

What You Need to Start a Cemetery

When looking to start a cemetery, one of your first orders of business should be to select and purchase a space to house your gravesite. Municipal corporations can own public cemeteries to offer burial spaces to the general public rather than a specific family or religion, as would be the case with a private cemetery. The government is also in the business of cemeteries by providing burial grounds for members of the military, as well as other government and federal employees.

Cemetery-business owners should also register their companies and secure an operating license to ensure their company is being run legally and in compliance with local ordinances – cemeteries are typically regulated on a state-to-state basis. If you are inexperienced or want to increase your business prospects, it may also be beneficial to buy a franchise from a larger cemetery company to help you run the business and provide added credibility to your company.

Once you've decided on a cemetery location, and secured the property and necessary credentials to operate your cemetery, it's time to develop a business model. Your business model will determine things like how many cemeterians you'll need to manage landscaping and general maintenance to keep the cemetery in pristine condition. You will also need to comply with local regulations and zoning requirements and ensure you have enough money to cover your startup costs.

Logistics of Owning a Cemetery

Another essential aspect of cemetery ownership you need to consider is the size of your grave plots. Typical cemeteries contain approximately 1,450 plots per acre, but if you have less acreage than that, you can scale as your business increases.

A unique aspect of cemeteries is the fact that many will eventually run out of plots of land for burial sites. The plots are often the primary source of income for cemetery owners; however, when all the plots are full, cemetery owners can offer patrons "Perpetual Care Trusts." These crucial funds, often drawn from the cost of the burial plot, accrue interest, which offsets annual maintenance costs such as repair and upkeep of lawns, roads, paths and signage. The fund also assures that existing and potential client families have a safe, well-kept resting place into perpetuity.

Changes in the Cemetery Industry

In many ways, cemeteries are a rock-solid, supply and demand business because everyone dies and families must decide on a final resting place for their loved one's remains. Families also have more options than ever these days, including green cemeteries that allow the deceased to be buried in the ground in biodegradable caskets, or incorporating the decedent's cremated remains into a coral reef in the ocean.

A potential threat to cemeteries is the rise of alternative interment methods such as cremation. However, many cemeteries offer the interment of cremated remains in burial plots. Further, traditional burials remain the most popular method of caring for the deceased and IBISWorld reports 2-percent annualized growth for the next decade. So while the need for cemeteries may not put a smile on everyone's face, if you're a cemetery owner or considering starting a cemetery business in the future, you can be assured, at least for now, that business is expected to be brisk.

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