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Designer Resale

Real women,
buying and selling
lightly used
designer clothing.
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**Online Sample
Sale**
Luxury Brand

Style

· High-End Hand-Me-Downs

Consumers craving designer clothing can save big at area consignment shops

By Haley Shapley

Bargain shoppers who have a taste for the finer things in life are in luck, all thanks to the flurry of designer consignment shops that have popped up in the two river area over the past few years.

Driven by budget-conscious consumers with an eco sensibility, these stores thrive by taking in the gently used—or, in some cases, new—clothing, accessories and other items that people no longer want, giving them cash for their contributions and an opportunity to find something else they might just have to have.

"The trend is customers who have money still have money, but they are just taking their money and seeing how far they can expand with it," says Ann Marie Elia, owner of All Things Consignment in Fair Haven. "Here they'll pay half of what they would at a regular store, and instead of buying one thing, they can buy two or three items."

Adds Kathleen Kenney Slavin, owner of In-Style Vintage, also located in Fair Haven, "A lot of people won't even shop in regular stores unless there's a sale,

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Jennifer Maddalena, owner of The Couture Exchange.

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or they have a coupon. Young people especially are very into it [the idea of consignment], into recycling and green; we even get girls from New York coming here."

These aren't the thrift stores of yesteryear, in which shoppers had to dig through mounds of clothes to find what might be the hidden gem at the bottom of the pile. Everything is high quality and housed in the type of atmosphere label-loving shoppers are accustomed to. Here are four in the area worth visiting:

The Couture Exchange

Shrewsbury

Opened: August 2005

What you'll find: women's handbags, shoes and accessories

The story behind the store: Bored with her job as a financial adviser, Jennifer Maddalena decided to take her hobby of buying and selling accessories and handbags on eBay, and turn it into a career. She started with a self-described teeny-tiny space on White Road, just 250 square feet, and has expanded twice since. "I knew the women around here would love all this," she says. "It's hard for us to get these premier brands in this area, so to be able to get these names locally makes it very convenient for them."

Brand sampling: Roberto Cavalli, Burberry, Jimmy Choo, Prada

Contact: 511 Route 35/Broad Street, (732) 933-1123, www.thecoutureexchange.com

DoubleTake

Red Bank

Opened: December 2010

What you'll find: women's designer and contemporary clothing, shoes, handbags and accessories

The story behind the store: Nearly 20 years ago, Marci Kessler was working on Seventh Avenue in the Garment District when she cleaned out her closets and took her items to a consignment shop. Unhappy with the experience at the store and looking for a career change, she decided to open DoubleTake in Short Hills. Now with four locations, Kessler prides herself on having "pretty stores to shop in, a friendly staff, beautiful dressing rooms and outstanding customer service." Their concierge service will send someone to your home to clean out closets and pick up merchandise to sell.

Brand sampling: Hermès, Gucci, Kate Spade, Oscar de la Renta

Contact: 97 Broad Street, (732) 383-5482, www.edoubletake.com

All Things Consignment

Fair Haven Opened: September 2010

What you'll find: women's designer handbags, jewelry and clothing

The story behind the store: After running the original All Things Consignment (which started in Oceanport and is now in Long Branch) since the early '90s, Elia wanted a spot that showcased only top-tier brands, so she opened a second location, in Fair Haven, that caters to Dior devotees and Louis Vuitton lovers. "At the big stores, I find they're not staffed as they would've been eight years ago, so you don't get the full attention you should when you go and spend a couple thousand dollars on something," she says. "Here you can spend \$25 and we'll still treat you as if you bought \$1,000 of merchandise."

Brand sampling: Cartier, Dolce & Gabbana, Manolo Blahnik, Coach

Contact: 606 River Road, (732) 741-8111, www.allthingsconsignment.com

In-Style Vintage

Fair Haven

Opened: December 2010

What you'll find: clothing for men, women and children, home furnishings

The story behind the store: When longtime consignment shop The Attic was slated to shut down, Slavin, who was a loyal customer, came to its rescue. She rebranded it In-Style Vintage and added a wider range of items, particularly for the younger set. The focus is on everyday wear, although dressier items are available, too. "What you get in here, you're not going to see it at every store and not everyone's going to have it," says Slavin. "Whatever doesn't sell, we donate. I feel like we're really providing a great service for a lot of different people."

Brand sampling: Anthropologie, Free People, Tory Burch, Badgley Mischka, Brooks Brothers

Contact: 772 River Road, (732) 741-9110, www.instylevintagefairhaven.com

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