

**Assistant Excellence
in Leadership Award
in Memory of
Buford M. Watson, Jr.**



BRENDA SEDLACEK

ICMA's Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award, which commemorates former ICMA president Buford M. Watson, Jr., is presented to a local government management professional who has made significant contributions toward excellence in leadership while serving as an assistant to a chief local government administrator or department head. This year's recipient of the Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award is Brenda Sedlacek, assistant city administrator of La Vista, Nebraska.

The mayor and city council of La Vista, Nebraska, envisioned a community that embraces a progressive plan for future growth while maintaining a safe and family-oriented culture, a community whose solid infrastructure and convenient location will attract and retain diverse businesses and highly skilled residents, a community that is better by design. Brenda Sedlacek has played an integral role making this vision a reality.

Ms. Sedlacek grew up in Hanover, Kansas, where her family was in the furniture business. Upon graduating from Kansas State University in 1993 with a master of regional and community planning degree, she was hired by the city of Concordia, Kansas (pop. 6,000), where she worked as director of community development and assistant to the city manager until 1997. She was well-suited to this position: her rural background helped her relate to the independent nature of a small community and to citizens' desires to maintain local control of their town; her family's business gave her an appreciation for entrepreneurship and a realization that solutions to problems come only from hard work and determination.

In the summer of 1997, Ms. Sedlacek accepted her current position as the assistant city administrator of La Vista, Nebraska (pop. 14,000). Located in metropolitan Omaha, La Vista was named Nebraska's fastest-growing city in July 2003. With a focus on meeting the

challenges and demands of a rapidly growing community—notably, providing quality and effective public services—Ms. Sedlacek has been La Vista's leader in planning for future infrastructure.

Among the new developments that she has directly overseen are 900 acres of residential subdivisions, 280 acres of commercial property, and 800 acres of industrial business parks. She managed and coordinated all phases of the design, development, and construction of a new 23,000-square-foot police facility that is expected to serve the community for 25 years to come. Her next success was in response to two national economic development searches. The first entailed the selection of a 22-acre site for PayPal, a company owned by eBay Inc. that handles the electronic paperwork for buyers and sellers on the Internet by transferring money. PayPal has 23.3 million customers in 37 countries. Ms. Sedlacek worked with the company, the state of Nebraska, the city of Omaha, and the Omaha Chamber of Commerce to secure the city council's approval for the project, which was negotiated, constructed, and opened with 1,300 employees in less than 12 months. While PayPal's headquarters are in California, most of its business is done in the new La Vista facility. The second search was for a 150-acre site for a 1.2-million-square-foot warehouse/distribution facility operated by the Oriental Trading Company. On this project

Ms. Sedlacek worked with a national site selection consultant and many of the same groups listed above to put the project together for the city council's approval. The first 600,000 square feet of this project have been constructed, and operations began in the spring of 2005.

During her tenure with La Vista, Ms. Sedlacek has twice served as acting city administrator for an extended period. Her success in this role is indicative of her leadership ability, which has garnered respect for her throughout the organization.

With line authority over both the community development department and the recreation department, Ms. Sedlacek has overseen the adoption of the city's first park and recreation master plan, the establishment of design standards for commercial and industrial business parks along the city's gateway, and an update of the city's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, which support the design criteria.

Ms. Sedlacek obtained the ICMA Credentialed Manager designation in January 2003 and has been recognized by ICMA for her ten years of public service. She is a member of the Nebraska City Management Association and the American Planning Association, and she served on the North Central Regional Planning Commission Board of Directors for almost four years. In 2003 she was recognized by Kansas State University's College of Architecture, Planning and Design as one of five alumni honorees.

Committed to representative local government democracy, Brenda Sedlacek is a local government manager whose career reflects how deeply she cares about her profession and how eager she is to make La Vista a better community. ■