

CRYPTS | Detroit cemetery denies it is exploiting Parks

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vate matter, not a spectacle," said Parks' closest living relative, nephew William McCauley.

According to a cemetery price list, individual crypts in the chapel now cost \$24,275, compared with \$17,000 before spots in the building formerly known as the Celebration of Life were given, for free, to Parks, her husband and her mother after Parks' death. That price does not include inscriptions or the mandatory \$500 casket wrap.

For seven prime spaces closest to Parks' crypt, an even greater price hike is being considered. Before her death, a crypt could be bought for as little as \$30,000.

Now, cemetery officials say, negotiations are under way for a package sale of those seven spaces with the per-crypt price in the \$60,000 to \$65,000 range. The cemetery declined to identify the potential buyers.

Woodlawn officials said they are not exploiting Parks.

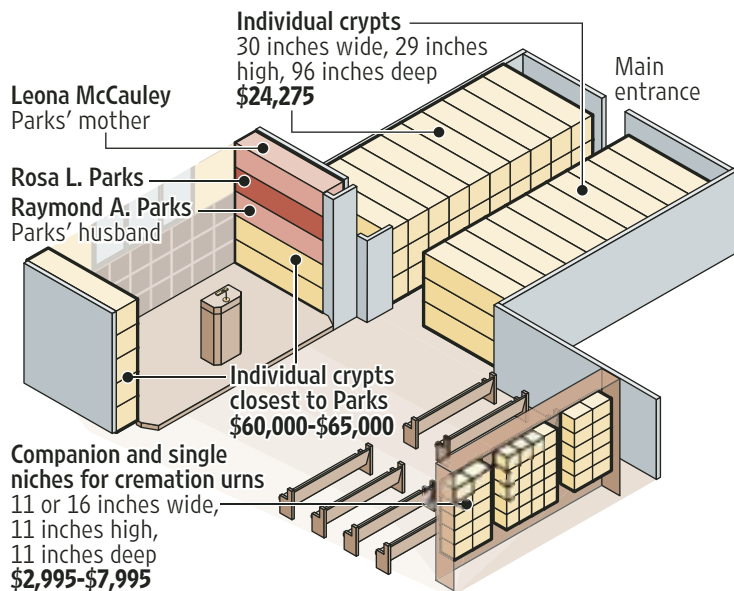
"No, no, I don't think we're profiteering at all," said Wade Reynolds, chief operating officer of Mikocem, the management company that oversees Woodlawn and more than 25 other Michigan cemeteries.

He said there have been many improvements and upgrades to make the chapel one of Detroit's premier burial sites. The new prices, while higher than those at other Detroit-area cemeteries, will fund the improvements, cover future maintenance and turn a reasonable profit, he said.

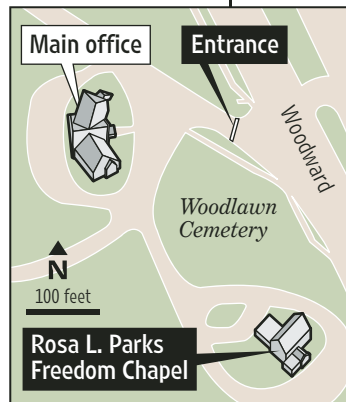
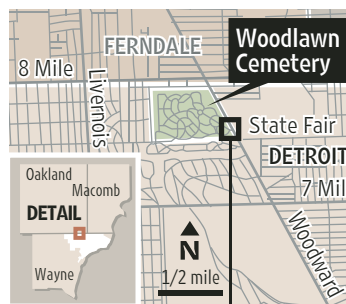
Tracy Fowlkes, Mikocem's area sales manager, said the new prices are in line with the

Rosa L. Parks Freedom Chapel

Woodlawn Cemetery's Rosa L. Parks Freedom Chapel is one of Detroit's premier burial sites. Cemetery officials said upgrades to the 1895 building contributed to the price increases.



Sources: Woodlawn Cemetery, "Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery" by A. Dale Northup



NOVIA KNIGHT/Detroit Free Press



HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

Traditional crypts line the entry way of the Rosa L. Parks Freedom Chapel in Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery. According to a cemetery price list, individual crypts in the chapel now cost \$24,275, compared with \$17,000 before spots in the building formerly known as the Celebration of Life were given to Rosa Parks, her husband and her mother after Parks' death in October.

RIGHTS LEADERS' BURIAL SITES

- **John Brown:** Family farm, North Elba, N.Y.
- **Frederick Douglass:** Mt. Hope Cemetery, Rochester, N.Y.
- **Medgar Evers:** Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va.
- **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:** King Center, Atlanta
- **Haji Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X):** Ferncliff Cemetery, Westchester County, N.Y.
- **Sojourner Truth:** Oak Hill Cemetery, Battle Creek
- **Harriet Tubman:** Ft. Hill Cemetery, Auburn, N.Y.



2002 photo by JOHN BAZEMORE/Associated Press

The tomb of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is reflected in the pool at the King Center in Atlanta.

By Joe Swickard

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Company overseer operated troubled Tenn. cemetery

By JOE SWICKARD
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Wade Reynolds, who oversees the company that runs Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery, came to Michigan in 2004 from Tennessee, where a cemetery he ran has collapsed in debt.

Since Halls Memory Garden in Knoxville closed last fall, anguished families have had trouble locating graves they purchased — allegedly because of contradictory, incomplete and missing records.

services for her son's burial, that payments she made for her son's headstone never made it to the finance company and that when she complained, the cemetery retaliated by not maintaining the grave.

"We won the case but we never got any money," said Harris, a mail clerk for the Home and Garden Television Network.

Other families, such as that of Peggy Cook, contend that problems from Reynolds' administration continue.

Cook's daughter, Kim Tarl-