

Cemetery celebration

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For a gathering at a cemetery, it was a somewhat upbeat occasion. Residents joined city officials and builders Monday to celebrate the opening of Royal View Memorial Cemetery. The city-developed facility, at the top of 13 Street N., is expected to provide burial space for local families for generations to come.

More than 2,500 full-burial and cremation plots are available in the 90-acre cemetery, which will become the city's primary location when Mountain View Cemetery reaches capacity within a few years.



MLAs Bridget Pastoor and Greg Weadick, along with mayor Rajko Dodic, unveil a plaque Monday morning during the official opening of the Royal View Memorial Cemetery. Herald photo by Ian Martens

Named after a nearby coal mine, operating from 1923 to 1942, the Royal View cemetery has been developed on bench land above Pavan Park. Community services director Bary Beck noted the province's Municipal Sustainability Initiatives fund covered almost all of its \$3.8 million land and construction cost.

About 400 trees – oak, buckeye, elm, poplar, spruce and pine – have been planted along its curved roadways, along with nearly 3,000 drought-resistant shrubs and perennials. An undulating stone wall along Royal View's eastern edge depicts a coal seam like many discovered during the city's early days.

A commissioned work of metal art, "The Threshold," is ready for installation as the cemetery's main gate. Canmore artist Tony Bloom's creation, also honouring the coal miners who put Lethbridge on the map, was selected through a competition held by the Allied Arts Council.

Lethbridge West MLA Greg Weadick, a city council member when the need for a new cemetery was first raised, recalled riding horses on the former farmland years ago. Bridget Pastoor, representing Lethbridge East, urged local families to include birthplace information on headstones or plaques commemorating a family member.

"That tells a story," reminding others of the great diversity of nationalities represented in southern Alberta today.

Mayor Rajko Dodic pointed out the land for the cemetery, and the busy park below the escarpment, was bought from the milk-producing Pavan family. He said the first burial, scheduled for today, will be for former Lethbridge Exhibition Board president Benny Pavan.

The longtime resident, 77 years old, died earlier in Calgary.