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The Film & TV Industry Boom and What It Means for Where You Live

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Data reflects 2024–2026 publicly reported figures. Not tax or legal advice.

The Garden State Is Going Hollywood

Okay, not literally Hollywood. But for the first time in over a century, New Jersey is positioning itself as a genuine, serious, major player in the American film and television industry. And I'm not talking about background locations for crime dramas and reality TV — though we've done plenty of that. I'm talking Netflix building a \$1 billion studio campus on the Jersey Shore. Lionsgate opening in Newark. Paramount signing a 10-year lease in Bayonne. Steven Spielberg filming in Cape May.

This is real, it's significant, and it's happening right now.

For the tens of thousands of film industry professionals — from directors and actors to grips, electricians, set dressers, production assistants, carpenters, costume designers, Teamsters, caterers, and everyone else who makes a production run — this represents a fundamental shift in where the work is. And where the work is matters enormously when deciding where to live.

This report is designed for film industry workers who are considering relocating to New Jersey, or who are already here and want to understand how the industry boom affects the housing landscape around the major studio hubs. You'll get the facts, the geography, the tax picture, and my honest assessment of where to look.

The Numbers: NJ Film Industry By the Numbers

\$833M Qualified Production Spend (2024) +41% year-over-year	30,000 Crew Hires (2024) doubled from 2023	35+ Q1 2026 Major Productions in first quarter alone	#4 NJ National Production Rank rising from #8 in 2023
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70	30+	45%	37%
Current Sound Stages in NJ	New Purpose-Built Stages (2 yrs)	Film Count Increase Q1 2026	Production Spend Increase
warehouse + purpose-built	coming online soon	year-over-year growth	year-over-year growth

Sources: NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission, Hollywood Reporter, ROI-NJ, Commercial Observer (2025–2026)

The Studios: What’s Being Built and Where

Let’s walk through the major developments, because the scale of what’s happening is genuinely impressive.

Studio	Location	Lead Tenant	Scale	Timeline	Key Features
Netflix Fort Monmouth	Oceanport / Eatontown (Monmouth Co.)	Netflix	292 acres / \$1B investment	Est. 2028	12 soundstages, town center, residential, local business area
1888 Studios	Bayonne (Hudson Co.)	Paramount (10-yr lease)	1.6M sq ft — largest in US	TBD (broke ground Dec. 2025)	23 smart stages, 22-acre water backlot, LED volume capture
Great Point / Lionsgate Newark	Newark (Essex Co.)	Lionsgate	6 stages, 10K–30K sq ft each	Est. 2027	Adjacent film magnet high school, 70% Newark jobs reserved
West Orange Studio	West Orange (Essex Co.)	Matrix Dev. Group	TBD	Approved 2024	Near Black Maria (Edison) replica, historically significant location

Timeline estimates based on reported groundbreaking dates and construction projections as of early 2026. Subject to change.

Why These Locations?

Each of these sites was chosen strategically. Here’s the short version of what makes each market interesting:

Fort Monmouth (Monmouth County)

A former U.S. Army installation, now being transformed into what Netflix's co-CEO Ted Sarandos called confirmation that "the birthplace of film is where its future is being built once again." The site is in Oceanport and Eatontown — Shore towns with good access to the Garden State Parkway and NJ Transit. This is a full campus development: not just stages, but a town center, residential units, and local business district.

Bayonne (Hudson County)

Less than 30 minutes from Downtown Manhattan, Bayonne was selected for 1888 Studios — a facility that, when complete, will be the largest film studio in the United States. Paramount is already committed as a tenant. The 22-acre water backlot alone is a game-changer for certain production types. Hudson County real estate is premium-priced, but Bayonne historically offers better value than neighboring Jersey City and Hoboken.

Newark (Essex County)

The Lionsgate studio in Newark is embedded in the city's cultural renewal. Located adjacent to NJPAC (New Jersey Performing Arts Center) and structured to benefit Newark residents with reserved employment and a film magnet high school, this isn't just a studio — it's an anchor for a neighborhood. Newark is transitioning. Affordable compared to much of NJ, direct NJ Transit access, and close to the airport.

Who Gets Hired: It's Not Just the Actors

Here's the part most news coverage skips over: the film industry employs thousands of people who will never appear on screen. For every actor, there are dozens of skilled tradespeople, technical professionals, and support workers who make a production happen.

