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'House of Cards': Spicy Locales at Lo-Cal Costs



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Baltimore a worthy sub for D.C.

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The glossy and rich Washington, D.C., locations of Netflix's "[House of Cards](http://variety.com/t/house-of-cards/)" can be found all over Baltimore, thanks to series location manager [Patrick Burn](http://variety.com/t/patrick-burn/).

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Burn, based in Takoma Park, Md., not only finds the locations but also makes the deals for them and most important, makes sure they are cleaned up when the crew leaves.

He began his career in the early 1990s as a PA on local shoots, and learned a lot on season three of "[The Wire](http://variety.com/t/the-wire/)," which shot in Baltimore.

That was a baptism of fire, as the gritty drama filmed in local crack houses, alleys and run-down neighborhoods.

"There were several times when we were scouting real crack houses and shooting galleries, and all of the sudden, there were vans of production people coming into these unlikely neighborhoods," he says.

Sometimes, locations can be too real.

"For 'The Wire,' we'd be shooting in an alley they liked the look of," Burn recalls, noting that the area was already full of garbage, syringes and other drug paraphernalia. But the producers would pay someone to clean it up and have the props department come in and artfully litter the "set" for the camera.

"House of Cards," which has been picked up for a second season by Netflix, has its own set of challenges. Burn began scouting the area in late 2011 with series exec producer David Fincher, who also directed the first few episodes. Although they explored and spent a lot of time in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Baltimore offer production tax incentives.

"I scouted all over D.C. to see what we needed, and then we created our own D.C. in Baltimore," Burn says, noting that this series was particularly challenging because the production is re-creating familiar and well-known buildings and areas.

How about Freddy's BBQ, the joint that Congressman Underwood (Kevin Spacey) frequents? Burn says they rent a Baltimore storefront for the restaurant. "People are always asking, during production, when is the barbecue is going to open? Fans of the show drive around D.C. looking for the barbecue."

In fact, even Burn's mother, a Washington, D.C., native, is fooled by her son's location-spotting acumen, asking him about buildings in the capital city that

had been used on the shoots.

The vet location manager — he's worked on big-budget pics such as "Salt" and myriad TV commercials and magazine shoots — says the real trick for this show is trying not to be very specific with locations. "If you're doing your job right," says Burn, "then no one pays attention."

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