



## Deal of the week: Athleta steps into Texas

By Katherine Feser

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Athleta made its Texas debut last week in Town & Country Village, where the athletic fitness and lifestyle apparel store for women opened its 12th location.

The store joins other Gap brands in the Memorial-area shopping center, including a Gap and Banana Republic stores.

"We are in the fortunate situation to know where our customer is," said Tess Roering, Athleta's vice president of marketing. She noted that the company's online business and catalog sales have been strong in the region for a number of years.

A turnout of more than 400 women at Tuesday's opening was a good sign for the retailer.

The decor of the 4,888-square-foot store features imagery of models exercising outdoors or striking a yoga pose, surfing, skiing or hiking.

"We have such an outdoor brand. We really want that organic feel to come out in the store as well," Roering said.

The store, located at 600 W. Sam Houston Parkway North, uses reclaimed wood from a 100-year-old barn, historic style fixtures and found objects.

The clothing racks can be wheeled away to make room for free classes, such as yoga, pilates, zumba and kickboxing. The frequency and types of classes will depend on demand, but Roering envisions at least three to five a week.

In addition to athletic wear for sports, Athleta offers fashionable "to fro" products such as cover-ups to throw on over a yoga outfit, easy dresses, sweaters and skirts.

The Sonoma, Calif.-based company plans to open 50 stores by 2013. It is seeking other locations in Houston, Dallas and Austin, said Roering.

The Houston store, which employs 22 people, is its third to open in 2012.

Ed James of UCR Moody Rambin Page represented the landlord, Town & Country Partnership, in the negotiations.

Athleta was founded in 1998 and became part of the Gap family in 2008.

[katherine.feser@chron.com](mailto:katherine.feser@chron.com)