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Final Four visitors and locals: Here's where you can take care of your retail therapy

STAFF REPORT
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CENTRAL HOUSTON

Downtown

Macy's, 1110 Main, is the flagship store of downtown Houston, but a few blocks over — at the corner of Main and Dallas — is Houston Pavilions, where you'll find **Books-A-Million**, **Forever 21**, **BCBMaxAzria** (with dressy clothes and accessories for petites) and a variety of smaller shops. Have cash for parking unless you're walking from a downtown hotel. www.houstonpavilions.com.

Midtown

Just southwest of the central business district, this area has undergone major revitalization recently and now boasts hip townhomes and trendy coffee shops on nearly every corner, with

franchise stores and boutiques sprinkled throughout. Most notable is **Spec's Liquor Warehouse, 2410 Smith**. The place is massive, with more than 15,000 wines, 5,000 spirits and 2,000 beers; it's like a candy store for adults. It also has a deli with handmade sandwiches and a grocery area with hard-to-find import items and a great selection of cheese, chocolate, candy, cigars and more. www.specsonline.com.

Lower Westheimer

If you have wheels and time to burn, cruise along this street, which starts just southwest of Midtown. Keep your eyes open for fun vintage clothing shops (**Leopard Lounge Clothing Exchange, 1657 Westheimer**) or jewelers (**Silverlust, 1338 Westheimer, Suite C** and **Past Era Antique Jewelry, 2311 Westheimer**). This area is also where Houstonians go "junking," as they search for reasonably priced antiques and mid-century vintage furniture.

Upper Kirby

If you can only make one stop, the luxury lifestyle emporium **Kuhl-Linscomb, 2424 W. Alabama**, is like a mall in one store. Gifts and apothecary items, bedding and bath, tabletop, furniture, rugs, a cool kids' department — heck, even designer kitchens — are grouped enticingly through five buildings.

Rice Village

Situated near Rice University, this area has been a distinctive shopping destination since the 1930s. Pick up a merchant map at any of the stores or you'll never be able to appreciate the smorgasbord of shops, restaurants and services, broken into 26 areas labeled from A to Z.

There's the usual: **Gap, Bath and Body Works, Talbots**.

There's the unique: art galleries; a pottery guild; custom tailors; consignment shops; boutique bookstores; and clothing boutiques, such as **Raspberry Rose, 2434 Rice Blvd.**, and **Lot 8, 6127 Kirby**, owned by *Project Runway* winner Chloe Dao.

And there's the unexpected: such as **Dromgoole's Fine Writing Instruments and Stationary, 2515 Rice Blvd.** Family-owned and operated for more than 50 years, it's a gem where you can browse through moleskin notebooks, smell the ink of fountain pens that range from \$20 to \$36,000, or feel the heft and blade of collector knives.

Parking is free. www.ricevillageonline.com.

19th Street

The Heights, one of Houston's best-kept old neighborhoods, has a shopping district with a distinctive bohemian vibe. Along 19th Street between Heights Boulevard and Shepherd Drive look for antiques, vintage clothing and unusual gifts. Home cooks won't want to miss the spice dealer **Penzey's, 516 W. 19th**. Good restaurants also abound here; including oh-so-trendy food trucks selling meat pies and cupcakes.

THE GALLERIA AREA

The Galleria

This mall, **5085 Westheimer**, is to Houston what Broadway is to New York — well-known and highly respected. Attracting more than 24 million visitors a year, it's home to more than 300 shops and restaurants, including such high-end designer stores as **Neiman Marcus, Carolina Herrera, Louis Vuitton** and others. www.simon.com.

Highland Village

If open-air is more your thing, visit this palm-tree-lined shopping area at **4055 Westheimer**. Known for its upscale merchants and restaurants, Highland Village also has a **Crate & Barrel** mega store. www.shophighlandvillage.com.

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WEST HOUSTON

CityCentre

Where once stood a shopping mall is now a pedestrian-friendly, open-air, green-space commercial zone at **800 Town and Country Blvd.** It's so new, merchants are still moving in. But you'll find plenty already, including **Elaine Turner**, a Houston designer of chic handbags and shoes; and **Eye Couture**, a "lensology" experience that shows you how to use eyewear as a punchy accessory, or, perhaps, as your wardrobe's focal point. **Olive and Vine** is slated to open at the end of March, featuring more than 35 varieties of oils and vinegars from around the world. Shoppers can sample products before having their choice bottled on the spot.

Town and Country Village

This shopping center at **12850 Memorial**, near CityCentre, has more than 75 merchants selling everything from jewelry to shoes and candles to clothing.

KATY

**LaCenterra
at Cinco Ranch**

This open-air, pedestrian-friendly center features high-end retailers along with places where you can enjoy a cup of coffee, a glass of wine or a steak dinner. www.lacenterra.com.

