

DEADLINE HOLLYWOOD

101 Miles North Of New York, Lumberyard's Film And TV Studio Takes Shape

By Dade Hayes

With demand for New York film and TV production space continuing to rise, Lumberyard Studios is aiming to lure shoots up to the bucolic Hudson River Valley with a new, purpose-built sound stage in the town of Catskill, N.Y.

Counting the main stage and a secondary one across Catskill Creek, there will be 12,000 square feet of available space when the facility opens in early fall.

Adrienne Willis, executive director of Lumberyard Studios, says the stage towers over the modest-size town around it. "People call it the Madison Square Garden of Catskill," she joked to Deadline. "One resident was telling me that he had never seen a crane as big as the one we had here."

The projected \$8 million cost of the facility (\$5 million from the Rudolph Steiner Fund) is a big bet for parent organization Lumberyard Contemporary Performing Arts, which began nearly 20 years ago as a Washington, D.C.-based dance company. The group then moved to a Catskill space in 2011 and, seeing film and TV booming this decade it decided to build the studio space. Lumberyard envisions a virtuous circle of investment in the community yielding jobs and economic activity and productions, seeing the efficiencies and tax benefits, returning for more.



New York state's Film Tax Credit Program offers up to 40% off labor (45% on post-production) for production taking place upstate. According to Empire State Development, the \$420 million program offers the production industry the nation's most stable and successful production and post-production tax credits. Since 2011, officials say, it has generated an estimated \$19 billion in spending and created more than 1.1 million jobs.

Lumberyard's social-impact model has it reinvesting 100% of proceeds into the performing arts community and community development, helping support artists' creative process. That got the attention of Republican State Sen. George Amedore, whose district includes Greene County and Catskill. The county is among the large swaths of New York state that were hammered by the decline of industrial manufacturing in recent decades. Cement factories that once served as economic engines for the area have all but disappeared, and state officials are scrambling to provide viable alternatives to factory jobs.

Lumberyard "is playing an integral role in the revitalization of the Village of Catskill," Amedore said. "In addition to the world-class performing arts they are bringing to the region, the Lumberyard Studios' state-of-the-art facilities will establish Greene County as a premiere destination for film production and encourage further investment in the local economy."

One reason Lumberyard moved to Catskill — a hamlet of 12,000 along the Hudson just south of Albany — is the custom for out-of-town tryouts for shows headed for Broadway. Tryouts must happen at least 100 miles from the Rialto, and Catskill is 101.

That distance, Willis says, is the key in another sense to Lumberyard's appeal for film and TV producers. "We are in the middle of an area with everything you would want — mountains, streams, rivers, historic homes, our small downtown," she said. "It's a special package to get just two hours from Manhattan."

A growing talent pool north of the city is yet another potential benefit for Lumberyard.

Included in the offerings are 13 rooms for onsite lodging for up to 25 people, as well as flexible office space, kitchen and lounge areas, a wardrobe room, laundry room, silent air conditioning, loading docks and an elevator. Oh, and of course, plenty of available parking.