The Crew That Makes It Happen

- Grips — the rigging, dollies, camera movement specialists
- Gaffers & Electricians — lighting design and execution
- Set Carpenters & Art Department — building and dressing the physical world of a production
- Teamsters & Transportation — the Teamsters union has enormous NJ presence; nearly 40% of Teamster members already live in NJ
- Sound Department — boom operators, sound mixers, playback specialists
- Costume & Wardrobe — costumers, stitchers, stylists
- Hair & Makeup — artists, prosthetics, special FX makeup
- Production Assistants & Coordinators — the backbone of every set
- Visual Effects & Post Production — increasingly done in-state as infrastructure grows
- Catering, Security, Location Management, and more

The NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission reported that crew hires doubled from 15,000 in 2023 to 30,000 in 2024 — and that was before the major studio campuses opened. When Netflix, Lionsgate, and Paramount are fully operational, the job creation impact will be substantially larger.

The “Happy Gilmore 2” Netflix production alone filmed in NJ for over four months and recorded over \$152 million in qualified spend in the state. That’s \$152 million circulating through NJ hotels, restaurants, vendors, rental houses, and paychecks.

Even more telling: NJ’s film infrastructure has grown to fill previous gaps. Equipment rental houses, specialty lumber mills, camera houses — the support ecosystem that productions need — has developed organically as the industry footprint expanded.

Why NJ? (It’s the Tax Incentives, And Also Not Just the Tax Incentives)

Productions choose NJ for a combination of reasons, but the tax incentive program is the door opener. Here’s how it works:

New Jersey Film Tax Credit Program

- 30% transferable tax credit on qualified production expenses within 30 miles of Columbus Circle (NYC)
- 35% credit for expenses incurred outside that 30-mile radius, encouraging Central and South Jersey production
- Bonus credit up to 40% for studio partners with facilities over 250,000 sq ft operating in NJ for 10+ years (Netflix, Paramount-affiliated 1888, Lionsgate qualify)
- Additional 2–4% bonuses for meeting diversity plan requirements
- Qualified expenses include crew wages, equipment, and vendor services — meaning local hires benefit directly
- Productions must spend money with NJ-registered businesses to qualify — incentivizing local vendor and crew use

But as Jon Crowley, Executive Director of the NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission, has said repeatedly: the incentives get people in the door. NJ keeps them because of what else it offers.

- Geographic diversity: You can go from a mountain with snow to an ocean beach in 90 minutes. This compresses shooting schedules and cuts travel costs.
- Proximity to NYC talent pools without NYC logistics and costs
- A growing crew base — skilled, local, available — reducing the need to bring people in from out of state
- 564 municipalities, many now “Film Ready” certified, providing streamlined permitting
- A track record: with 63+ productions in 2025 alone, NJ has proven it can execute at scale

Where Film Industry Workers Are Looking to Live in NJ

This is the section I can speak to most directly as a Realtor. Where you live will depend on which studio or production market you’re working in, your budget, and your lifestyle preferences. Here’s my breakdown:

If You’re Working in the Bayonne / Jersey City Market (1888 Studios)

Bayonne itself is worth serious consideration. It’s Hudson County’s most affordable option with good transit, and prices have not yet spiked to Jersey City levels. Jersey City and Hoboken are premium-priced but offer excellent walkability and transit.

If you’re looking for more space and lower carrying costs, consider moving slightly inland to Bergen County (Secaucus, Rutherford, Lyndhurst, East Rutherford) — all within

reasonable range of Bayonne with significantly lower home prices and better parking situations.

If You're Working in Newark (Lionsgate / Great Point)

Newark itself is undergoing a real transformation. The South Ward, where Lionsgate is located, is adjacent to NJPAC and the Prudential Center — there's real investment happening. Housing in Newark is among the most affordable in the metro area.

Surrounding communities worth looking at: Maplewood, South Orange, Montclair (higher price, but exceptional quality of life and train access), Belleville, Nutley, and the Ironbound neighborhood in Newark itself. These give you Essex County access without the full Newark urban experience if that's not your preference.

If You're Working at Fort Monmouth (Netflix, Monmouth County)

This is the most interesting and fast-moving market. Monmouth County has traditionally been the Jersey Shore county, and Netflix's choice of Fort Monmouth will put upward pressure on surrounding towns.