Katy Mills

With 1.6 million square feet of retail space, the mall includes a movie theater, restaurants and more than 150 outlet and value-retail shops such as **Coach**, **Victoria's Secret**, **Polo Ralph Lauren**, **Juicy Couture** and **Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World**. Mall shops are offering special discounts for Final Four visitors. It has plenty of parking and more restaurants nearby. www.simon.com.

NORTHWEST HOUSTON

Houston Premium Outlets

If you're serious about style and savings, make this trek. If your time is limited, head to the back left area from the main Cowboy Court. That's where you'll find the **Tory Burch**, **Theory**, **Burberry**, **Cole Haan**, **Coach**, **Michael Kors**, **Juicy Couture**, **A/X Exchange**, **7 for All Mankind** and **J Crew** factory stores. The big **Saks Off Fifth** outlet is at the very back. Party girls shouldn't miss **BCBG Max Azria**, with great handbags, shoes and Herve Leger bandage dresses. We scored great deals at Tory Burch and **Elie Tahari** — items originally priced at \$200 or more for \$50. At J.Crew, piles of cute T-shirts beckoned, marked down to about \$10. If you're a shopaholic, allow at least a half-day, and check the store list online so you don't miss any favorites. It's a big place. **U.S. 290 W. in Cypress**, exit Fairfield Drive. premiumoutlets.com.

THE WOODLANDS

Market Street

This open-air center with a town-square vibe provides numerous shopping and dining options, as well as a hotel, movie theater and **H-E-B Central Market** grocery store. Located next to The Woodlands Mall, the center is built around a park, which often hosts live bands and neighborhood festivals. www.marketstreet-thewoodlands.com.

The Woodlands Waterway and Waterway Square

This area acts as the neighborhood's downtown district. The waterway connects the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, The Woodlands Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Waterway Square and The Woodlands Mall. Waterway Square not only serves as home to many of the area's major employers, but it also offers luxury townhouses and dining, shopping and nightlife, including live music and specialty drinks at the **Goose's Acre** and **Baker Street Pub**. Other favorites include **América's Restaurant**, **Crush Wine Lounge**, **Berripop** and **Grimaldi's Pizzeria** as well as **Hubbell & Hudson**, a gourmet market and bistro. www.thewoodlandstowndistrict.com.

Old Town Spring

This popular destination is a short drive from The Woodlands. The restored turn-of-the-century railroad town has been transformed into 150 specialty shops, galleries and restaurants, offering everything from antiques, collectibles and crafts to the latest fashions. www.oldtownspring.com.

FORT BEND COUNTY

Sugar Land Town Square

This is a 32-acre haven of food and drink, fashion and shoes, salons and spas, and specialty shops and entertainment. From early morning to late night, this is the place to find sidewalk cafes, a movie under the moon, a sports bar as well as some of the country's most popular retailers. Three free parking garages are conveniently nearby the square, located at Southwest Freeway and Texas 6. www.sugarlandtownsquare.com.

Rosenberg

Everything old is new again in Rosenberg's historical downtown district, where visitors can browse through an antiques emporium, a collection of rare books and displays of fine hand-made furniture, then top off their trip with a visit to a museum dedicated to railroad history or a 1950s soda fountain. The district is home to an eclectic array of gift boutiques, casual dining and vintage clothing. shoprosenberg.net.

SOUTHEAST HOUSTON

Historical Seabrook District

Several quaint cottages along Hardesty Avenue and Second Street have been converted into independent specialty shops that carry handmade crafts, jewelry, apparel and décor, and antiques nooks. Among the niche shops is **Le Petit Boutique**, **1305 Second**, a brightly painted purple bungalow with green trim that embodies its trendy mix of fashionable women's clothing and jewelry.

Kemah Boardwalk

In addition to colorful kiosks that sell souvenirs and novelties, the boardwalk offers shops containing fine ladies

apparel and accessories, unique toys, surf gear, gifts that capture the collegiate spirit and celebrate Texas, T-shirts and hats, and homemade candies. **Kipp Avenue**, Kemah. www.kemahboardwalk.com

Kemah Lighthouse Shopping District

Just steps away from the Kemah Boardwalk sits an eclectic mix of independently owned shops where you can channel your inner Jimmy Buffett. Handmade ceramics, pottery and crafts made by local artisans, nautical items, Victorian décor and accessories, homemade soaps and candles, kicky and casual clothing, specialty wines and whimsical sculptures are just some of the treasures. Antiques aficionados will not be disappointed. **Bradford Avenue at Sixth Street**, and a portion of **Kipp Avenue**, Kemah. www.kemah.net.

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