

*Congratulations!*

# Alvin Blain Retires

■ **General Services General Manager and Club Member retires after 35 of City Service.**



Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager, General Services, and City Purchasing Agent.

**GENERAL SERVICES** — The one-time garage attendant is retiring as General Manager.

Alvin Blain, the General Manager, General Services, and longtime Club Member, retired April 1 after 35 years of City service. An official retirement party was held in his honor on March 25.

*Alive!* had trouble catching up with Alvin in mid-March because he had numerous thank-you parties to attend.

"I've been going to three parties every day," he told *Alive!*

"Yesterday was Piper Tech; where there were 168 people there, just employees. Then I went to Fleet Services, with 100. Today it's the heliport. Custodial had one for me. Every division is throwing another party. And my official one isn't until next week!"

And the feeling is mutual.

"My employees are the success of General Services. They move it forward."

He rates safety and productivity as his biggest successes. "We have made General Services a much safer place for employees, for citizens, for everybody," he said. "Our number one goal was to improve on safety. And we're number one [department] in terms of safety."

"And I also wanted to create a sense of urgency — get work done, and then follow up on it. It's all about being productive and customer service. We're doing an excellent job. I feel good about retiring, with the way everything is."

"In 35 years, we've gone from a government

operation to more like a business now. We have goals and controls. We have benchmarking. We're more productive. We're still run by elected officials. What also hasn't changed is that we want to make the City a better place for everyone.

"I'd like to see General Services keep on its current path of success. The employees have turned the department into one they are proud of."

"If I had the chance to do it all over again, I think I would do it all the same. I'm very pleased with the department, and I'm retiring on my terms."

He's looking forward to retiring, but it might be short-lived.

"I've always set up myself to have the option to sit on my front porch," he explained. "I have the option to do that, or to do something else if I want to. I will probably travel; we have an RV. Or I might go back to work. I've had lots of opportunities just drop out of the sky [recently]. But I don't know if I will take any of them. I'm retiring, so I want to be unemployed for at least a month."

"The real success of my time here was the journey, the path, the friends, the 35 years. I'm just lucky that people allowed me to be a part of their success."

"I'm so lucky I have that relationship with my employees," he said, rushing off to another party. "It is a tremendous honor to work in civil service. My employees, the people of General Services, have been the best part of this. They're the best."

**Here's a portion of the City's resolution upon his retirement:**

"Whereas, Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager, General Services (GSD), is retiring on April 1, 2008 after 35 years of service to the City; and

"Whereas, Alvin is an extraordinary and remarkable leader whose career includes unparalleled achievements and accomplishments; Alvin manages General Services policies and programs to support other offices in City government; he serves as the City's Purchasing Agent by directing the purchase, storage and distribution of supplies; he oversees the acquisition, leasing, and management of all City property; repair and maintenance operations of the City's fleet of more than 10,000 automobiles, trucks, aircraft

and equipment; parking, mail, security, custodial and maintenance services for more than 900 facilities; and operation of the City's materials testing laboratory;

"Whereas, Alvin began his career with the City on July 2, 1973 as a Garage Attendant with the LAPD, where he performed non-repair servicing of passenger vehicles, trucks, and motorcycles; and

"Whereas, in 1974 Alvin transferred to Transportation and was promoted to Equipment Mechanic, where he displayed extraordinary application to his duties, was a fast learner, cooperated well with his supervisors and fellow

employees, and displayed excellent work attitude and very high work output; and

"Whereas, in 1977 Alvin was promoted to Heavy Duty Equipment Mechanic for the Transportation, where he performed journey-level work in the maintenance and repair of construction, road maintenance and fire fighting equipment; built, installed and modified equipment for special purposes and supervised a small group of employees performing this work; he was the fastest learning mechanic and was very eager to learn and work; he received a Certificate of Commendation for his personal effort in assisting on a special task force assembled to alleviate a very serious and potential equipment problem; and

