



Office of Finance

Office of Finance: Generating Revenue

■ **Office of Finance collects taxes and fees to fund many City assets ... including many of your salaries.**

Photos by Liz Montes, Club Counselor; Angel Gomez, Member Services Manager; and Sammy Davis and Joon Lee, courtesy of the Office of Finance

FINANCE — As a result of City Charter Reform, the Office of Finance (Finance) was created in 2000 to centralize much of the City's revenue collection efforts under one manager, the Director of Finance.

The City's tax and permit collections were transferred to Finance from the City Clerk's Office in 2000, and the Citywide Collection Unit was transferred from the City Attorney's Office in 2002. The current staffing level of 342 employees is tasked with collecting more than \$2 billion in revenue from various sources including taxes, fees and permits annually.

Below is a partial list of the many types of revenue collected by Finance along with examples of what the tax or permit is for and who enforces, if not the Office of Finance:

- Business tax
- Parking occupancy tax (parking lots)
- Utility users tax (electricity, telephone, gas)
- Transient occupancy tax (hotel rooms)
- Real property transfer tax (remitted by the County for property sales)
- Police alarm permits (burglar alarms – enforced by LAPD)
- Police permits (for example, massage therapists – enforced by LAPD)
- Fire permits (for example, assemblage occupancy – enforced by LAFD)
- Tobacco retailer's permit (enforced by the City Attorney's Office)

This revenue supports numerous essential City services; for example, paying the salaries for Police Officers and Fire Fighters, filling potholes, maintaining City parks, expanding library collections, etc. As you can see, much of the City's funding for core services is dependent on Finance's extensive revenue collection efforts.

City Hall Office



From left: Martha Pinckney, 3 years; and Linda Arviqu, 20 years.



From left: Caiteline Lam, 8 years; Vanessa Garcia, 5 years; Martha Torres, 27 years; and Vanessa Lopez, 9 years.



From left: Brad Kirkland, 5 years; and Daniel Villaneda, 6 years.



From left: Brenda Holyfield, 19.5 years; Vanesha Foisia, 2 years; Carolyn Mix-Le, 23 years; and David Nevarez, 6 years.



Sharon Williams, 32.5 years.



From left: Crystal Walker, 18 years; Victor Salaiza, 22 years; and Debra Chavez, 13 years.



From left: Charmaine Martin, 18 years; Tamu Moseley, 7 years; and Melina Rosas, 9 years.



Ruben Munoz, Personnel Director, 33 years.



From left: Josie Mendoza, 7 months; Angela Gonzalez, 24 years; Yolanda McCollough, 19 years; and James Durkian, 7 years.



From left: June Ulrich, Sr. MA II, 34 years; and Jeffery Whitmore, Revenue Manager, 19 years.



Front row, from left: Ellaina Smith, 24 years; and Courine Jaramillo, 21 years. Back: Martin Higgins, 34 years; Bea Suga, 30 years; and Benjamin Ortiz, 11 years.



From left: Michelle Cheng, 17 years; and Ed Cabrera, Chief I, Tax and Permit, 12 years.



Office of Finance

Department of the Month

City Hall Office (continued)



Front row, from left: Minnie Johnson, 32 years; and Sandy Mack, 36 years. Back: Michael Leisenbach, 5 years; Ed Ramos, 21 years; Travis Anderson, 8 years; and Evelyn Kelley, 12 years.



Linda Brazile, 12 years.



From left: Frances Felix, 4 years; Virginia Aguirre, 4 years; Yvette Harrison, 13 years; Belinda Manada, 3.5 years; and Barbara Hamm, 24 years.



Rhey Vista, 17 years.



From left: Ela Vallejo, Executive Secretary, 29 years, with the two people who helped *Alive!* produce this Dept. of the Month feature: Jeffery Whitmore, Revenue Manager, 20 years; and Crystal Walker, Secretary, 18 years.



Front row, from left: Stelia Valenzuela, 18 years; and Luz David, 25 years. Back: Brad Moe, 8 years; Diedra Johnson, 8 years; Karen Dean, 27 years; and Juanita Toquero, 17 years.

