

It's Breslin's next big project

■ Real estate studies center at Hofstra has his name and dollars

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More than half a century ago, when developer Wilbur Breslin started his career, there were corn fields, then suburban sprawl, some of which the businessman freely conceded he committed.

In a ceremony yesterday, the man responsible for some of Long Island's big commercial projects helped kick off Hofstra University's Wilbur F. Breslin Center for Real Estate Studies, where industry professionals, government officials, the public and students can convene to tackle some of Long Island's biggest problems. Like sprawl. Or the subprime collapse. Or more respect for real estate professionals.



NEWSDAY PHOTO, 2003 / KAREN WILES STABLE

Wilbur Breslin

"It is my hope that this center will keep Long Island at the forefront of changes in the industry," said the founder of Breslin Realty.

The new venture will take a multidisciplinary approach to real estate, with programs that encompass zoning law, market

forces, taxes and other issues. The center is expected to serve as a think tank and a resource for consumers.

It opens at a time when university and some industry officials believe real estate issues, from mortgages to the environment, are more complex than ever.

The first offering will be a land-use training program on Monday for Long Island's key decision-makers, followed later by a panel on green building and a fall conference on redeveloping Long Island, said Richard Guardino Jr., the center's executive dean and Hofstra's vice president for business development.

"The Breslin Center . . . will generate an innovative and scholarly discussion about how real estate issues impact our region and society," said Hofstra president Stuart Rabinowitz. "It will give the study of real estate the kind of economic analysis it has not yet received."

Breslin, 80, is a former Hofstra board member whose latest gift of \$2.25 million to the university will help fund the center. He's bumped up against environmentalists and community groups on high-profile projects that have taken decades to settle, including an 850,000-square-foot shopping center that will include some pine barrens in Yaphank.

The developer, who said after the ceremony that he's made his share of business mistakes, said his role in the center is yet to be defined but he has lessons to pass on. His philanthropic efforts for Hofstra — \$30 million raised when he was chairman of the university's capital campaign — may be the college life he never had after graduating from Hempstead High School at 16.

"The streets of Long Island were our classrooms," he said, "and very few of us were lucky to get any formal training."