

UPPER WEST SIDE NOW

A blue silhouette of a city skyline, featuring several prominent skyscrapers, is positioned behind the main title text.

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"All The Neighborhood News"

COMPLIMENTARY

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And the Academy Award goes to... Your Home

By Ethan Bordman

What do Academy Award winning films and screenplays such as *West Side Story*, *The Apartment*, and *Hannah and Her Sisters* and blockbusters such as *Spider-Man* and *Wall Street* have in common? They were all filmed or take place on the Upper West Side. In 2010, more than \$5 billion was spent in New York City on motion pictures, television shows and commercial production.

How can Upper West Siders get a slice of this lucrative pie? One way is to offer your home as a film location. You will be paid a fee by the production company, which varies based on factors such as the number of days your home is utilized and the degree of changes made to your home. You will need to decide if the fee is all-inclusive or if there will be itemized charges for electricity and water used by the film crew. Your building may charge you or the production company with fees for services such as elevator use and involvement of maintenance personnel. Compensation for use of your home can range

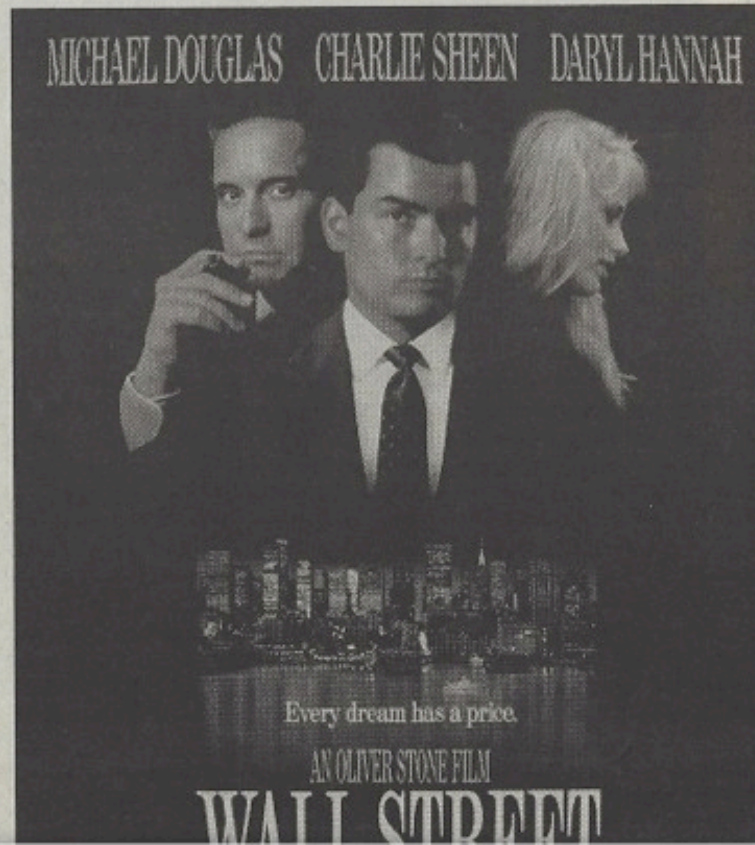
from a few hundred dollars for a few days or fewer a year, you keep most, if not all, of the money you receive tax free. Of course, it is best to speak to an accountant to check on how your particular situation applies to the code.

The first thing to check is whether your building allows participation in film projects. Some buildings' by-laws do not allow production crews because they often disrupt the building's operations and may inconvenience fellow residents. Conversely, because of the notoriety gained as a result of being in a movie, the governing boards of many buildings are changing their policies, because they are eager to be publicly featured and recognized. Potential homebuyers are often impressed to hear about the movies that have been filmed in the building or in the apartment; this gives the space a bit of history that distinguishes it from other prospective homes, and may even add to the value of a home.

To list your home as a location, check the "Make Your Home A Star in New York City" page of the NYC film office website. The film office lists

listing homes as locations. The agent will ask you to take several pictures inside your home and of the outside view from your windows. Because of privacy concerns, the pictures you submit are not listed on the real estate company's website. The agents will keep them on file so when the location scout describes the type of location needed, the agent will show them homes and views that match the description. The use of your home will involve several visits before a decision is made. First, a location scout will take pictures of your home from angles dictated in the script; then, the location supervisor will visit, followed by the director.