Office of Finance: Mission Statement

Finance has eight public counter locations throughout the City to serve the public. Additionally, there is a Call Center staffed by 20 employees, open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and round the clock access to their Customer Service email option for incoming inquiries. The comprehensive Website at www.lacounty.org/finance provides a multitude of information along with the option to file annual business tax renewals on-line (upwards of 400,000 renewal forms are mailed out annually). Staff works in the field directly with the City's taxpayers through audit and enforcement activities. Specialized job classifications in Finance include those in the Tax Compliance Officer series, the Tax Auditor series, and Collection Investigator.

The majority of activity within the Office revolves around enforcing compliance with the City's Business Tax Ordinance. This ordinance imposes a privilege tax for revenue purposes only – no attempt is made through this tax to regulate the conduct of businesses; this tax is not a business license as many have misinterpreted. It is merely a tax required of businesses that are subject to the ordinance by engaging in business within the City of Los Angeles. Registering a business with the Office of Finance and maintaining a Business Tax Registration Certificate (BTRC) via annual renewal accomplishes compliance with the ordinance. In fiscal year 2006-07, Finance collected \$465.8 million in business tax revenue – an all-time high!

In recent years, there have been many changes in the ways the City historically approached tax collection. Through the multi-year efforts of the Business Tax Advisory Committee, Mayor and City Council, tax reform measures were developed and implemented. One example is the increased Small Business Exemption threshold from \$5,000 to

\$50,000 to the current \$100,000 minimum to take advantage of this incentive. Another example is the consolidation of the numerous Funds and Classifications from 42 down to nine, with only six applicable rates. Work continues on simplifying the business tax ordinance and compliance procedures through the Mayor and City Council's current Ad Hoc Business Tax Reform Committee.

Finance has also implemented a number of programs to discover non-compliant businesses that are not paying their fair share of business taxes. Through state legislation (Assembly Bill 63), California municipalities gained access to the State's Franchise Tax Board records for data matching purposes. Through this program, the City has added more than 85,000 new accounts to the tax rolls and generated more than \$73 million in revenue since its 2002 inception. Other discovery efforts include utilizing databases from other City departments including utility records, housing records, and property records for data matching purposes.

Tax collection is not glamorous, but the efforts of the fine employees of the Office of Finance have afforded the City an annual contribution to the General Fund that pays for many City services. These funds pay for department salaries, community programs and public safety services, to name a few. City employees should recognize the less-than-glamorous role of tax collection their fellow Finance employees perform to fund so much for the City of Los Angeles. Through aggressive discovery programs and dedication to service, the tax rolls have increased each year since the inception of the Office of Finance – a job well done by anyone's standards.

"To provide efficient, effective and responsible revenue collection services through a customer-focused environment to taxpayers and City departments through management, assessment and application of best practices."

— Office of Finance
Mission Statement



From left: Carolyn Mix-Le, 23 years; Angela Gonzalez, 24 years; and Juana B. Garcia, 9 years.



Systems unit: Winston Weng, 8 years.



Nelia Mayo, 25 years. Nelia Mayo, 25 years.



Tax Code Analysis/Taxpayer Advocate units, from left: Michael Pe, 1 year; John Dierking, 5 years; and Mark O'Brien.



Tax Code Analysis unit, from left: Brian Dolan, 4 years; Alicia Vega, 18 years; Rosalind Barden, 6 years; and Mark O'Brien, Sr. Management Analyst II, 34 years.



Department of the Month

Office of Finance

Van Nuys Office

Office of Finance: New and Vital



Antoinette Christovale,
Director of Finance

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you into our little corner of the City, the Office of Finance. We're not a large department (just 342 employees) or long established (created in 2000), but we play a vital role in providing economic stability for the City. Finance staff enforces the City's tax laws and collects a wide variety of taxes, fees, and permits on behalf of several City departments, including the Police and Fire departments. We also perform final collection activities on aged debt referred to our Citywide Collection Unit as a last effort prior to write-off.

Since I accepted the position of Director of Finance back in 2000, my department has increased collections each year due in large part to the dedicated employees of the Office of Finance. While we have the advantage of many long-term employees who maintain wonderful stores of historical knowledge, we also benefit from the vibrancy of new college graduates entering our workforce directly into the Tax Compliance Officer series and or Tax Auditor series, a great launching point for a City career. The implementation of our new LATAX mainframe system in the fall of 2004 has vastly improved our operations, along with numerous tax reforms we have recommended for implementation in recent years.

