

Fashion Street: Water Street

By Chelsey Knutson

Do you ever wonder if you're missing out on some great boutiques because you go to the same stores over and over again in your neighborhood? It's not because you're scared or because you're not open to new ideas -- you may just not know any better.



Lillians of Excelsior

Take heart: most of us are guilty of falling into a mall-shopping routine or sticking only to a specific area in the Twin Cities.

Still, there are plenty of opportunities to step outside suburbia -- or that neighborhood shop you return to enough to be known by name -- and find some new fashions amid unfamiliar territory.

The streets of the Twin Cities are home to a litany of great shops, including Water Street in downtown Excelsior, the feature of this week's 'Fashion Street' feature.

You will probably find more shops on this stretch than are listed here, but this will give you a good start.

Avanti Shoe Boutique, 314 Water St., 952-474-3527

If dogs are man's best friend then shoes are women's. Shoes will always fit no matter how many pant sizes you go through (it's okay we've all been there), they are easy to store and they can transform any ordinary outfit into something that looks like it belongs in the pages of Vogue. Avanti Shoe Boutique carries trendy and affordable shoes from casual to dressy as well as accessories like jewelry. Ladies, it's time to sit back and kick off those heels -- only to try on a new pair of course.

The Bungalow, 229 Water St., 952-474-4537

For some women, swimsuit shopping is like seeing an ex -- they hope they never have to. Well, unless you want to be rocking one of those large t-shirts at the beach, The Bungalow is the ideal place for swimwear. The store carries a collection of swimwear from Maui to Miami. On top of their excessive swimwear collection they carry handbags, clothing, jewelry, flip-flops and sunglasses, men's and kids swimwear, tees, and resort wear.

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Cynthia Rae, 244 Water St., 952-401-4484

The problem with shopping in the urban part of the city is that most people already do. Translation: risk owning something that 100 other people do -- and running into them. Avoid the double trouble by going rural (well, as rural as the Twin Cities can get) and visit Cynthia Rae's to find a constantly changing, unique and affordable inventory that includes dresses, blazers, jeans and accessories. You may just get asked where you got that outfit more than you're used to.

Lillians of Excelsior, 261 Water St., Excelsior, 952-474-3191

When you hear about a shop that is only open four days a month, you probably think they carry unique items found few other places. In this case, you're right. Lillians of Excelsior is a hip and chic shop for women started by two enterprising sisters with a simple goal: give every woman that walks through their doors a shopping experience of a lifetime. They've achieved their goal. Check the website so you don't miss out the next time they're open.

Zelaz, 287 Water St., 952-920-1044

You usually hear stories about how daughters are inspired by their mothers (who, of course, know best). This time, it's the other way around. Zelaz was opened by Jan Polach, who wanted to find a comfortable and creative alternative to the big-box clothing stores for tweens, teens, and their parents (talk about taking matters into your own hands). Polach was inspired by her daughter Alex to open a store that offers chic fashions for everyday and special occasions. The store not only wants to dress girls in chic clothing but give back to them as well. Five percent of the store's revenues to worthy causes that help girls with fewer resources. Shopping has never felt so good.