



The British Film Empire Expands to Georgia with the Arrival of Pinewood Atlanta Studios

SITUATION

Pinewood Studios is a global film and television production studio, headquartered in Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire, UK. Founded in 1936, the studio has a rich and storied history, famous for such productions as the James Bond series and the early Harry Potter movies. With production facilities in London, Wales, Toronto, Malaysia and The Dominican Republic, Pinewood was anxious to break ground on an American facility large enough to provide turnkey solutions for blockbuster Hollywood productions. By providing a full media center, with large location acreage, multiple soundstages, on-site production vendors and office space, Pinewood hoped to introduce a new business model to the normally fragmented Hollywood production system. The key for Pinewood was to find a logistically ideal, financially attractive, and stable location that would provide world-class productions with access to the most advanced facilities available, and enable all companies to take advantage of the rich array of film production incentives that are available.

IMPLEMENTATION

From the outset, Pinewood purposely sought to avoid locations where too much studio competition already existed. Thus, once the decision was made to plant the studio's roots with a full-scale facility in the United States, Pinewood immediately began looking at locations in the southeast, where the burgeoning film industry and the competitive production landscape had been attracting a growing number of productions.

The short list included Wilmington, North Carolina, which had recently played host to the Hollywood tent-pole production *Iron Man*; New Orleans, Louisiana, where the state's film credits had drawn a number of other productions, but was already mired with plenty of competition; and Atlanta, Georgia, which was recognized for its aggressive state film tax credits that had already attracted a number of large-scale productions. Naturally, Pinewood executives began conversations with representatives from each state's film offices.

Company:

Pinewood Atlanta Studios

Facility Type:

- Film and Television Production

FY15 (July 1, 2014 — June 30, 2015)

- Georgia-lensed productions generated a record-breaking economic impact of \$6 billion.
- Georgia also saw record investment from film and television productions with more than \$1.7 billion in direct spending in the state.
- According to the Motion Picture Association of America, the film and television industry is responsible for more than 79,000 jobs and roughly \$4 billion in total wages in Georgia. These are high-quality jobs, with an average salary of nearly \$84,000, 75 percent higher than the average salary nationwide.

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“From the moment we began our discussions with Pinewood Studios we knew Georgia was the right fit. Our job was to communicate why, which we knew would make their decision an easy one,” explained Lee Thomas, Deputy Commissioner of Georgia’s Film, Music & Digital Entertainment division. “Once we understood Pinewood’s needs, we rolled out the proverbial red carpet and showed them all that Georgia had to offer, starting with locations for their planned studio facility.”

Among the key factors that set Georgia apart were its sophisticated hotel and travel environment, which also included a world-renowned restaurant scene and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, which simplified travel in and out of the region.

Georgia’s hands-on approach, which included multiple surveys of potential locations across the state, a wide-open line of communication between Pinewood and the state’s film office, a demonstrated eagerness between local and state-level decision makers to work together, and visits to the Pinewood headquarters from Governor Nathan Deal, communicated the state’s commitment and made Georgia a strategic partner rather than a host.

Once Pinewood settled on a tract of land – one that was found purely by accident during a tour in Fayette County – Pinewood Atlanta Studios was born. Fayette County was deemed ideal as its location offered relatively close proximity to metro-Atlanta and the airport, but still boasted enough open space to acquire 288 acres for the studio and all its facilities. Two months after acquiring the land in March 2013, ground was broken on the first soundstage.

RESULTS

Within two months of breaking ground on the first five soundstages, Marvel Studios committed to shooting *Ant-Man* at Pinewood Atlanta. Pinewood’s turnkey approach has become extremely attractive to prospective productions, especially large-scale productions needing convenience and security. “This is a unique approach that no one else has,” explains Pinewood Atlanta’s Operations VP Brian Cooper. “By having everything a production needs in one place, producers are more comfortable bringing larger movies to our studios.” He goes on to summarize their media center model. “We are experts at finding the experts. That’s always been Pinewood’s strength.”

Pinewood Atlanta not only provides productions with the space and studio needs, but has collected a number of third-party vendors with offices and workshops on-site to service whatever production may be shooting at that time – even if the production is not shooting at Pinewood. Production truck rental, prop houses, prop manufacturing, camera and equipment rentals, car rental facilities – there’s even a dedicated Home Depot called The Home Depot Studio Store which stocks industry-specific tools and supplies behind the gates of Pinewood, exclusively for the use of Pinewood customers.

That also means that virtually all the businesses involved in the production benefit from Georgia’s skilled, industry-specific workforce, and as a by-product, expands the footprint of the economic impact to the state of Georgia.

Phase two of Pinewood Atlanta raised the number of stages from five to 11. In order to sustain this growth, Pinewood plans to build a hotel complex on the property, as well as a residential community designed to appeal to year-round workers. “The economic ripple effect created by the Pinewood Atlanta Studios complex is at the heart of the industry here in Georgia,” says Thomas. “While Pinewood itself has 12 full-time employees, the vendor area added approximately 170 year-round positions for Georgians, and the studio creates as many as 1,000 full-time jobs when a film is in production.”

Fayette County has enjoyed a substantial boost as a result of Pinewood’s investment. Production professionals see Pinewood’s commitment as a long-term investment in the industry, and as a result, have themselves invested in the community. As many as 45 homes in the surrounding area have been purchased by workers associated with the studio’s productions. “It’s been an incredibly positive experience,” says Cooper. “That’s what everybody wants.”

Marvel’s *Captain America: Civil War* recently wrapped production at Pinewood, and Sony’s *Passengers* and Marvel’s *Guardians of the Galaxy*.