As an advocate for the business community, I have participated in the Business Tax Advisory Committee and the Ad Hoc Business Tax Reform Committee in addition to numerous industry organizations and national conferences to create a more user-friendly way of doing business in the City of Los Angeles. It is vital that the City of Los Angeles attracts new businesses and keeps existing businesses from moving out of the City. To this end, my office has worked closely with elected officials, industry leaders and individual business owners to develop ways in which the City's concerns may be met in concert with the business community.

I am pleased and honored to have the Office of Finance featured in *Alive!* I believe our accomplishments deserve to be highlighted, and I am happy to share information about our department with the rest of the City. I hope you enjoy learning about our operations and accomplishments, as I am proud to recognize my staff and the department's very deserving efforts.



From left: Tom Szabo, 15 years; Emilio Salamanca, 25 years; and Tracie Vu, 17 years.



Jeanette Santoni, 7.5 years.



From left: Rhoda Herrera, 1.5 years; Manju Rajappan, 2 weeks; Eiko Satake, 18 years; and Craig Sykes, 9 years.



Susan White, 27 years.



Ben Bohorquez, 35 years.



Frozee T. Avila, 7.5 years.

Wilshire Office



Front: Vicky Lit, 1 year. Back row, from left: Duc Vu, 1 year; Vicky Leung, 18 years; Wendy Li, 3 years; Edwina Thompson, 18 years; and Jesus Dungo, 7 years.



Front row, from left: Maria Alvarez, 17 years, and Marilou aVillagonzalo, 2 years. Back: Teresa Eidenbock, 2 years; Walther Gencon, 22 years; Eduardo Marana, 7 years; and Fernando Torres, 13 years.



Front row, from left: Khanh Banh, 21 years; and Amer Knight, 5 years. Back: Martin Lantion, 8 years; and Gerard Liao, 3 years.



Front: Brenda Lakes, 29 years. Back, from left: Cinthia Mejia, 6 years; Gidget Blevins, 5 years; Sandra Marquez, 9 years; and Travon Moss, 5 years.



Front row, from left: Carl Sampson, 19 years, and Mike Gomez, 3 years. Back: Pili Larson, 21 years; Ann Bostich, 1 year; Emilia Yanez, 20 years; Ivy Chow, 19 years; and Hadiara Diallo, 8.5 years.



From left: Melba Bustos and Linda Francis, 6 years.

Office of Finance

Department of the Month

Wilshire Office



Front: Edna Zafra, 18 years. Back, from left: Marianne Lopez, 2 years; Melba Bustos, 22 years; Maricel Chavez, 1 year; Sylvia Manalang, 7 years; and Diosdado Morales, 1 year.



Front row, from left: Bessabuena Dela Cruz, 7 years; Lulu Kabiling, 21 years; and Caren Ware, 1 year. Back row: Joel Cortez, 4 years; Marlene Salawdanan, 7 years; and Benedict Erganena, 4 years.



Front row, from left: Myrna Tecson, 16.5 years; Tessie Diaz, 17 years; and Carlos Venegas Jr., 12 years. Back: Art Faelnar, 9 years; Romy Marmol, 17 years; and Jose Agelr, 27 years.



Front: Henry Chan, 22 years. Back row, from left: Sheldon Miller, 14 years; Eva Liu, 17 years; Teresa Lei, 9 years; and Allan Shum, 11 years.



Front row, from left: Cindy Sandusky, 27 years; David Ojeda, 9 years; and Wilbert Aqntonio, 11 years. Back: Eddie Zetina, 7 years; Isaac Nwachukwu, 10 years; Mary Aliasghar, 21 years; Pete Galang, 12 years; and Rubert Razon, 23 years.



Front row, from left: Francis Cheng, 6 years; and Kingsford Kyei, 6 months. Back: Harry Avunjian, 5 years; Patrick Ho, 7 years; Jonathan Luu, 8 years; Jonathan Kim, 18 years; and Don Halfhill, 5 years.



