

## **OFFICE OF THE CITY CONTROLLER**

City Controller Sylvia R. Garcia is the second highest elected official in Houston City government and its chief financial officer. She serves as the taxpayer's "watchdog" over City government's fiscal affairs.

During her first two-year term, Controller Garcia has implemented changes that have resulted in significant improvements in audit services, customer services, financial reporting, investment management, and technology. Many of these measures are highly cost effective. In fact, performance audits conducted by the Controller's office could save the City between \$42 and \$75 million if fully implemented.

In her first term, the Controller's Audit Division completed performance audits of the Police Department, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Solid Waste Department, and together with the Mayor's Office co-managed a performance audit of the Department of Public Works and Engineering. The Controller also completed contract compliance audits of Public Works and Engineering Department contracts. These audits revealed major deficiencies and incidents of waste and poor management, providing the Brown administration with important information that can be used to improve efficiency and accountability in City government. Some of the other audits conducted during Controller Garcia's first term were audits of temporary services, travel and entertainment expenditures, bidding procedures, construction, concession and other contracts, financial system controls, and the City's web site.

Improved investment and debt management has been one of the highlights of Controller Garcia's first term. Active portfolio management has increased the City's investment earnings by approximately \$2 million per year in comparison to the earnings that would have been achieved under the previous practices, without increasing overall risk. These earnings enhancements were achieved primarily by shifting assets out of treasury investments and into federal agency investments, with increases in yield ranging from approximately 20 to 100 basis points. Changes in technology and resources directed toward this area have resulted in a smoother and more effective functioning of this operation.

During fiscal year 1999 the City successfully upgraded the financial, purchasing, and human resources computer systems. The Controller's Office managed the financial upgrade and actively participated in the overall project, which resulted in full integration of all three key systems. The Controller's Office believes that its software systems are now year 2000 compliant.

In fiscal year 2000, the City Controller intends to strengthen the office as a source of economic information. By partnering with the University of Houston's Center for Public Policy, Controller Garcia hopes to become a resource not only for City government but also for the community at large.

The preparation of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) requires a concentrated effort by every division of the City Controller's office. The Financial Reporting Division is ultimately responsible for the final product. The CAFR will be available on the City Controller's website, [www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygovt/controller](http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygovt/controller).

## **SYLVIA R. GARCIA**

### **HOUSTON CITY CONTROLLER**

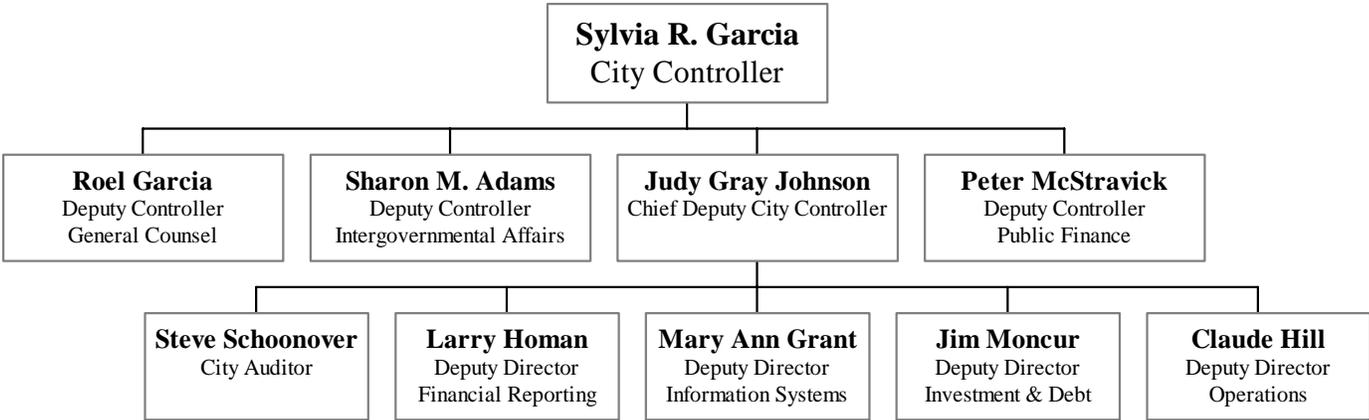
Houston City Controller Sylvia R. Garcia is a native of the South Texas farming community of Palito Blanco. She attended Texas Woman's University on a scholarship, graduating with a degree in social work, and received her Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. The eighth of 10 children, she learned at an early age the value of education and hard work. She also learned to be frugal with a dollar; a lesson which serves her well in the Office of the Controller.

Controller Garcia was sworn in on January 2, 1998 as Controller for the City of Houston. She is the second-highest City elected official and serves as the City's Chief Financial Officer. Prior to her election in November 1997, Controller Garcia served as the appointed Director and Presiding Judge of the Houston Municipal Court System. As Presiding Judge, she was responsible for a multi-million-dollar budget, coordinated a staff of 50 judges, and established the operation and administration policies of the courts. She enjoys the distinction of having served for an unprecedented five terms under two mayors. Controller Garcia believes that maintaining the City's fiscal soundness is serious business and is committed to ensuring that City government operates cost-effectively.

Before joining the City, Controller Garcia worked as an attorney for the Gulf Coast Legal Foundation and served on the City's first Appraisal Review Board. She also served as administrative law judge for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and headed her own law firm.

Active in the Houston community, the Controller has served on more than 25 community boards and commissions, including the San Jacinto Girl Scouts, the Houston Hispanic Forum, the American Leadership Forum, the Texas Southern University Foundation and the Institute of Hispanic Culture. During the past year both community leaders and the media have honored Controller Garcia. She was named "Humanitarian of the Year" by the National Conference of Communities and Justice and chosen as one of "Houston's 25 Power People" by Inside Houston magazine. The Houston Press also named her "Politician of the Year."

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Mayor & City council member photos go here

