

2006 IOWA FILM OFFICE CAMERA-READY COMMUNITY GUIDE

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www.traveliowa.com

In recent years, Hollywood has come to Iowa and invested over \$40 million dollars. Those monies were spent on hundreds of television commercials and motion picture productions lensed all across Iowa. As this industry continues to grow, more and more communities in Iowa are experiencing film production. The changes in the economy alone have prompted Hollywood to re-examine the way it makes movies. Runaway production is no longer simply to Canada but now ends up in Europe, New Zealand, Australia and wherever a dollar can be stretched to its fullest. Technology has also become more accessible and less expensive. Digital cameras are quite easy for anyone to use and the quality is very high; student and amateur film makers will increasingly be seen with this fantastic equipment as professionals continue to explore the limits.

The Iowa Film Office has put together this guideline to help you get your community "Camera Ready," and to help us be better prepared to promote your community to the domestic and international film markets. The following is a basic set of guidelines but your creativity beyond these items is helpful in capturing the full, true essence of your hometown.

1. Conduct an inventory list of locations in your community. This list should include:

- General area types;

- A brief description of each area and its buildings;

- Approximate year each area and its buildings were built.

For example, does your community have a main street business district or a town square? Do you have a drive-in theater? If so, is it operational or closed? Is it in town or outside of town? Do you have a courthouse? When was it built? What architectural style is it? What does the courtroom look like? Do you have a 1950s diner? What does it look like?

Attached is a list of the most Frequently Requested Locations (Appendix A) in Iowa. Check to see if your community has any of these locations. Of course, other unique locations are always of interest to filmmakers.

1. *Continued*

Major concerns to production companies when picking locations include:

- Sufficient electrical power,
- Easy access to the location,
- Ample parking,
- Lack of surrounding noise (no construction, demolition, freeway, etc.),
- Elevators for upper floor access,
- Equipment supplied by owner (like glasses, trays, dishes if in a bar),
- Adequate restrooms,
- Flexibility of the owner in making changes to the premises.

2. Check with the Film Office (515-242-4726, or email: filmiowa@ided.state.ia.us) to see what photographs I have in my files from your community. The odds are we have some pictures, but they may be out of date. I will ask you to identify which photographs are out-dated and need to be replaced. I can show you examples of how the photographs are shot and assembled into packages to be sent to clients.

3. Photograph the locations in your community. Send or e-mail the photos to the film office but keep any negatives. To help you take pictures, I have attached a Guide to Location Shooting 2004 (Appendix B) that will help you take the best pictures possible. Please pay attention to the suggestions in the Guide – they make your community much more attractive to producers and directors. It is also very important to provide a narrative description of the location, such as:

- Your name,
- Contact information, (yours or the location owner's)
- Which direction it faces,
- How far out of town,
- When was it built,
- Etc.

(See the Location Information sheet at the end of the Guide to Location Shooting 2004.) We also need to know if the location is in use or not, if it would be a problem to displace the occupants for short periods of filming, and any other relevant data affecting the use of the location.

An alternative to taking regular 35mm pictures is to photograph your community using a digital camera. The same photographic principals apply.

4. Include a map of your community with the photographed areas marked on the map. Complete the attached Community Production Preparedness Questionnaire (Appendix C) on your community. That will help us better define your unique community to our clients. Try a mapping service or GIS on the web.
5. Establish a contact team in your community. This group should know the community well, have an interest in film making and appreciate the needs of the film and video production industry. This team should consult with Tom Wheeler, 515.242.4726, filmiowa@ided.state.ia.us.
6. Explore additional educational opportunities. The Donna Reed Festival for the Performing Arts (www.donnareed.org) and the Iowa Motion Picture Association (www.impa.tv) provide workshops relating to the film & TV industry in a variety of areas. Any knowledge you can gain about how the film industry works will aid your ability to work with the industry.
7. Additional steps you can take as a community to help market yourself.
 - Provide a video presentation (stock footage only) of your community -- 1/2" VHS format that can be visual only (no audio required). The same principals of still photography apply to video – good lighting, nice day, spring or summer, and pan (moving the camera from one side to the other) slowly. Also, don't forget to get close-ups of details. Use of a tri-pod is recommended.
 - Provide a marketing packet which would include maps of the community and surrounding areas, phone book of the community, and any historical data of the community and its surrounding areas.
 - Provide a historical preservation plan for period buildings.

Once a production company is interested in bringing their project to your community, there are certain pieces of information you should be prepared to discuss with the production staff. These are very important and should not be overlooked.

