

Limelight Cinema Group presents

Begging For BILLIONAIRES

Documentary *Begging For Billionaires* exposes the human toll of eminent domain abuse

A ground breaking independent documentary reveals the human drama that unfolds when families and small business owners struggle to defend their homes and livelihoods from being taken by legacy-building politicians and handed to billionaire developers and corporations.

KANSAS CITY, MO. – A new feature-length film called *Begging For Billionaires* (See trailer and clips at www.beggingforbillionaires.com) takes a hard look at the abusive eminent domain and tax increment financing policies that have displaced tens of thousands of property owners in cities across America.

Using Kansas City as a backdrop, the film chronicles the plight of two family-owned businesses and other property owners who struggle to survive under the threat of eminent domain. Their properties are ultimately taken by Kansas City officials to make way for a mixed-use entertainment redevelopment in the city's Power and Light District.

The project was sold to local taxpayers as a way to attract a professional hockey team and new corporations to Kansas City. Instead, it subsidized an NHL arena that has no team to play in it and a new office tower for H&R Block, a profitable, Fortune 500 company that was already based in Kansas City. In addition, longtime downtown Kansas City retailers were forced out of their properties to make way for other retailers.

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“Eminent domain abuse has become a big issue across the country,” says *Begging For Billionaires* Director and Executive Producer Philip Klein. “I made the documentary to make people aware of how important this issue is and to expose them to how eminent domain is being used to benefit private developers and big corporations rather than the public.”

Klein is a property rights activist, independent filmmaker and lifelong entertainer. He grew up in the family carnival business, has worked as a magician and vaudeville performer, and is a graduate of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. He says he used his experiences both as an entertainer and an activist to make *Begging For Billionaires*.

“The film exposes the truth about so-called ‘economic development,’ but it’s really about the right to own property in America,” Klein says.

Once relegated to public projects, eminent domain is today being used by city governments to aid private enterprise. Vague, elusive definitions of “blight,” tax breaks for fat-cat developers and multi-billion dollar companies like Wal-Mart, and outright corruption are all part of the equation.

The issue of eminent domain was thrust into the headlines after the fallout of the 2005 *Kelo v. City of New London* case, in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a state court’s ruling allowing cities to exercise eminent domain powers on behalf of private interests in the name of ‘economic development.’

Begging For Billionaires was an 8-year project that had its challenges, Klein says. At one point, he was even arrested and removed from a public meeting for having a video camera.

The film is today making its way through the national film festival circuit. Klein says he is working to secure a distributor to make the film available for wider release by 2008.

The film’s editor and post-producer is award-winning filmmaker Daniel Polsfuss, whose past documentaries include *The Barbed Wire Club*, about a group of international men imprisoned in Japanese POW camps, *Gen-X*, which investigates Gen-x-ers’ outlook on media advertising, and *Imagination Reality*, a profile of Chinese T’ai Chi Master T.T. Liang.

The film’s original music was written and recorded by two Grammy-nominated artists: folk musician Tom Goodkind, who was made famous in the 1980s while recording and touring with the internationally famous Washington Squares, and Phil Solem, formerly of the pop-duo The Rembrandts, whose credits include a string of top 40 hits, including the theme song for the hit NBC TV series *Friends*.