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Andrew Barkis and Daniela Anderson have owned Hometown Property Management for 10 years. In that time, the former Lacey-based business found a new home in Olympia, increased the number of single-family homes it manages and continues to add services to its business.

The business has a maintenance division, called Maintenance by Hometown, and it recently started working with Thurston Energy to do energy audits on the homes it manages.

The number of audits, which shows whether a home could benefit from some energy-efficient upgrades, is approaching 200 homes, Barkis said.

“Just because the house is new doesn't necessarily mean it is energy-efficient,” he said. “We help facilitate those improvements.”

Hometown manages more than 1,000 homes in Thurston County, with an emphasis in Lacey, largely because of the military community and the transitional needs of troops that come and go.

But that's not the only demographic they serve, Barkis said.

They also rent to those who are choosing to rent as a lifestyle, either because it's more convenient or they're still feeling uncertain about buying because of the housing market's recent history. Median rents are in the \$1,300 to \$1,400 range, he said.

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In his office, a yellow legal pad is not far from his reach, and it's already filled with ideas for the future. Barkis, too, has plenty of advice for those set to go into business.

–Seek out wise counsel, such as the services offered by the Thurston County Economic Development Council.

–Even a great idea must have a business plan. You need a plan to help you anticipate what you're dealing with, he said.

–Understanding regulations and taxes is key to running any business.

–Develop a strong team and surround yourself with excellent people.

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Small Business

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