The Film Office will take the lead in determining that the following has been completed but you need to be aware of the need for these items.

Please note: The Film Office is not always aware of production in your community before they arrive. Upon first contact with the producer or representative from the production staff, ask if they have in fact talked with the Film Office. If not, please call me immediately with a production contact name and number.

1. **Production Insurance** – It is very important that the production company carry the appropriate amount of production insurance to cover any loss or damage to community property, the property of businesses and individuals, or any personal injury. Generally, you should ask for a Certificate of Insurance, adding your community’s name (or specific business or building) as “Additional Insured.” The policy should be for at least \$1million for each occurrence of General Liability, \$1 million for Automobile Liability and \$1 million of Excess Liability. Policies vary, but this can be used as a general guideline.
2. **Location Release Form** – The production company will have you sign a location release giving them permission to photograph the location and use it in their production. The form usually includes: 1. the location fee (if any), 2. scheduled hours of production (including early morning starts or late night shooting that may disrupt a neighborhood), and 3. any special requirements the production may need (i.e., changing signage, repainting, adding awnings, etc.). It is the responsibility of the production company to return the location to its original condition, unless you request otherwise.
3. **Schedule of Production** – Obtain a detailed schedule of when the production company intends to use specific locations. When will they start preparing the location (painting, bringing in furniture, etc.), how many days of shooting, how long to wrap out of the location, etc. Be aware that production problems occur (like change of weather) and schedules get changed – be flexible and allow for additional days or complete shifts in time periods.
4. **Vehicles** – How many vehicles do they plan to bring in? How big are they? Where do they plan to park them? Some production companies bring in large vehicles like semi trucks to carry their equipment and generators. If these vehicles end up on the street, will it interfere with local traffic, and do you need to provide police officers to help control traffic? Generally, a production company will rent additional empty space to park all their vehicles, but make sure you have a complete understanding of how to deal with this issue.

5. **Street Closings** – Ask if the production company will request to close (or partially close) any streets for filming (this includes country highways). Generally, the production company wants to control the vehicles traveling on a street if they're filming on the street. If so, it will effect traffic in your community and require police officers. A minimum of two officers, with patrol cars, is usually required to close a street or highway. In addition, it is the production company's responsibility to pay for these officers and to provide them with walkie-talkies to communicate with the Assistant Director.
6. **Additional Information** - Ask if the location can continue business as normal while filming is going on (for example, in a grocery store), or must the location be closed to the public?
 - How many people are showing up from the production company (crew, extras, cast, etc.)?
 - Will they need surrounding businesses to keep things quiet, or even vacate the area?
 - Will they need Porta-Potties brought in?
 - Will they need additional space to hold extras or feed meals to the crew?
7. **Screen Credit** – Specify screen credit given to your community (or business, or individual). Tell them how you would like it to appear on the screen. (i.e., "Thanks to the people of _____, Iowa" or "Filmed on location in _____, Iowa," etc.)

It's helpful to think of a production company coming to your town much like a small, temporary manufacturer. They roll in with lots of workers, raw materials and equipment, to set up shop, do their work, then leave abruptly. The impact on a community can be very disruptive if you are not ready for the process.

But, it's not all negative. Production companies bring excitement, activity, lots of dollars, jobs, and often an incentive to fix up a street, business or home. Just don't forget that they are paying guests in your community. If you treat them well, they will do the same to you.

There are extra actions a community can take to help a production company and to make the entire experience more enjoyable for everyone.

1. **Office Space** – Help find usable office space for the production company. They will need an area that has good lighting, heat and air conditioning, access to phone lines with internet service, and plenty of electricity. A vacant store or newly constructed office building that has vacant space is ideal. Think of them as a new temporary retailer in your community.
2. **Office Furniture and Equipment** – The Production Company will need desks, chairs, lamps, computers, copiers, fax machine, phones, office supplies and everything else that most offices need. They usually rent all this equipment, and, if it can be found locally, your businesses will benefit.
3. **Food** – Every production runs on its stomach. They will want to eat, to feed their crews, their actors and guess where they're going to want to buy all this food – from your local businesses. The more you can help them connect with all the resources in your community, the happier everyone will be. And let's not forget lots of coffee and lattes!
4. **Lodging** – Many people will show up in your community to make the movie. They come from all over the country, including many parts of Iowa. They all need a place to stay. Help them find good, clean, inexpensive lodging and you will have solved a producer's major headache.
5. **Extras** – Invariably, movies have crowd scenes in them where they need extras. And usually, it's easier (and a lot more fun for the production company and the town) if the extras come from the community. Talk to the production company about their needs and help them "wrangle" the people they need. Usually, there will be Casting Director for Extras that you can work with to get your citizens into the movie.
6. **Answering Questions** – Since the production company is new to your community, they won't know where anything is. So, they will have a million questions for you about every conceivable item. Be prepared to answer their questions. Generally they want to know where to buy, rent, locate or find something – and that translates into dollars spent in your community. The Contact Team should be prepared to answer many different questions and to intercede between the production company and businesses to help smooth the way in negotiations and solving problems.

