

County DIGEST



FEBRUARY 1998

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

An often misunderstood yet critical department in the County, the Assessor's Office is a component of a five-department property tax system which includes the offices of the Auditor-Controller, Treasurer and Tax Collector, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk and the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors. The Assessor's Office is responsible for placing a value on 2.3 million real property parcels and 304,000 personal property assessments within the County. These assessments result in a \$500 million property assessment roll which generates \$5 billion in property taxes. As such, this roll is a major source of revenue to fund schools as well as County and city governments. Downtown skyscrapers, shopping centers, commercial and private aircraft and boats are among the more interesting and challenging assessment projects.

Coping with the Real Estate Downtrend

As with other County departments, the Office of the Assessor has had to improve performance and do more with less. Since 1991, the Assessor's staff was reduced from 1,800 employees to 1,500, a reduction of 17%. However, assessment appeals (cases in which taxpayers dispute their assessed value or disagree with a legal determination made by the Assessor's Office) increased from 21,000 cases in 1991 to 109,000 cases in 1996, over 500%. Additionally, Proposition 13 (Decline-in-Value) applications increased from 14,000 applications in 1991 to 83,000 applications in 1997, over 590%. To meet this workload, the Office worked hard for the passage of Assembly Bill 818, which granted \$13 million annually in additional

Taxing Times at the Office of the Assessor

funding from the State to the Assessor's budget. Without this additional funding, the Assessor's Office would have been unable to maintain the current staffing levels needed to complete the requirement of maintaining the assessment roll. If the roll was not completed, revenues to the



The Assessor (center) with a drawn picture given by the children at MacLaren Hall. Pictured with him are Alexa Medlin, 660 Toy Drive coordinator and Pete Cunningham, MacLaren Hall's recreation supervisor. (Courtesy of Johnny Knox.)

County would have been significantly and adversely affected.

Although the appraisal and assessment of real and personal property account for a majority of the department's resources, the Mapping Services Section, in cooperation with the Department of Public Works, has developed the computerized Geographic Information System mapping database which will eventually contain parcel information for every property within

the County. As information is added to the database, users may retrieve various types of data for a specific parcel, city or region such as land use information. Public safety agencies will use this data extensively to provide critical emergency services. Additionally, the Assessor's Office is responsible for diagraming and maintaining records for almost every building within County limits. The Assessor also performs the important task of reviewing and approving property tax exemptions for nonprofit institutions such as churches, hospitals and the most recent highly praised addition to Los Angeles County culture, the Getty Museum.

Planning for the Future

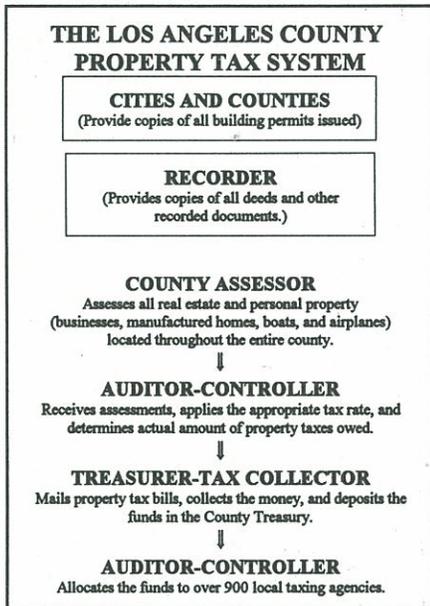
Just as the declining real estate market caused increased workloads, the improving market will bring its own challenges. The Assessor has temporary declines-in-value on approximately 375,000 properties. Reviews of these properties to determine whether they should have their Proposition 13 value partially or fully restored will consume considerable resources. Plans are being formed to make this process as fair and accurate as possible.

As the turn of the century approaches, the Assessor's "Year 2000" project will ensure that all computer systems will be able to accommodate the year change for the 1999-2000 assessment roll. Assessor and Internal Services Department employees will have the project completed by the end of the year.

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In another project, the Assessor and Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's Offices have undertaken a deed imaging project which will capitalize on the benefits of the latest imaging technology while integrating the processes of both departments. The cooperative effort of these offices will promote a quick and easy transmission of information which will allow for more timely assessments.

In yet another effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all property tax functions, the five departments have undertaken the collaborative effort of reengineering the business processes of two major areas of property taxation: property valuations and management of assessment appeals. The integration of the



processes of all five departments in these areas will result in reduced costs and faster, more effective service to the public.

Maintaining High Standards of Public Service

Located at <http://www.co.la.ca.us/assessor/>, the Assessor's Web site extends the public service counter into the Internet and provides valuable property tax information, phone numbers and locations of regional offices, forms, employment opportunities and real estate-related links 24 hours a day. Future plans include an on-line "virtual" public service counter to which taxpayers may e-mail their property tax-related questions or comments and receive the same fast and effective responses they would receive if they traveled to the main office or one of the regional offices.



