



Carlisle Towery
President,
Greater Jamaica Development Center

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Carlisle Towery's involvement in the Southeast Queens community stretches as far back as the 1970s and goes beyond his job at Greater Jamaica Development Center (GJDC). Towery is a member of the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, as well as the York College Community Advisory Board, where he acts as York's liaison to the Food and Drug Administration and has special involvement with their aviation institute.

PERSONAL: Towery, 70, was raised in Alabama but lives in Westchester County. He has five children, all grown. Two live in New York, two in Tennessee, and one in Hawaii. Towery attended Antioch University, received his degree in Architecture from Auburn University, and got his Masters in Architecture\Urban Design from Columbia University.

JOB: As the President of GJDC, Towery oversees a 40-person not-for-profit entity that practices local economic development. His work is devoted exclusively to downtown Jamaica's revitalization.

PROUDEST MOMENT: Towery's mother, 96, received the Alabama Governor's Award for the Arts in 1999. "She was 90 at the time," said Towery. "Seeing her receive that award at that age filled me with pride."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "Attracting private investment" in Jamaica is Towery's current challenge. "We've succeeded with public investment," he said, citing institutions like York College, but persuading private investors of the potential in a neighborhood like Jamaica is no easy task, said Towery.

FAVORITE MEMORY: While Towery was at Antioch, Corretta Scott King, an alumna and wife of Martin Luther King, Jr., visited the campus, and Towery was one of the students lucky enough to have dinner with her. Having always prided himself on his intellectual awareness and concern for civil rights, Towery was taken aback when King asked him about the state of civil rights in his home town. "I had no idea how to answer," said Towery. "I didn't know who our councilman was - I didn't know a damn thing. It was my most embarrassing moment. I realized I had to take a more practical approach to social issues."

INSPIRATION: Ralph McGill, a columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, inspired Towery to begin his own social\political column in the Auburn University publication for which he worked. Ultimately, Towery had the chance to interview McGill. "He wrote so courageously and naturally about race relations that he stiffened my backbone to those kinds of challenges," said Towery. "He was a real inspiration when I needed him."