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Pinewood Atlanta Studios, which opened in 2014, offers state-of-the-art sound stages on a 288-acre site that was once a family farm. A former school building across the highway now serves as offices for the production company. So many production crews are clamoring to film in Georgia that the studio is adding more sound stages – a projected 27 when the entire project is completed.

“Every time you go by, there are cranes and another [soundstage] cropping up,” Ungaro says.

One side effect of all these productions has been something of a housing shortage. Crews coming into town for a short-term assignment are having a hard time finding temporary quarters while they complete work on a film project. That problem is likely to be addressed soon with Pinewood Forest, a nearby mixed-use development that is slated to include retail, commercial, residential

Ready for a Close-up: Carlotta Ungaro, president and CEO of the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce



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Tasty Technology: David Luckie, executive director of the Griffin-Spalding County Development Authority

and hotels. Initial plans call for more than 1,000 multi-family residential units, single-family homes and townhouses, along with a couple of boutique hotels.

All this development within the city of Fayetteville is likely to spur still more development in the surrounding community, according to Ungaro.

The film industry has very specific labor needs, and Georgia is seeking to provide a steady supply of trained workers through its new Georgia Film Academy. One of the first locations selected for the school was the Pinewood Production Centre next door to the studio complex. Academy programs are designed to train the skilled workers like set builders, camera operators, on-set production assistants, craft services and other specialty technicians who appear “below the line.”

“They have developed some specific programs to get people trained up quickly to address the needs of the labor market in the film industry,” Ungaro says. “They also teach some of the more specific movie skills, like understanding the site selection process for film and organizing and pulling all those things together.”

Education of a different sort is helping drive economic development in Spalding County. At the Griffin campus of the University of Georgia, a 14,500-square-foot Food Technology Center is under construction and slated to come online later this year. The \$5.5-million facility will house the Food Product Innovation and Commercialization Center and offer resources for food companies developing new products or improving production techniques. The center facilitates commercialization of food products by providing access to food scientists and a host of labs and production facilities for both startup ventures and existing food companies.

“It took us 15 years, but we finally have broken ground on the center,” says David Luckie, executive director of the Griffin-Spalding County Development Authority. “We think it will create jobs and capital investment. Not just for our community, but for all of Georgia. It’s the only one like it in the southeastern United States.” ■



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