Flu & Other Respiratory Illnesses

As you have probably noticed, the Los Angeles area is experiencing a heavy season of flu and other respiratory illnesses. The following information on how to deal with this season's batch of respiratory illnesses comes from Dr. Shirley Fannin, Chief of Acute Communicable Disease Control for Los Angeles County's Department of Health Services, Public Health Programs & Services.

Three Illnesses

There are three main kinds of respiratory illness circulating in the Los Angeles area. The symptoms of typical, influenza-like illness are sudden onset, high fever, cough, sore throat and general aches and pains, with illness lasting three to five days. Antiviral medication, available by prescription, is only partially effective and is usually reserved for the severest cases. Healthy children and adults generally recover without complications. The usual advice is acetaminophen for fever, lots of liquids, light meals and bed rest, as well as avoiding face-to-face contact with others because this disease is highly contagious.

Diarrhea, nausea and respiratory symptoms with little or no fever characterize the second illness cycling through the Los Angeles community. This illness causes mild to moderate discomfort, lasts one to three days and generally requires no treatment.

The third illness causes a pneumonia with fever, severe cough, headache, shortness of breath and almost no body aches. Some doctors have

reported unusual numbers of hospitalizations among their elderly patients with these symptoms. Elderly people should see their doctor whenever illness is prolonged, they have high fever or have difficulty breathing.

Dr. Fannin states, "People should realize that with the increase in illness, there are longer waits at the facilities providing care." Dr. Fannin emphasizes that "there have been no cases of the bird influenza found in Hong Kong anywhere in the United States and our surveillance system continues to watch for any evidence of it."

Flu Shots

To get the greatest benefit from influenza vaccine, Dr. Fannin notes that people need to obtain vaccine well before the virus begins to circulate. "In a year when new versions of the virus are circulating, the vaccine may offer poor or no protection. This is because the newest version of the influenza virus is not in the vaccine that is available. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that because there appears to be very little cross protection between Influenza A-Wuhan and Influenza A-Sydney, this year's vaccine will not offer protection against A-Sydney."

How to Minimize the Spread of Influenza and Other Diseases

Dr. Fannin's advice is, "If you are sick, protect your health and the health of others -- stay home. And don't forget frequent hand-washing with hot water and soap. This is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of illness."

Assessor Kenneth P. Hahn is particularly proud of his staff because their hard work and continuing dedication are exceeded only by their generosity and goodwill. The Assessor's staff have participated in a host of activities which include the AIDS Walk, Operation Santa Claus, the American Red Cross Blood Drive, the

MacLaren Hall Annual Holiday Toy Drive, bake sales and payroll contributions to benefit United Way and other charitable institutions. As always, the Assessor's Office remains committed to fair, timely, cost-effective, accurate and professional assessments and dedicated service to the public.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Gregory James

Motivating Youths through Theater Arts

His dedication to and passion for helping young adults turn into productive citizens are reflected in the faces of those whom he has encountered. Ten young men accompanied their mentor to the Board of Supervisors' meeting not only to salute him but to give a brief presentation to the Board as a testament on why honoring their mentor was truly justified.

Gregory James, a Deputy Probation Officer I with the Santa Monica area office of the Probation Department, was honored by the Board as the January 1998 County Employee of the Month. Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke presented him with a pin and a scroll of commendation. In his remarks, James made a special reference to the young men he counsels for opening their hearts and minds to a new and better perspective on life.

Having starred in high school productions of "Mame," "West Side Story" and a college presentation of "Our Town" and appeared as a supporting character in "Teenwolf 2," James decided to take a back seat and instead focus his attention on the "behind the scenes." Using his love for the theater, he created and directs the Camp Afflerbaugh Honors Drama Ensemble to inspire youths to stay away from gangs, violence and drugs. He has done this in spite of his regular duty of supervising, caring and treating minors in custody.

The ensemble, which consists of boys currently enrolled in the camp, creates, writes, directs and choreographs its productions with anti-gang, anti-violence and anti-drug messages in skits, songs and speeches for presentation to the community.

The message and professionalism of the ensemble have brought it Countywide exposure in junior and high school assemblies, churches and special events such as prayer breakfasts and anti-gang rallies. In addition, the program has been expanded to other camps to inform and rally youths to stay away from vices as well as reform the performers themselves. Because of the ensemble's popularity and exposure, James has been able to bring together a plethora of volunteers from various communities to mentor the Afflerbaugh wards.

The creation of this delinquency prevention program has brought about a change in the lives of young people from a life of crime to one of helping others to become productive and respectful citizens.

Last year alone, the ensemble impacted more than 8,000 youths at different schools throughout the County. And because of the impact the ensemble has had on the Probation Department, the County and the state, James received outstanding evaluations for the past six years and numerous awards.

The creation of this program has also brought a sense of pride to James but more importantly to the members of the ensemble. They have broken racial boundaries and are working together to bring across the message of change to their peers. And they have done so magnificently.

He received a B.A. in recreation and a minor in theater from the University of La Verne and is a member of the university's Thespian Honors Society for his outstanding achievements. His oratorical expertise is due partly to his membership with Toastmaster's.

Gregory James lives with his wife and their 16-month-old son. Asked to comment on his favorite production, he said "'West Side Story' because it shows a balance between love and rivalry and the unity of the human spirit."



