

New film captures WTC redevelopment battle

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The political battle royal over the World Trade Center site is meticulously captured in the new revealing documentary, "16 Acres."

The flick covers the decade of twists and turns from the time Larry Silverstein hoisted the keys to the complex on July 25, 2001, through the opening of the Memorial fountains on Sept. 11, 2011.

The \$750,000 film, by co-producers Mike Marcucci and Matt Kapp, was sharply pared down by director Richard Hankin from 3,000 hours of archival footage and interviews with the players.

Notably, the entire Memorial Museum and the deaths of firefighters while tearing down the former Deutsche Bank building are ignored completely — both fodder for entire movies themselves.

Leaseholder Silverstein and his executive Janno Lieber, former Gov. George Pataki, the Port Authority's Kenneth Ringle, Lower Manhattan Development Corp.'s Roland Betts, Memorial designer Michael Arad and Rosaleen Tallon, sister of firefighter Sean Tallon, who died in the attacks, are among those who candidly discuss their roles. The film intersperses news footage with the interviews, creating a riveting and emotional tug of war over the direction of the rebuilding and the worldwide fascination with the memorial scheme.

Numerous New Yorkers are shown at emotional town meetings telling the politicians what they think should be built. Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani is shown begging that the site be left fallow.

Serial photo-op master plans, groundbreaking and other announcements are highlighted by the controversy over a giant cornerstone for the Freedom Tower — since renamed One World Trade Center — when Silverstein strides into the moment of the unveiling. The cornerstone is later deep-sixed in the dead of night.

Lynne Sagalyn, the Earle W. Kazis and Benjamin Schore Professor of Real Estate, Columbia Business School, who viewed the film and toured the site earlier this week along with the co-producers said, "The documentary is a good overview of the serial controversies that besieged the site up to the point where the Memorial plaza opened. They did a heroic job of putting into 90 minutes" [what took a decade].

The film's North American premiere, on Oct. 18 at the Jazz at Lincoln Center's Allen Room, as part of the 2012 Architecture & Design Film Festival, is sold out — but the movie will also be shown on Oct. 19 at 5 p.m. and Oct. 20 at 5:15 p.m. at Tribeca Cinemas.

It will also be screened for the public at The Quad Cinema from Nov. 16-22.