7. Entertainment – Since making movies is not all work, the cast and crew will want to find entertaining diversions on nights and weekends that they're not working. This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce them to all the tourism opportunities in and around your community. For further help with this, contact the Iowa Department of Tourism or go to their web site at www.traveliowa.com.

We hope this Guide has been helpful. There is no way to cover all the issues that will arise from a production company coming to make a movie in your community. The Film Office stands ready to help you prepare for a production company and can answer many of your questions. Please call Tom Wheeler at (515-242-4726), email us (filmiowa@ided.state.ia.us), or write us at Iowa Film Office, 200 East Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50309.

And finally, film production provides much more than dollars and jobs. It can help increase community pride and international awareness of what your community has to offer. We've all witnessed the impact that "Field of Dreams" has had on Dubuque and Dyersville. The famous line from that film was "If you build it, they will come." This is my invitation to you to join the Iowa Film Office in helping build the motion picture industry within Iowa. And yes, they will come!

Iowa Film Office Guide to Taking Location Photos • 2006

Finding Locations

(What to Shoot)

Keep an eye out for anything that sets an area apart. Farm houses, barns, neighborhoods all seem to look the same everywhere. What gets a film or commercial project to an area is a specific look or object that can't be found anywhere else. For example, there was a film that just completed production and what set the town apart from all the others was the closed-up, kind of run down look of a larger community (As a side note, they are re-doing the downtown area now with help from the state and donations from the production company.)

Any interesting town squares, main streets, court houses, etc. are wonderful. Old movie theaters, drive-ins, diners (especially if you can find one of the old, aluminum silver-bullet types!!!); gas stations in the middle of nowhere, a hotel that looks like it could be in Psycho, odd looking houses or mansions, an old footbridge over a creek or a barn unlike any other you've ever seen. Basically anything that sets your area apart from the rest of the state or country. Remember, Iowa has locations that are unique in America because we preserve our past and our heritage. We don't tear it all down and replace it with the new, modern buildings.

Another example could be a road that you can see stretch off into the distance for miles with no trees, just fields on either side (quite popular with car commercials) and also without telephone poles. Or, that "perfect Iowa Farm" where the white farmhouse has a wrap-around open porch and you can almost taste the lemonade that grandma is making, as you stand next to the ideal red barn.

When to Shoot It

We try to get most of our photos in the Spring, Summer and early Fall.

We try to not show snow, rain, clouds, tornadoes, etc. if at all possible. These weather conditions can hamper production. Anything they want, from a blizzard to a light sprinkle, can be made artificially. Note: winter reference is helpful but only a couple of general reference shots of your main street are usually needed.

So, we want to try to get bright "sunshiny" days.

(It's also a good excuse to get out and enjoy some nice weather, too!)

Also, try to shoot with the sun at your back. That makes the location more visible and makes the sky a nice deep blue.



Nope, can't see much with the sun there.



Too cloudy and everything is brown!



Snow?



PERFECT!

How to Shoot It

Digital cameras are the best way to take location pictures. But, the old-fashioned film photography works as well - the only difference being that film photographs must be scanned or developed directly onto a Kodak Photo CD.

When we take pictures, we try to get them as wide as possible. We can't use any filters or lenses that would distort the image. When producers, directors and location managers look at pictures, they want to see what the landscape looks like without anything artificial.

We do, however, try to get the pictures to look as nice as possible.

For small pan shots of two or three pictures, hold the camera horizontally.

Here are four shots that we got while in Bloomfield:



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

*Quality has been reduced to save document size

Don't try to do a full 360° circle. The pictures don't really need to be that wide.

When you get a wider shot and your pictures start to cover an area of about a 100-degree arc, it's usually better to hold the camera vertically. This is because when we edit the pictures together, we've got more sky and ground to work with and we don't end up being forced to either "create" sky and ground or cut everything down so you can't see what's around it.