February Retirees



Congratulations to the following employees who are joining the ranks of the retired after 30 or more years of service to the people of Los Angeles County:

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE:

Pamela S. Everett

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: Gayheart D.

Dillard, Patricia M. Kemble

COMMUNITY & SENIOR SERVICES:

Mary K. Maxwell

DISTRICT ATTORNEY: Lorraine Smith

FIRE: Robert H. Belliveau, Ruben T. Finn,

Franklin D. Tuttle, Lyle D. Burkhart,

David B. Felch, Eddie W. Long, Donald A.

Pierpont, Lloyd D. Schueller

HEALTH SERVICES: Samuel

Behmoiras, KR Bon Eske, Thelma

Castillo, Robert J. Collins, Harmelden A.

Dean, Michael J. Patzakis, Ola M.

Rasberry, Joseph Renty, Carl V. Singleton,

Fred S. Tanabe

INTERNAL SERVICES: Julian B. Bell,

Mills W. Kendrick, Mary E. Ruybal

MENTAL HEALTH: Pearl L. Coleman

MUNICIPAL COURTS: Doris J. Williams

PARKS & RECREATION: Earl L. Ross,

Hudson L. Smith III

PROBATION: Bill C. Coats, Camille C.

Miller

PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES: Joan B.

Esquer, Larry I. Kaiser

PUBLIC WORKS: Charles N. Butler,

Robert C. Cathey, Ernesto S. Gallegos, Don

A. Hansen, William L. Leach, Geza Z.

Madarasz, Antero L. Palacios, Paul D.

Preter, Ronald W. Price, Frank J. Saiz, Jr.,

Stanley R. Segarra, Daniel N. Short,

Wayne R. Stahl

REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY

CLERK: Richard J. Willis

SHERIFF: James T. Campbell, Robert W.

Decourcey, Anthony E. Denis, Allan C.

Frisch, Thomas L. Greep, John L.

Heckman, Richard C. Humber, Bernd W.

Kammer, Michael A. Rawlings, Peter A.

Recendez, Richard K. Schilling, David R.

Wyse, Daniel W. Donovan, Norma Y.

Jackson, Doris J. Morse, Michael R.

Miltimore, Arthur K. Price, Robert W.

Bullard, Merle E. Cook, Michael J. Lee

SUPERIOR COURTS: Esther L. Fajardo,

Marie Franks

Congratulations to the following employees who are retiring after serving the people of Los Angeles County for more than 25 years:

ASSESSOR: David B. Kim

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: Audrey Ittel,

Eladio Sainz, Carol G. Wippert, Victoria

Vega

COMMUNITY & SENIOR SERVICES:

Shiro Masuda

COUNTY COUNSEL: Charles J. Moore

DISTRICT ATTORNEY: Kenneth L.

Marks, Lynne Morchy, Leo C. Strong,

Francisco Y. Tanalega

FIRE: Dennis H. Adkins

HEALTH SERVICES: Santos F. Acierto,

Estrelita P. Arbeloa, Martha Balmer,

Trinidad V. Calleros, David J. Escarcega,

Victoria Estrada, Luciel C. Gadson, Robert

Hellyer, Laurie Hernandez, Ida Hill, Roger

Mullendore, Juanita Patterson, Ivory L.

Pitre, Margarita Rodriguez, Claudine

Sanders, Iris Shao, Edward H. Sims,

Mamie B. Smith, Arnold Vasquez,

Jeremiah J. White, Elizabeth E. Barilla

INTERNAL SERVICES: Michael R. de

Meo, Kenneth P. Hammer, Santosh K.

Maheshwari, William R. Shuttleworth

MUNICIPAL COURTS: Clifford L. Joy,

Cassandra L. Kubiak

PARKS & RECREATION: William E.

Anderson, Gerald C. Garcia

PROBATION: Edward Comeaux, Thomas

E. Deane, Deluvina Robledo

PUBLIC LIBRARY: Pervis J. Casey,

Aurora Martinez

PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES: Richard

O. Tellez

PUBLIC WORKS: Margaret R. Belton

SHERIFF: Clifford E. Busick, Carlos A.

Casillas, Thomas R. Kirsch, John J. Lowe

III, James E. Murren, Richard A. Summers,

Herbert H. Wilmsen, Fay F. Ferris,

Jacqueline Huff, Lawrence Podoksik, Ella

R. Weeden, Robert M. Young, Jr., Stephen

J. Campbell, Wayne G. Hilliard, Michael L.

Maynard, Van R. Morris

TREASURER & TAX COLLECTOR:

Arturo V. de Joya

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Director of Personnel

Sandra A. Hoodye
Ombudsman/Community Liaison

John S. Mina

Staff

Send us your comments, story ideas or questions!

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Fax: (213) 621-0387

Attn: *County DIGEST*

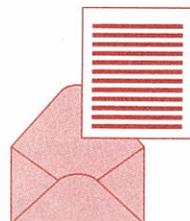
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Due to space considerations, we cannot guarantee publication of submitted articles.