"Whereas, in 1979 Alvin transferred back to General Services and was promoted in 1981 to Equipment Repair Supervisor, where he supervised the work of senior and journey-level workers, apprentices, and helpers and engaged the maintenance and servicing of various equipment; he scheduled preventive maintenance and repair work, diagnosed equipment trouble from various records and maintained subordinates work schedules, inspected small outlying shops and was on call 24-hours a day for emergency work; and

"Whereas, in 1984 Alvin was promoted to Senior Automotive Supervisor, Airports, where he directed and coordinated the activities of a number of specialized shops engaged in the maintenance and repair of transportation and construction equipment; he developed and wrote specifications, analyzed bids and recommended purchases of new equipment and modifications; his extensive knowledge of purchasing procedures and storekeeping methods prepared him for his next career advancement; and

"Whereas, in 1984 Alvin was promoted to General Automotive Supervisor, General Services, where he was responsible for directing the activities of a large automotive maintenance and repair unit and managed the economical repair of equipment after failure has occurred; he directed a large group of employees, prepared and analyzed budget, activity and other related reports; and

"Whereas, in 1988 Alvin was promoted to Equipment Superintendent for General Services, where he provided accountability, efficient management, achievement of program goals and their effect on City operation; determined budgetary needs and submitted justification for budget requests; interacted regularly with client departments to obtain and furnish information; assigned work and appraised performance of subordinate supervisors; recommended and established divisional work standards, provided for employee development, training and safety, demonstrated excellent technical knowledge, and ensured the enforcement of divisional policies; and

"Whereas, in 1995 Alvin was promoted to Director of Fleet Services, General Services,



From left: Gary Newton, Chief Special Officer; Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager and City Purchasing Agent; and Chief William J. Bratton, LAPD.



1983: A farewell to Alvin Blain from General Services/Fleet Services Division's Sweeper Shop.



Proclamation of Earth Day in Los Angeles, from left: Dee Allen, General Manager, Environmental Affairs; Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager, General Services and City Purchasing Agent; and Jan Perry, Councilmember, Ninth District.



1981: In this Fleet Services Division Area III staff photo, Alvin Blain is in last row (eighth from the left).



Alvin Blain stands with General Services/Public Safety's Police Cadet graduates from the LAPD Academy.



Farewell from General Services/Fleet Services Division's staff at the Van Nuys Heliport, March.

where he operated and managed the largest division, with a budget of \$160 million and staffing of 500 employees; planned, organized, and coordinated the repair and maintenance of the City's fleet of automobiles, trucks, aircraft and equipment; managed operations at 30 repair facilities and supervised the development and review of maintenance schedules, repair procedures, and related cost controls; he instituted a specialized safety and training program to promote employee development and increase efficiencies; and

"Whereas, in 2001 Alvin was promoted to Assistant General Manager, General Services; planned, organized, coordinated, and directed the daily activities of the Fleet, Technical, and Fuel Services divisions with a budget of \$200 million and staffing of 600 employees. He supervised the development of a \$500 million alternative fuels infrastructure and he developed long-range and overall plans for the operations of the Fleet Services and Fuel Services divisions; he received a Quality and Productivity Commission award for delivering leading edge and cost effective customer service improvements for the City of Los Angeles; and

"Whereas, in 2004 Alvin was appointed General Manager, General Services; in this capacity, he was responsible for overseeing the management and operation of the City's third largest and most diverse department, with a budget of \$260 million and staffing of 3,000 employees and 19 different divisions that support all other City departments; his excellent leadership skills are demonstrated through the significant growth the department has experienced in the last four years with the annual budget increasing by \$71 million from \$190 million in 2004 to \$261 million in 2008; and

"Whereas, because safety is Alvin's highest priority, General Services met and surpassed the Mayor's goal of reducing Worker's Compensation costs, as well as ensuring the safety of employees, customers and the public; in 2003, General Services had 1929 employees and an Injury on Duty (IOD) usage of 66,311 hours; Alvin implemented risk management programs such as the Worksite Safety Inspection program, on-site accident review and response protocols, and the Illness and Injury Prevention Program; as a result, four years later in 2007, despite the growth in the number of General Services employees to 3,000, IOD usage went down to 36,394 hours, a reduction of 46 percent, saving the City \$1.4 million; and



General Services/Management Information Systems Division farewell party in March.