When you go to a location, imagine yourself as the director. As the director, what you want to find is THE location that best fits what you imagine. But, instead of being at a location and standing in the middle of the street and looking around, all you have is our pictures.

Try to get an overlap on the pictures of about an inch and try to put some "landmark" on the edges of the frame so we can put them together later.

(Landmarks can be cars, fire hydrants, buildings, bushes, trees, or even a nice stick!)

When we get all the pictures, we'll lay them out in one file:



All four pictures are arranged in roughly the places they need to be.



Then, we'll put the pictures together and distort them slightly as they move out from the center so they look right when put together. (More like distorting them back into shape, though!)

Then, all we have to do is crop off the white edges and we've got our panoramic location picture. (Suitable for framing, mailing, printing, giving as gifts...)



This picture is actually 16 inches long when printed!

Generally, other than adding a clear, descriptive title, that's all the further we'll go when editing the photos together.

Sometimes, if we have a little more time, we'll clean them up a little. We try not to do too much though. Basically, just cleaning up the lines and trying to make the pictures look a bit nicer. We don't ever want to fake the photos!



The final panoramic photos are normally no more than 13 inches wide and 7 inches tall (Including the title). With a minimum resolution of 100 dpi and a maximum resolution of 150 dpi and saved as Jpeg files.

Sometimes, you'll need to take detail shots of interesting characteristics. We shot these photos while in Fairfield:



Vertical shots are no more than 7 inches high (Including title) at 100 to 150 dpi, also saved as Jpeg files.

Let's say that you take a photo and you're so far away from the subject that you almost have a panoramic photo in one shot. Great! We can work with that. But, there's a trick!

This is Mt. Etna Opry and the road leading away from it:



This shot is so wide already and it includes details on the sides, so we can just crop this picture into a semi-panoramic shot.

Top Secret:

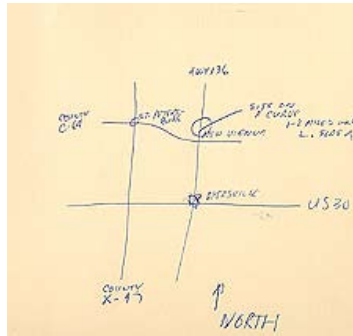
The reason we do this is not because of photo quality or looks. The reason is psychological. If you have a photo that's as wide as possible but it's square, all "movie people" see is the square photo making them think that they're missing something.

But, if a photo looks panoramic, it looks like it actually includes more and that there are no details missing. We don't tell them that it's only one picture though!



Notice that you hardly saw any people in these photos. When we get location photos, we want to see the location. With the Bloomfield pictures, if we could have helped it, we would have also done away with all the cars too. Even places that are normally packed with people, we try to get as empty as possible. But, there are always situations that can't be helped.

Or, even draw your own



We also need to know

- An owner / contact person name and phone number.
(Not just someone who happens to be standing near the location.)
- How close is it to an airport? (Miles are an acceptable form of measure.)
- How are the roads? (Four-lane paved, gravel, dirt, etc.)
- Are there any restrictions on trucks getting to the area?
(Height and weight Limits, large sinkhole)
- Is there noise nearby? (A freeway, a factory, trains, etc.)
- When did you take the pictures? (a.k.a. "The Date")

Wait!

What was the most important thing we need to know again?

At the end of this booklet, you'll find a reference sheet that you can bring with you as a reminder. If you like, you can make photocopies and include them with the photos.

Ok, so now what?

So, now you're ready to go out and take great location photos, right?

Sure you are!

You might be asking yourself, "So, how do I get these pictures to the Film Office?" and that would be a good question.

You would then answer yourself by saying, "Well, there are several ways."

You could:

- Send in the un-developed rolls of film.
- Send in a Kodak Picture CD of the developed film.
- Make a CD-ROM of the pictures you took with your digital camera.

Thank you for your help!

By keeping your community's photo catalog updated, you're increasing the chances that we'll be able to get your pictures out on a project!

No one knows your community like you and no one can completely cover it better than you!

And be careful out there...

Iowa Film Office Location Information

Field Version

Date: _____

Scout Name & Phone: _____

Location Title: _____

Directions to Location: _____

Owner's Name and Phone: _____

Approx. Miles to Airport: _____

Road Access/Truck Access

- Good Roads
- No Restrictions
- Fair Roads
- Bridge Weight Limit
- No Roads
- Low clearance limit

Notes: _____

Noise

- No noise
- Occasional Noise (Planes / Tractors)
- Constant Noise (Freeways, etc.)

