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City of El Reno Becomes First Community to Achieve Oklahoma Film Friendly Community Certification; Establishes TV & Film Commission

The City of El Reno has seen a steady increase in film and television production in recent years. Since 2019, the community has welcomed a number of feature films, including “Thirteen Minutes”, “Stillwater”, “Sorority Sister Killer”, “Impropriety”, “Cheer For Your Life”, “How I Met Your Murderer” and most recently the Lionsgate films “The Unbreakable Boy” and “American Underdog: The Kurt Warner Story”. Recognizing the value and economic impact of the film and television industry, the City of El Reno has become the first community to be officially certified as “film friendly” by the Oklahoma Film + Music Office (OF+MO) after completing the requirements of the agency’s Oklahoma Film Friendly Community Program.

An OF+MO initiative with a mission to certify film friendly communities across all 77 Oklahoma counties, the Oklahoma Film Friendly Community Program seeks to provide the necessary resources and toolkit to communities wishing to further benefit from the impact of the state’s booming film and television industry. As a certified film friendly community, the City of El Reno has a designated film liaison, an established filming permit and an increased representation of its assets in the OF+MO online Oklahoma Locations Directory per the program’s requirements. These assets, which appear on OF+MO’s website and other marketing materials, will now be branded with the official certification seal of the Oklahoma Film Friendly Community Program; likewise, the seal will be provided to El Reno for promotional purposes and their own collateral.

“El Reno has an amazingly scenic backdrop,” said El Reno Mayor Matt White. “When you combine that with our history and assets, like the hospital and other city properties available for filming, we feel taking this next step just makes sense and will help us build an economically advantageous industry for our citizens.”

In addition to becoming the first certified city in OF+MO’s Oklahoma Film Friendly Community Program, the City of El Reno went above and beyond the program’s requirements to establish the El Reno TV & Film Commission (ERTVFC), the city’s first film office.

The ERTVFC seeks to promote and expand El Reno's reputation as a premier location for film, television and commercial production in Oklahoma while providing one-stop coordination for production logistics, permission and permitting. The goal of the ERTVFC is ultimately an increased retention of film and television production, which will maximize local economic impact to the city and its businesses. The commission's newly launched website features a number of resources for filmmakers seeking their next production destination in Oklahoma, including information on local permitting, city services, accommodations, businesses and film friendly locations.

"We felt like we were nearing a pivotal time in our city's history and augmenting our economic diversity with a new sustainable industry just made sense for our community," said City Manager Matt Sandidge. "It also helps that we are lucky enough to have an enthusiastic liaison in Steve Maddox – whose wife asked him to get a 'hobby', which turned into a passion for the movie industry. And now we have a dynamic group of individuals at the ERTVFC looking to further the film industry here in town."

The ERTVFC will host its first quarterly mixer to introduce filmmakers and creative professionals to their community in late May or early June. Interested parties can sign up to attend the event via the ERTVFC website. Serving as the current Commission Liaison, Steve Maddox is eager to welcome filmmakers and creative professionals to El Reno to showcase what makes their community so special.

"'El Reno Strong' is much more than a description of how we come together in times of sorrow and disaster. It is the spirit of this close-knit family that brings us together as one," said Maddox. "This spirit led to my strong belief that El Reno was a prime location for film and television production - a newer industry for our city, non-dependent upon a particular employer to create jobs, but one which relies on our unity to benefit us for generations to come."

Currently under the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, the Oklahoma Film + Music Office continues to serve as the statewide office for film and television production. Effective July 1, 2021, OF+MO will be moving under the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. The El Reno TV & Film Commission is the latest office established to help drive and support the entertainment industry on a localized level, joining organizations such as the Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts & Culture and the Cherokee Nation Film Office.

"As a certified film friendly community and with the creation of the ERTVFC, the City of El Reno is sending a message loud and clear that they are ready to support film and television production in Oklahoma, and that they understand and value the impact this industry can have on our statewide communities," said OF+MO Director Tava Maloy Sofsky. "We're incredibly grateful to the leadership and community of El Reno who have excelled in their support of Oklahoma's film industry, and with their increased representation and engagement, we look forward to working together."

For more information on the El Reno TV & Film Commission, visit ertvfilm.org.

For more information on OF+MO's Oklahoma Film Friendly Community program, visit okfilmmusic.org/filmfriendly.

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