Towns to watch: Eatontown, Oceanport (where the campus is), Long Branch (increasingly urban, good value, waterfront), Red Bank (vibrant downtown, arts community, great fit for creative industry professionals), Asbury Park (one of NJ's most culturally interesting towns, music scene, arts, diversity), and Shrewsbury. For more affordable options with car-accessible commutes: Howell, Freehold, and Aberdeen/Matawan (train access).

Patrick's Hot Take on Monmouth County

The Netflix Fort Monmouth campus is a long-term game changer for Monmouth County real estate. Asbury Park and Red Bank in particular have the cultural DNA that creative industry professionals gravitate toward. If I were a grip moving from LA to work in NJ, I'd be looking hard at Red Bank before the market prices it fully in.

For Crew Working Across Multiple Locations

Many film and TV crew members work across multiple productions and multiple locations — that's the nature of the work. If that's your situation, a more central location makes sense. Consider:

- Central Bergen County (Hackensack, Paramus, Ridgewood area): reasonable drive to both Hudson County and Morris/Essex county shoots, good highway access to Route 17, I-80, and the Garden State Parkway
- Essex County (Livingston, Millburn, Maplewood): roughly equidistant from Newark and the northern markets, solid schools, suburban comfort
- Morris County (Florham Park, Parsippany, Madison): farther from the Shore campus but central to a lot of northern NJ production activity, with lower taxes than Bergen

What Film Industry Workers Need to Know About NJ Taxes

Let me be direct: NJ taxes are a real consideration. Film industry work is often project-based, and income can fluctuate significantly. Here's what matters when choosing where to live:

Property Taxes

The difference between a high-tax and a low-tax town in NJ can be \$15,000–25,000+ per year on comparable homes. For someone on a project-based income, that carrying cost matters enormously. See the low-tax town data in the companion Relocation Guide.

Towns near the studio hubs that offer relatively lower effective tax rates:

- East Rutherford (Bergen): among the lowest total tax bills in the county due to the MetLife Stadium commercial ratable base
- Carlstadt (Bergen): Meadowlands proximity, good value, low rates for the area
- Mahwah (Bergen): accessible rate, good transit, mountain terrain
- Bayonne (Hudson): more affordable than Jersey City with improving infrastructure
- Eatontown (Monmouth): right next to the Netflix campus, reasonable pricing for Monmouth

NJ Income Tax

NJ has a graduated income tax ranging from 1.4% to 10.75% at the highest bracket. For film workers who may earn significant sums during active productions and little during off-periods, it's worth having a conversation with a CPA about how to structure your situation. This is not my lane — always consult a tax professional.

The NJ vs. NY Tax Math

If you're currently paying NYC income tax on top of NY State tax, moving to NJ can be a net positive even before you account for the housing cost difference. NYC imposes a separate city income tax of up to 3.876% that NJ residents do not pay. Again — CPA conversation required. But the math often works in NJ's favor.

Key Resources for NJ Film Industry Workers

Where to Find Work and Information

- NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission: nj.gov/njfilm — job postings, Film Ready town list, production news
- IATSE Local 52 (NYC/NJ): the main crew union for film and TV production in the area
- Teamsters Local 817: transportation for film productions
- Newark Film Works: Free job training program for grip, electric, and PA tracks. Launching June 2026. Supported by a \$750,000 NJEDA grant.
- NJPAC / Great Point Studios partnership: educational and apprenticeship opportunities embedded in the Newark studio campus
- NJ Economic Development Authority: njedanewsroom.com — incentive program updates and studio announcements

How I Can Help You Find Your NJ Base

If you're a film industry professional — whether you're a gaffer who just got hired for a Netflix production, a grip relocating from LA, a production coordinator who needs to be in the Bayonne market, or an electrician who's been working NJ productions and finally wants to buy instead of renting — I can help.

I specialize in relocation, and I understand the unique considerations for project-based workers: proximity to multiple production hubs, flexibility in timeline, smart carrying cost management, and making the most of whatever market conditions exist when you're ready to buy.

No sales pitch. No pressure. Just an honest conversation about whether buying in NJ makes sense for your situation, and if so, where.

Let's find your place in the Garden State.

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Important Disclosures

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