Quantifying Growth: Data-Driven Perspectives on Warehousing in the Los Angeles and Inland Empire Region

Henry Nadel

Pitzer College

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Abstract

This study explores the community and environmental impacts of warehouse expansion in the Inland Empire, focusing on the trends and challenges associated with the rapid growth of the logistics sector in Southern California. Through comprehensive, data driven research, this paper examines the spatial distribution of warehouses, the rate of their expansion at regional and county levels, along with their per capita impact on communites. The study also draws on a review of relevant literature to highlight existing research on the economic, environmental, and health effects of warehouse growth, shedding light on disparities in environmental burdens faced by vulnerable communities. The findings reveal significant concerns regarding air quality, traffic congestion, and socio-economic inequality linked to warehouse development. The study underscores the importance of balancing industrial growth with the well-being of local populations and the environment.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking the WWRC for welcoming me this semester and providing me the opportunity to learn valuable research skills and gain experience as part of the organization. Specifically, I want to thank Felix for being my supervisor, this project would not have been possible without you. I so appreciate your commitment to my learning and development as a data analyst outside of this project. I'd also like to thank Jemma for your guidance in turning this research into a formalized paper, along with having the quickest turnaround times for our work of any professor. Finally, Thank you to Tessa and my entire CASA cohort for all of your contributions this semester, it was a pleasure to learn from you.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of the logistics industry in the Los Angeles and Inland Empire region reflects broader trends in globalization, urbanization, and neoliberal economic policy. As global supply chains demand ever-larger warehouses, regions like the Inland Empire have become key nodes in the logistics network, benefiting from their proximity to major ports and transportation corridors. However, this growth comes at a cost.

From an environmental justice perspective, the logistics industry disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Warehouses bring increased truck traffic, air pollution, and noise, contributing to adverse health outcomes such as asthma and cardiovascular disease. Moreover, these developments often occur in working-class neighborhoods with limited political or economic power to resist industrial encroachment. From a labor perspective, the rise of warehouses reflects broader trends in precarious employment, with many logistics jobs characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, and limited protections. The intersection of these systemic issues underscores the need for research that both critiques existing policies and advocates for equitable alternatives.

This study contributes to the growing academic discourse on environmental justice, industrial geographies, and urban equity. Documenting the trends and impacts of warehouse development, it provides a critical lens for examining how regional planning and economic policy shape spatial inequalities, with implications for both local advocacy and broader urban theory.

The Warehouse Workers Resource Center:

The Warehouse Worker Resource Center (WWRC) has been a vital advocate for warehouse workers in California's Inland Empire since its beginnings as Warehouse Workers United in 2009. As a nonprofit organization, the WWRC is dedicated to protecting and supporting workers in the warehousing and logistics industry, where exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and wage theft are prevalent. The organization's mission is rooted in empowering workers to enact positive change in their workplaces. Through legal support, resources, and guidance, the WWRC helps workers combat injustices and assert their rights, fostering a culture where individuals can advocate for fair wages and speak up against discrimination.

Central to the WWRC's values is a commitment to social justice and equity. Warehouse workers, often employed in physically demanding and precarious positions, are essential to the economy yet face significant barriers to fair treatment. By engaging with the community and collaborating with labor coalitions, the WWRC amplifies workers' voices, advocating for policies that ensure safer working conditions and fair compensation. The organization has been influential towards legislative reforms in California, such as raising the minimum wage and establishing protections for subcontracted workers.

The WWRC's efforts extend beyond individual workplaces and aim to address systemic issues affecting warehouse workers. For instance, the organization has supported Amazon workers in San Bernardino, advocating for higher wages, safer conditions, and legislative changes. The WWRC also campaigns for broader systemic reforms, such as the Excluded Worker Program, which seeks to extend unemployment benefits to undocumented workers, and

the Airport Gateway Specific Plan, which threatens affordable housing and community stability in San Bernardino. Through a multifaceted approach, the WWRC not only seeks justice for individual workers but also aims to create a more equitable labor environment that benefits workers and the communities in which they live.

The Researcher:

I am currently a junior at Pitzer College studying Environmental Analysis with a minor in Data Science. Born and raised in Newton, MA, a close suburb of Boston, I was first introduced to community work in the summer of 2020 through political organizing for the upcoming elections that November. Over the following two years, I worked on four separate campaigns, ranging from local city council races and state ballot measures to U.S. Senate elections. At the same time, I became involved in climate movement organizing, spending two years as part of the Sunrise Movement's actions team. There, I learned how to organize direct actions and mobilize support for partner organizations.

