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Lacey furniture retailer opens

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DirectBuy, a members-only retailer of mostly home furnishings, has opened a 16,000-square-foot showroom in Hawks Prairie.

The DirectBuy franchise at 8719 Commerce Place Drive N.E., known as DirectBuy of Puget Sound, is the company's fourth in Washington, spokeswoman Sara Shragal said.

The company also has franchises in Kent and Bothell, one in Spokane and a fifth franchise is planned for Kennewick in the next six months, she said.

Based in Indiana, DirectBuy is a 36-year-old business that operates 149 franchises in the United States and Canada, Shragal said.

The company's stores offer products such as home furnishings, cabinets and lighting and sells them at what the company calls "manufacturer-direct" prices.

Evan Windom of North Bend, a member of DirectBuy's store in Kent for the past two years, estimates he saved about \$70,000 buying furnishings at DirectBuy for his new home.

Like Shragal, Windom declined to disclose his membership fee.

However, the membership costs vary by franchise and can last two to three years before it needs to be renewed, Shragal said.

"It's not (like) buying a Costco card, but the discounts are amazing," Windom said.

Costco Wholesale charges a \$50 or \$100 annual fee depending on the level of membership, Costco Chief Financial Officer Richard Galanti said.

Costco considers DirectBuy to be a competitor, but not a major direct competitor such as Wal-Mart's Sam's Club or B.J.'s Wholesale Club, Galanti said.

To obtain a DirectBuy membership, the company asks that prospective members call to set up an appointment at one of the company's showrooms.

The appointments take about 90 minutes, Lacey store co-owner Dimitri Olympidis said.

Olympidis, a former membership director for the company, owns the business with his wife and two other partners. Lacey made sense for a DirectBuy franchise because the region already had about 1,500 DirectBuy members, Olympidis said.