Front: Gary Tran, 1 year. Back row, from left: Doris Duncan, 7 years; Judy Ramirez, 21 years; Leslie Rush, 22.5 years; and Maria Pascual, 4 years.



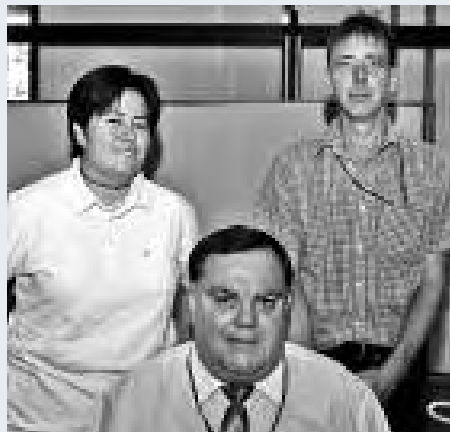
Front: Robert Gagnon, 19 years. Back row, from left: Louie Ulanday, 7 years; Maria Imelda Reyes, 3 years; Nick Real, 3 years; Somia Magno, 26 years; and Ana Waggoner, 12 years.



Front: Phyllis Perkins, 25 years. Back row, from left: Jorge Enciso, 10 years; Patty Kawada, 1.5 years; Kay Ha, 5 years; Ivet Bagrainyan, 3 years; and Larry Siu, 21 years.



From left: Angela Hayes, 9 years; Linda Ozuna, 17 years; and Dawnell Hawkins, 30 years.



Front: Larry Manocchio, 21 years. Back row, from left: Dawn Bitste, 1 month; and James Miller, 3 years.



Front: Nick Shadvaldian, 22 years. Back, from left: Warren Sibille, 1 year; Olivia Alvarado Ford, 26 years; and Lisa Fuqua, 2.5 years.



Myra McLean, 10 months.

Office of Finance

PROFILE

Founded: 2000

Director: Antoinette Christovale

Employees: 342

Annual revenue: More than \$2 billion
Business taxes collected (FY 2006-07): \$465.8 million

Customer service locations: 8 (City Hall, Hollywood, San Pedro, Van Nuys, West L.A., Westchester, Watts, Figueroa/downtown) plus call center

Mission statement: "To provide efficient, effective and responsible revenue collection services through a customer-focused environment to taxpayers and City departments through management, assessment and application of best practices."

Contact: (213) 473-5901, www.lacity.org/finance





Department of the Month

Office of Finance

Wilshire Office (continued)



Front: Victor Hernandez, 1 year. Back row, from left: Julie Anne Torres, 1 year; Socorro Smith, 1 year; and Monika McKnight, 1 year.



Cyndia Hanna, 7 years.



Leonard Malabayoc, 22 years.



Catherine Lee, 17 years.



Front row, from left: Deborah Bates-Johnson, 20.5 years; and William Tang, 4 years. Back: Amabel Hill, 19 years; and Cay Majeeda, 10 years.

Westchester Branch Office



Back: Jeametta Gates, 21 years. Front: Chandra Flemister, 21 years.



Front row, from left: Mai Tran, 1 year; and Joann Torres, 6 years. Back: Sherry Tou, 4 months; and Jova Salazar, 11 months.



Hollywood Branch Office



From left: Michael Poon, 6 years; Miya Taepun, 1 year; and Montwayne Smith, 5 years.



From left: Cassandra Chambliss, 1 year; Jeff Strafford, 1 year; and Donna Givens, 2 years.

West Los Angeles Branch Office



From left: Christine Brown-Smith, 30 years; Jerri Davis, 11.5 years; Margaret Buchheit, 21 years; Pamela Woodard, 5 years; Michael Brandon, 1.5 years; and Christine Bohlig, 5 years.

Alive! thanks Jeffery Whitmore, Revenue Manager, and Crystal Walker, Jeff Whitmore's secretary, for their great assistance in producing this Department of the Month feature.

ClubFest Photos on the Web!

As a great new Club service for Club Members, *Alive!* has placed all these ClubFest photos...and more...on the Web. Log on to see 'em all in color! Go to: www.cityemployeesclub.com and click on ClubFest (Clubfest photos are expected to be on the Website in the second or third week of October.)