Notes: _____

Don't forget to:

Keep the sun at your back • Shoot in bright sunlight on a clear day
Green is Good! • Get interesting details • Shoot for Panoramic Shots

Make sure to overlap photos • Have Fun!

For 1-3 panoramic photos, hold the camera horizontally

For 4 or more, hold the camera vertically

Remember, we're making movies here!

Iowa Film Office Camera Ready Community Guidelines

CITY _____ COUNTY _____

Population _____ Date Responded _____

LOCAL CONTACTS:

Contact 1: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone-Bus: _____ Home: _____

Email: _____

Contact 2: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone-Bus: _____ Home: _____

Email: _____

Number of hotels/room availability: _____

Number of police/fire personnel: _____

AIR SERVICE:

distance to nearest public airport _____

distance to nearest commercial air service _____

City name: _____

Airline(s) serving point: _____

Number of miles to closest metropolitan area: _____

Major events of community (county fair, parades, etc.) _____

Is your main business district on a town square or main street: _____

Surrounding topography that best describes your community:

___ flat ___ somewhat flat ___ rolling ___ very rolling

Please check the following locations that are applicable to your community:

___ college _____ state/national parks

___ old schools (vacant/occupied) _____ lakes

___ auditoriums _____ boy scout camp

___ country school house/church _____ virgin prairie land

___ football and/or baseball stadium _____ racetracks (car, horse, dog, etc.)

___ old Victorian homes _____ courthouse - if yes, what year
was it built? _____

___ old Colonial homes _____ jail (city/county)

___ 1950s Americana neighborhoods _____ old city hall

___ post-WW II Matchbox housing _____ old forts

___ factories (vacant/occupied) _____ historical sites

___ major manufacturers _____ mansions

___ breweries _____

___ county fairgrounds _____ pioneer village

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1950s diner | <input type="checkbox"/> theatrical playhouse/opera house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> drive-in restaurant | <input type="checkbox"/> bandstands/gazebo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> town cafe | <input type="checkbox"/> military installations (vacant/
occupied) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> drive-in theatre (working,
non-working) | <input type="checkbox"/> mental institutions (vacant/
occupied) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> old movie theatre | <input type="checkbox"/> amusement parks - ballroom/
dancehall |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grain elevator | <input type="checkbox"/> roadhouses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> old mill windmill | <input type="checkbox"/> bars/saloons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> train depot | <input type="checkbox"/> covered bridges/unique bridges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> train track running through town | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian reservations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other train facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> river running through town | <input type="checkbox"/> churches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> docks and/or barge facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> monastery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dam | <input type="checkbox"/> old mid-western farmstead |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electric plant/hydro-electric plant | <input type="checkbox"/> river valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> riverboats | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gas station, old (vacant/occupied) | |

Additional unique features of community:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airports and airplane facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Cemeteries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amusement parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Churches, temples, unique shrines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banks | <input type="checkbox"/> Colleges, universities, training
schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Botanical gardens and
arboretums | <input type="checkbox"/> Courthouses and courtrooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridges, tunnels, roadways | <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian facilities, stables,
riding academics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus stations | <input type="checkbox"/> Factories and warehouses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car dealerships | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers markets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Casinos | |

Farms

Fire stations

Forts

Garbage dumps, salvage yards and junkyards

Golf courses and country clubs

Historic villages and main streets

Hospitals and mental institutions

Ice cream parlors and soda fountains

Islands, riverfronts, beaches, canals

Laboratories and research facilities

Landscapes - forests, river valleys, large vista views of croplands, prairie, etc.

Legislative chambers and capitol buildings

Libraries

Locks and dams

Main streets, business districts, town squares, etc. - All time periods, all sizes, all classes

Mines of all kinds

Old mills

Parks - national, state, regional, city

Power plants - hydro electric, wind, coal, nuclear, etc.

Race tracks - auto, motorcycle, dirt, paved

Race tracks - dog and horse

Residential areas and neighborhoods - All time periods, class levels, etc.

Restaurants

Riverboats

Schools

Skating rinks - roller and ice, indoors and outdoors

Train stations, depots, train yards and actual trains

Wilderness preserves and wildlife preserves

Zoos

Thank you!

IOWA
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IOWA FILM OFFICE

200 East Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Phone: 515.242.4726 • Fax: 515.242.4718