

CitySquares.com was featured in the Boston Herald on Wednesday, October 12, 2005.

## Web site: It's very cool to be a square

By JESSE NOYES

A local entrepreneur is putting Boston area small businesses on the cyber-space map.

This Saturday, Somerville resident Ben Saren launches CitySquares.com, a community-based Web site bringing residents and businesses in urban neighborhoods in touch.

"We really want to hit specific neighborhoods and squares," Saren said. "We're definitely targeting brick-and-mortar, mom-and-pop (businesses)."

The site holds listings and rankings of neighborhood businesses, a classified section, even a "Starving Artist" online art gallery for creative types. Saren is also talking with media outlets in an effort to carry local news on the site.

The address of every business in each square will automatically be listed on the site. But merchants



STAFF FILE PHOTOS BY MIKE ADASKAVEG, LEFT, AND LISA HORNAK

**PLACES TO BE:** Stores in Somerville's Davis Square, left, and Union Square are among those that could benefit from a new Web site designed to promote local businesses. CitySquares.com, which plans to launch this weekend, focuses on Boston area neighborhoods and their businesses.

can buy enhanced packages for between \$50 and \$150 with photos, company logos or a hosted Web page.

The site gives small shops a tool to compete with the deep pockets of national franchises, Saren said.

"I have had too many people walk in and say,

'Geez, I didn't know you were here,'" said Dan Kennedy, owner of Union Square Press.

Kennedy, who bought CitySquares' top package, hopes the Union Square portal of the site will provide some inexpensive marketing for his small print and copy shop.

The site is launching

with a full roster of Somerville and Cambridge neighborhoods, including Harvard Square, Porter Square, Inman Square and Davis Square. But CitySquares is also planning to expand into Boston neighborhoods such as Copley Square and Jamaica Plain in the coming months.

The Web site currently

has about 20 clients but, according to the site, hundreds of other businesses have expressed interest in signing up.

The site plans to host ads but said most of its revenue will likely come from annual subscription fees from area businesses.

Online sources for area business listings and news,

such as Google or Amazon.com's A9 search engine, already exist. But CitySquares wants to carve a niche for itself by becoming a one-stop source for local neighborhoods.

"A lot of those bigger online tools have already filled in the broad strokes," Saren said. "We're going to fill in the nooks and crannies."