

LOCAL NEWS

Barrhaven BIA invites home businesses to join in success

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When business owners in Barrhaven decided to start up a business improvement area earlier this year they became the first in the city to allow for a new type of membership, home-based business owners.

Traditionally, a business improvement area (BIA) encompasses a certain street or commercial district involving multiple storefronts that come together to help improve local business conditions.

When the Barrhaven BIA was created it became the first in the city to encompass a large suburban area, making the idea of

including those who work out of their homes seem like a logical one said Andrea Steenbakkers, executive director Barrhaven Business Improvement Area.

"Because our BIA is a large geographic area our membership is quite spread out. We have quite a large residential community meaning we have a lot of people who operate businesses out of their homes," said Ms. Steenbakker.

The nature of Barrhaven as a residential suburb makes it unique from other BIA's in the city, Ms. Steenbakker estimates there are anywhere from 150 to 200 home-based businesses in the area.

Victor Tsang, who runs the e-

business services company Local.ca out of his home in the Cedarview Rd. area, says becoming a member of the Barrhaven Business Improvement Area was an easy decision for his business.

"As a home-based business it allows us to get exposure and to learn how to do business in the community, it gives us access to valuable resources that show how Barrhaven is developing and the issues that Barrhaven business is facing," said Mr. Tsang, whose business is preparing to open its web portal at www.barrhavenlive.ca.

Ken Ross, chair of the Barrhaven Business Improvement Area, says the high-tech boom, which fizzled out several years

ago, created a wave of local entrepreneurs who are now operating non-traditional business models out of their homes; a segment of the commercial community the BIA could not ignore.

"In today's day and time you don't necessarily have to have a storefront to have a successful business," said Mr. Ross.

Being connected to other businesses in the area is a huge advantage according to Mr. Tsang who appreciates the ability to have a voice in the development of the business community in Barrhaven.

"As a home-based business, your struggle is always to get visibility and network, the fact that the BIA would allow me to join is

an avenue I couldn't ignore. I want to contribute to our community and the BIA gives me a vehicle to do that," said Mr. Tsang.

The Barrhaven BIA currently has six home-based business in its ranks, which currently number nearly 300 businesses in the area.

Home-based members of the Barrhaven BIA pay full dues and receive full membership including a vote at all general meetings a relationship that benefits all sides.

"The economy that develops by having home-based businesses thrive brings more revenue into the community and that revenue gets spent back in the community. It's a really symbiotic relationship if it is nurtured," said Mr. Tsang.