

Downsview Stories

FILM & TV PRODUCTION IN DOWNSVIEW

It's called "Hollywood North" for a reason.

Film and TV production is a massive industry in Toronto, employing about 35,000 people, and annually generating over \$2.5 billion in direct economic activity. About 1500 film, TV commercials and music video productions are shot in the city every year. Toronto ranks behind only New York and Los Angeles as an exporter of TV programming in North America.

And while much of that production currently takes place on the huge sound stages located near the city's waterfront, Downsview has long been a major player in Toronto film and TV production. Hundreds of TV shows, movies, music videos and commercials have been shot at Downsview Park



Left: the massive "green screen" at 40 Carl Hall Road in spring 2020; Right: the wall being transformed into the ALLSTYLES mural in summer 2020

Studios. Inside the windowless walls of the massive former military supply depot at 40 Carl Hall Road, are eight studio spaces totalling nearly a quarter of a million square feet. Outside, on the building's southwest wall, was once one of the largest "green screens" in North America – currently undergoing a transformation as the ALLSTYLE mural curated by Danilo Deluxo.

Among the movies filmed in these studios were Chicago in 2002, which won six Oscars, and Cinderella Man in 2005, which was nominated for three. Both movies starred Renee Zellweger. The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, worked there when she was shooting the TV series Suits.



Downsview film production stills: Russell Crowe in Cinderella Man, Queen Latifah in Chicago & Meghan Markle in Suits

Tenants have included ABC, NBC, CBS, Netflix, Apple TV, Disney, and FX. And while most workers at Downsview Park Studio are employed by the production companies filming there, the studio also had 343 full time employees in 2019, the last time employment data was collected. And now, Downsview’s role is about to get a whole lot bigger.

Call it “Hollywood North North.”

In June 2021, Hackman Capital Partners, a Los Angeles-based firm that focuses on buying, renovating, and re-imaging studios, vintage commercial and industrial properties with more than \$6.8 billion in holdings, signed a Memorandum of Understanding for long-term ground lease of a portion of the land south of the BMO training ground. There, a film and television production studio facility will be built representing a \$200 million (CAD) investment.



Conceptual Rendering of the Film Studios, as shared at the Northcrest First District Townhall, recording available at: <https://northcresttogether.ca/projects/district-1>

The plan envisions more than one million square feet of new production and support space, with sound stages ranging from 20,000 to 80,000 square feet. There will also be a large outdoor backlot filming space. The developers say the new studios will exceed the city's Green Standard sustainability design requirements.

Studio construction is expected to begin as early as 2023 and will be completed in two phases over approximately four years.



Conceptual Rendering of the Film Studio district, as shared at the Northcrest First District Townhall, recording available at: <https://northcresttogether.ca/projects/district-1>

When it's fully up and running, the new facility will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in new production volume, and thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

The additional space will be welcomed by an industry that is currently seeing productions leave Toronto for other cities because of a shortage of facilities and workers.

Film production in Downsview has a storied past. It now has an even brighter future.

Explore more Downsview Stories and share your own at id8downsview.ca/stories.