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'16 Acres' and the emotional journey toward building a monument for 9/11

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Can you imagine the worst kind of meetings, where high-power political figures and their constituents meet and try to come to a decision that serves the public and private interests of a major city? That is what "16 Acres" is about: 11 years of plans made and canceled as debates continue over just how to address that huge hole left in Manhattan on 9/11.

Using archival footage and contemporary interviews, director Richard Hankin examines the various concerned parties within the framework of architecture critic Philip Nobel's narration. Nobel considers that while the World Trade Center was an office building it has now become a symbol—something usually reserved for monuments and statues or homes of historic figures. The World Trade Center has become a symbol of community healing, defiance before terrorism and a renewal of a city and a country. There's that troubling concept of closure.

Yet for political figures such as mayors and governors (Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Governor George Pataki as well as former mayors and governors in archival footage), this can be both a photo op as well as a heavy burden of impossible expectation. Both Nobel and Esquire writer Scott Raab note that like any project with too many concerned parties, there are false starts and postponed decisions. This might give you nightmares about meetings or make you feel that your own meetings are more bearable.

Democracy at work is messy, but at least everyone's voice gets heard. That means people like Rosaleen Tallon, the sister of a firefighter who died there and Larry Silverstein, the man who bought the Twin Towers six weeks before it was destroyed. If the aim is the healing and mending a city and a nation, then every opinion needs to be heard. This 2012 documentary "16 Acres" will serve as a family album or an explanation of how things were eventually resolved and a monument got made and at 95-minutes is shorter than the worst meeting that I can recall being in on. The movie is playing for one week only at the Pasadena Laemmle Playhouse 7, ending 20 December 2012.

"16 Acres" is currently playing at the Laemmle Pasadena Playhouse 7.