

New York

Ground Zero plus ten

The wounds are healing slowly—but they are healing

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ON SEPTEMBER 11th 2001 everyone who was at their desk at Cantor Fitzgerald, on the 101st-105th floors of the World Trade Centre's north tower, died. Of the company's 960 New York-based employees, 658 were killed, including Gary Lutnick, brother of Howard, the firm's chief executive. In all, the attacks took 2,752 lives from the city. But the disaster called forth great-heartedness. A week later, when



it was not yet clear the company would survive—it was losing \$1m a day and was in need of a \$75 billion loan—Mr Lutnick announced that Cantor would share 25% of the firm's profits with victims' families for five years and would provide them with health insurance for ten years. This amounted to \$180m. The families also received \$45m in bonuses.

Lower Manhattan, like Cantor Fitzgerald, suffered a devastating loss on that day. Some 14m square feet (1.3m square metres) of office space was damaged or destroyed and 65,000 jobs were lost or relocated. Hundreds of businesses closed, some permanently. Yet ten years on, the area is doing well. According to the Downtown Alliance, its vacancy rate is one of the lowest in the country. The volume of apartment sales has increased by 151% since 2003. The resident population has more than doubled, to 56,000, since 2001. Six new schools have opened there since 2009. Last year almost 10m tourists visited. Many stay at one of the 18 hotels in Lower Manhattan, three times the number in 2001. Though many companies fled in the first two years after the attacks, today there are more downtown than there were in 2001.

The biggest change is at the site itself. After years of construction delays and paralysis, One World Trade Centre, formerly known as "Freedom Tower", now tops 80 floors. It is beginning to dominate the downtown skyline as the twin towers once did. Still two years from completion, when it will reach 104 storeys, 1m square feet of it is already leased to Condé Nast, a publishing company. The 9/11 museum, meanwhile, will not open till next September; but visitors to the site will soon be able to see two of the steel trident-shaped supports from the original building, which survived and have now been enclosed in the museum's glass atrium. Seeing them for the first time since they were salvaged from the pulverised buildings is powerfully impressive. Visitors will also be able to see and touch the 70-foot (21.3-metre) underground wall that mercifully held back the Hudson River during the attacks.

The memorial, called "Reflecting Absence", will open on September 11th. Its main features are

two pools on the footprints of the fallen towers (see picture) with accompanying waterfalls. The names of the dead are inscribed in the bronze that surrounds the pools. They may appear jumbled, but people who worked together and died together are grouped together.

Special requests were accommodated, such as one made by the daughter of a man who died on Flight AA11, which crashed into the tower where her best friend was killed. The two are inscribed together. Joe Daniels, the memorial's overseer, called the grouping of the names the most challenging part of the project; many families wanted more information to be given about their lost ones. "How we remember the dead says a lot," says Edie Lutnick, Howard's and Gary's sister. "We could have done better." Still, seeing the names of so many dead is moving indeed. The memorial also includes a survivor, a pear tree that was originally planted in the WTC plaza in the 1970s. It was found amid the rubble, was nursed back to health and was returned to the site last year.

Security at the memorial will be tight. All visitors will be screened. New York's police department (NYPD) has boosted its presence in the area, which is still in the terrorists' sights. Under the direction of Ray Kelly, the police commissioner, the NYPD has expanded its mission to include counter-terrorism. Some 1,000 officers work in its terrorism division. New York detectives are deployed in 11 foreign cities, and departmental linguists at home (including native speakers of Arabic, Pushtu and Bengali) look and listen out for worrying chatter. The police department has installed an extensive camera system, licence-plate readers and air monitors. A dozen plots against New York have been thwarted or have failed since the attacks, including one to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge. Last year a home-grown terrorist attempted, but failed, to set off a bomb in Times Square.

As the tenth anniversary approaches, documentaries and special reports are being broadcast almost nightly. Books covering the anniversary, including Ms Lutnick's "An Unbroken Bond" are hitting the shops. Every museum and gallery seems to be holding some sort of commemorative event. But New Yorkers do not need a reminder. Every day they are told, "If you see something, say something." There are few buildings where a photo-ID is not required for access, notes Steve Malanga of the Manhattan Institute, a think-tank. And many of New York's first-responders are suffering and many may be dying because they were exposed to toxins during the rescue efforts after the attacks, despite being told by the Environmental Protection Agency that the air was safe.

Getting compensation for these brave people was harder than it should have been. Congress dragged its feet for years, but was eventually shamed into passing the Zadroga Act at the end of last year. On August 29th the fund expanded the "dust zone", which means that more people who fell ill because of living or working in the area can now apply for coverage. Cancer claims, however, are excluded.

Today Cantor Fitzgerald is thriving. Its staff has grown to 1,600. And, like New York, it has changed. It, too, is a lot more cautious. Its new offices are in midtown, and all its floors can be reached by the fire department's ladders.

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