"Whereas, with his leadership, General Services received 34 Quality and Productivity Awards since 1996, and more than \$20 million in estimated cost savings and new revenue to the City; these awards were for innovations and efficiencies that includes but not limited to such: Invention of a Particulate Trap Cleaning Machine, Mobile Operating Polling Places (MOPP), Mount Lee Drive Project, Water Metering Program, Saving Time and Money by Streamlining Publishing Process and Hard Dollar Savings created by Citywide software contract; and

"Whereas, Alvin is responsible for reducing the City's dependence on fossil fuels; he crafted and implemented a vision to convert the City fleet to alternative fuel and hybrid technology; he strategically led the City to use low-sulfur fuel, made the City the first in the nation to use particulate traps six years before federal mandates, obtaining \$3.4 million in grant funds for the project; when other municipalities were purchasing electric vehicles, Alvin made a strategic decision to purchase the then less popular hybrid vehicles; he turned the City's fleet into the cleanest and

'greenest' large municipal fleet in the nation; because of his work in this very important area, he has been honored by many prestigious organizations; and

"Whereas, Alvin Y. Blain operates on a philosophy of continuous improvement and applies this philosophy to every aspect of leading GSD as one of the most dependable and innovative departments in the City; he believes in providing positive leadership and good management by instituting employee development and recognition programs to let them know that they are the reason for the department's success. His leadership style is personal and friendly and it has proven to be very effective; and

"Whereas, Alvin Y. Blain looks forward to spending time with his family and enjoying his retirement; and

"Now, therefore, be it resolved, that by the adoption of this resolution, the Mayor and the Los Angeles City Council honors and congratulates Alvin Y. Blain on his retirement as General Manager, after 35 years of excellent and outstanding service to the City of Los Angeles."

*All our best congratulations from the Club, Alvin!*



Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager, General Services and City Purchasing Agent, and Beverly Stinson Pleasant, Executive Administrative Assistant III, at General Services' 2007 holiday party.

## Alvin Y. Blain General Manager and City Purchasing Agent



**A**lvin Blain is retiring as the General Manager of the City's Department of General Services, the City's third largest department after Police and Fire. He manages 3,000 employees and an annual budget of \$385 million, which includes more than \$180 million for fleet purchasing and funding for the City's energy costs — petroleum, natural gas and water and electricity.

Under his leadership, Los Angeles became the first in the nation to test low-sulfur diesel fuel and particulate traps in 1999, and started using it six years before state and federal agencies mandated its use. When other municipalities were purchasing electric vehicles, Mr. Blain made a strategic decision to purchase the then less popular hybrid vehicles. He recognized that the electric charging technology was not standardized and would have a lot of limitations.

Since 2001, the City has made hybrid vehicles its standard for passenger sedans and currently, 74 percent of the City's passenger vehicle fleet are hybrids. More than 44 percent of the Refuse Collection Vehicle fleet and 30 percent of the Street Sweeper fleet have been converted to alternative fuels. To date, there are 1,400 alternative fueled vehicles in service, reducing the City's dependence on foreign oil by 1.5 million gallons annually.

Leveraging the City's buying power, the department is implementing an Environmentally Preferred Products Program to establish guidelines for purchasing environment-friendly products. In 2006, the City purchased more than \$24 million in recycled products. The department also contributes to the City's goal of waste diversion through recycling paper, cardboard, glass, aluminum, plastic, electronics and rechargeable batteries from City facilities. One hundred percent of materials from construction demolition are recycled and last year alone, 300 tons of construction debris was diverted.

He has been happily married for 32 years and is the father of two adult children.



Farewell party for Alvin Blain from General Services/Supply Services Division, in March.



At the General Services/Publishing Services Division open house were, from left: Michael Leighton, Director of Publishing Services; Tony M. Royster, Asst. General Manager; Alvin Y. Blain, General Manager; and Robert H. Jensen, Asst. General Manager.