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Style-conscious men drive expansion of retail, grooming shops

By **Katherine Blunt** | January 3, 2017 | Updated: January 3, 2017 10:58pm

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Photo: Michael Ciaglo, Staff

IMAGE 3 OF 4

Established Bespoke owner Gary Warfield, right, and client Kevin Jones, left, look through fabric samples on Jones' couch Saturday, Dec. 31, 2016 in Houston. Warfield's company makes house calls to fit clients ... [more](#)

Kevin Jones felt his way through a book of fabric last month, contemplating a pricey decision.

He planned to order a cashmere blazer from



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Jones, a 59-year-old financial consultant, is one of a growing number of Houston men whose appearance demands more than off-the-shelf suits and bargain haircuts, a trend that has fueled the expansion of high-end men's retail and grooming establishments throughout the city. In the last several years, Houston has added a number of such storefronts, including luxury retailers John Lobb and Canali and upscale barbershops Argyle League and Cutthroat Barbers.

This year, the momentum is expected to continue as more open in the area, mirroring a national trend. The market for menswear climbed 13 percent between 2010 and 2015, according to data from Euromonitor, and the market for men's grooming products jumped 15 percent during the same period.

Established Bespoke, which for years maintained a shop in West University Place, plans to reopen in the JPMorgan Chase & Co. building at The Jones on Main early this year. Its entry will restore a retail presence in the old building once home to a Sakowitz department store.

Gary Warfield, who moved to Houston in the 1990s and founded Established Bespoke six years ago, said he has noticed in recent years a greater interest among Houston men in the quality, fit and color of their clothing.

"It's almost like a bunch of men got together and said, 'Let's do this,' " he said. "It makes me feel good after 20 years of being here."

He and his business partner now serve about 50 regular clients, and he expects business to triple when the new shop opens. Many of his customers, business executives, attorneys, physicians and professional athletes among them frequent the higher-end barbershops

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once a year for shirts and trousers that fit his neck and waist just right. He trusts one barber, who has he been seeing for about 30 years, and he periodically books manicures and pedicures.

'Very meticulous'

"I think I'm very meticulous," he said. "I go to my clients and ask them to trust me to place people in organizations that make hundreds of thousands of dollars, and I think I have to look that way."

Last month, Austin-based Finley's, a barbershop offering haircuts, hot-towel shaves and "relaxing executive hand details," among other things, announced plans to open two Houston locations this year. The Gents Place, a men's grooming chain based in the Dallas area, plans to open 10 locations in Houston by the end of 2018.

Founded in Frisco in 2008, The Gents Place is a club of sorts with a range of services from haircuts and shaves to a "unique and manly twist on the pedicure" in a custom foot-repair throne with a hot-stone leg and foot massage, a clay foot mask, whiskey and TV. It has four locations in other Texas cities and Kansas, and it serves about 8,000 clients a month.

Memberships start at about \$400 a year, and owner Ben Davis said several customers pay as much as \$8,000 a year for unlimited shaves, haircuts, waxes, massages and shoe shines.

"We're serving gentlemen who holistically know how to take care of themselves," he said.

'Feels good, looks good'

Jones, too, is particular about his hair and now frequents one shop he discovered in Arizona four



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