and New York to relocate to Dallas.

Driving this shift is a multimillion-dollar boost to the state's Moving Image Industry Incentive Program, according to the [Dallas Film Commission](#). This change is also paired with a growing network of local crews, soundstages and college graduates who studied film at North Texas universities.

After the state boosted its film incentives this year, the DFW metroplex has become more attractive to budget-conscious producers.

“There is a new version of the Texas Film Commission’s [Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program](#) (TMIIP) that is run by their office,” said Katie Schuck, a Film Commissioner for the Dallas Film Commission. “The biggest difference is the percentage of rebate that can be captured by a production in the program, now up to 31% based on their eligible Texas spend. There is also a new menu of 1%-2.5% stackable uplifts available for different qualifying criteria such as filming in a rural area, filming on a Texas heritage site, or hiring 5% veterans.”

Incentives are not new in the film world, but the timing of Texas’s new rebate system has timed itself well with rising production costs in national film hubs.

“Places like Los Angeles and Atlanta are kind of bleeding when it comes to production. It's getting more and more expensive as productions move there and the rebates are becoming harder to get,” said Kesleigh Dougherty, an adjunct professor in the film department at SMU. “You're having to spend more money to make films, and the return isn't as great. Now, the incentives in Texas are going to create a huge return.”

This means that now more than ever, producers have reasons to film in Texas that go beyond aesthetic appeal, such as the mix of cities and rural landscapes outside the cities. They can receive benefits just for hiring specific residents and filming in specific spots.

However, Dallas itself is a great filming location, with so much architectural diversity and talent, and filmmakers are picking up on it.

“I truly love filming in Dallas, whether I am working on a project for fun or for work,” said Joshua Berry-Sauseda, an SMU alumni who has chosen to stay in Dallas to continue his film career. “There is such a wide range of talent in this city, and Dallas is just a great backdrop for so many of my projects.”

With the new incentives for film and production in Dallas, college students and alumni are more likely to want to stay in Dallas rather than try to make it big elsewhere.

“I had definitely considered moving to Los Angeles to continue my career, because historically that is where the most opportunities are,” Berry-Sauseda said. “But Dallas just feels more authentic when it comes to the industry.”

Students also benefit from this. As more productions arrive, internship opportunities and on-set training are becoming more accessible for future filmmakers.

“With these stronger incentives, students are going to be coming out of universities and film programs, and won’t have to leave the state to find work anymore,” Dougherty said. “I think it’s going to build this really cool pipeline of getting your education, doing apprenticeships and internships, developing relationships in the state with filmmakers, which will lead to a long-term career without having to leave and go to places like Georgia and California, where a lot of the productions are happening right now.”

Even with increased funding, Dallas still competes with states offering even larger rebates that also have specific aesthetic appeals.

“The new TMIIP program, which offers 5%-25% rebates, is now in a competitive percentage range with other states,” said Schuck. “Georgia has a 30% Transferrable Tax Credit, New York has 30%-50% Refundable Tax Credit, and California has a 20%-30% Tax Credit.”

See Story Map Below.



However, with the recent success of the Paramount+ series “Landman,” produced by Taylor Sheridan, after all filming was done in Texas, production companies are starting to catch on.

“Landman was a huge success, and a great example of the projects that can be produced in Texas, even in Dallas,” Berry-Sauseda said. “The scenes taking place at TCU, and even in Knox were awesome to see as a local, and I think that many producers are starting to see the benefits that Texas offers in this industry.”

However, consistency is everything when it comes to these rebates. They must be in place for a while before Texas sees any real, major changes.

“People want to know if Texas will follow through, will the studios get built, and will Taylor Sheridan actually bring his productions here?” Dougherty said. “We’ve watched incentives fail in other states and the industry collapses. At this point, incentives aren’t optional; they’re a requirement. Without consistency, Texas gets crossed off the list.”

However, there is truly no reason for Texas to get rid of these rebate programs, at least not anytime soon. These incentives bring all kinds of business that expand past just the film industry.

“If Texas is film-friendly, then it is also pro-business,” said Schmuck. “We have seen an increase in interest since the program’s revision and expect more shows to land as a result.”

And according to Schmuck, Dallas is bringing in the most opportunities.

“Dallas is one of the most exciting places to be right now,” said Schmuck. “With a newly revamped film incentive, growing industry investment, and a supportive creative community, there's never been a better time to tell your story here.”

So, despite the lack of palm trees and yellow cabs, Texas brings charm in the form of cowboy hats and boots, as well as incentives and opportunities that are currently one-of-a-kind.