Another factor to consider is when and for how long the scene will film. Will your home be used for a few hours on a weekday afternoon, while you are out, or will you be required to stay at a hotel for several days and nights? Although the scene being filmed may only be on the screen for a few minutes, it will take several hours or even days to film it according to the director's specifications. If you do have to spend the night out-



HANNAH AND HER SISTERS



WOODY ALLEN MICHAEL CAINE
MIA FARROW CARRIE FISHER
BARBARA HERSHEY LLOYD NOLAN
MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN DANIEL STERN
MAX VON SYDOW DIANNE WIEST

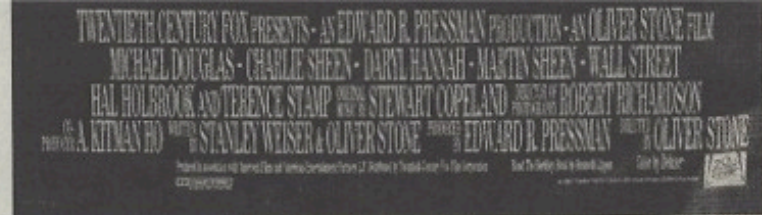
Executive Producers JACK ROLLINS... CHARLES H. JOFFE... Producer SUSAN E. MORSE... Director of Photography CARLO DI PALMA...
Produced by JACK ROLLINS... CHARLES H. JOFFE... Produced by ROBERT GREENHUT... Written and Directed by WOODY ALLEN

If your building's willing to work with a film production, you must always be considerate of your neighbors. There will be a crew of people setting up, filming, and disassembling their equipment in and around your home. A "small crew" can mean up to 50 people depending on what is required to film the scene. Needless to say, this can be disruptive to people around you—though they may share in the excitement if you are forthcoming about the details of what is going on.

The building may also benefit financially, and can be compensated for storing production-related materials and equipment in areas such as the basement, which helps cut down on the number of trucks that are needed for storage outside the building.

One important consideration is the physical changes the production will make to your home. Is the movie a drama that will feature a family eating dinner in your dining room, or is it an action movie involving two people fighting and smashing into walls? There is a big difference between moving a couch and putting a hole in your wall in an action scene, though the production company will repair it before they leave.

The New York City Film Office recommends that you check with them to make sure the production company has the appropriate filming permits and insurance forms on file. The company will carry a variety of policies to insure the production of the film and any damage that may occur to your



home. The Film Office requires a film to have at least a \$1 million comprehensive general liability policy to be eligible for the tax credit, although not every film is produced under the credit. It is a good idea to get a copy of the policy and to make sure your home is listed as covered. The agreement the production company makes with you will cover the exact filming location in your home and will stipulate which areas of the home the crew can access, the time of access, the amount of payment and—if applicable—will detail any alterations to the location as well as a plan to return your home to its prior condition. Keep in mind that if you absolutely do not want a particular item moved, or any physical change made for any reason—even though the crew will return your home to its original condition—you must make this clear in case the change is vital to the scene. The production company may only want to use your home if the change can be made.

The payment schedule is negotiable; payment can be made all up front, half up front with the remainder paid upon conclusion of the scene, or daily. If the scene involves

extensive structural changes, an escrow account can be helpful. The account will hold monies that you and the production company deem appropriate to return your home to its prior condition. This way, you are assured that you will receive the funds necessary to make repairs to your home. Once filming is completed, you must inspect your property as soon as the crew leaves in order to be sure everything is returned to its proper place and in its previous condition. Most film productions are meticulous about repairs, making homes look as though no one was ever there.

Though there is no Academy Award for a film location, you can still be part of an Academy Award nominated movie or even a winner! A clause can be written in the contract so that you will be listed in the film's ending credits as a result of your involvement with the production. You can tell friends, family, and future homebuyers that your home was the star of the show.

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