Over the past few years, I've undergone a significant evolution in my approach to activism. When I first started working on political campaigns and climate justice movements, I was driven by a sense of urgency and righteous anger. The fast-paced, confrontational nature of these movements energized me and gave me a strong sense of purpose. However, through reflection and building relationships with people from different backgrounds, I've shifted my focus towards creating more inclusive movements that bring people together.

This change in philosophy has shaped my current work with the Warehouse Worker Resource Center (WWRC) through Pitzer College's Critical Action & Social Advocacy (CASA) program. CASA pairs students with community organizations, allowing us to trade 125

internship hours for course credit, along with coursework in social change theory and research methods. I was drawn to CASA because it offered an opportunity to channel my time and energy into community-driven efforts rather than traditional academic work. Working on tangible, real-world issues, like advocating for workers' rights, felt more pressing and impactful than writing academic papers. My current role at the WWRC aligns with my belief in compassionate, bridge-building activism that seeks to understand and uplift diverse voices—a philosophy that resonates deeply with the WWRC's mission to fight for justice and equity in the labor sector.

At the WWRC, I'm part of the research team, a critical component of the organization's advocacy work. Research is conducted on labor practices, workplace conditions, and economic policies affecting warehouse workers, which is used to inform the WWRC's campaigns and legislative efforts. By examining trends in wage theft, subcontracting, and occupational hazards, we ensure that the WWRC's strategies are grounded in rigorous research. The findings support legislative reforms and broader systemic changes that benefit warehouse workers and their communities. This work also involves collaborative reports with academic institutions and labor coalitions, further elevating public discourse around the rights of workers in the logistics sector.

Goals:

This research has multiple interconnected goals, including learning, project, and research objectives, all aimed at understanding the growth and impact of warehouse development in Southern California. On a personal level, I am seeking to improve my skills in using statistical analyses to identify trends and correlations while enhancing my technical skills, particularly in using Excel as a platform for data analysis.

At the project level, my goal is to create a dataset with information on warehouse growth patterns in the region that can serve community organizations, policymakers, and scholars in addressing the rapid expansion of warehouses. This includes documenting historical trends in warehouse size and location, identifying disparities in industrial distribution, and contributing to public awareness about the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of these developments. Additionally, through this project, I am aiming to empower local communities by providing accessible data and tools to support advocacy for more equitable land-use policies.

The research also aims to address the question of which areas of the Los Angeles and Inland Empire region face the largest impacts from the warehousing industry. I do this by investigating the temporal and spatial trends in warehouse development. By addressing these questions, the research aims to expose systemic inequalities and provide insights to help reshape regional development practices toward greater equity and sustainability.

Literature Review

Southern California's Inland Empire, a metropolitan area spanning Riverside and San Bernardino counties east of Los Angeles, has transformed over the past half-century from an agricultural region to a leading logistics and warehousing hub in the United States. This literature review explores the existing research on trends and causes found in the growth and geographic placement of warehouses in the Inland Empire. The amalgamation of research reveals a complex interplay of economic benefits, environmental justice issues, and shifting land use patterns, with studies emphasizing the industry's rapid expansion fueled by e-commerce demand and strategic location advantages. The body of work discussed in this literature review underscores a concerning trend of warehouses being disproportionately located in low-income, predominantly

minority communities, exacerbating health and environmental disparities while highlighting the socioeconomic limitations and limited mobility for young workers.

Hector De Leon's study titled "Vacuum of Social Mobility: Warehouse Labor's Impact on Young Workers in California's Inland Empire" focuses on the socioeconomic effects of warehouse work on young employees aged 18-22. Conducted through interviews with young warehouse workers using convenience sampling and nomination recruitment strategies, De Leon's research sheds light on how the logistics industry's expansion has impacted social mobility for minority communities. The findings reveal that these young workers face significant challenges, including low wages, lack of benefits, and limited opportunities for advancement—conditions that contribute to what the authors describe as "wage slavery" and "time poverty." This study situates warehouse labor within a framework of "Racialized Neoliberalism," suggesting that while economic development is often framed as empowering, it can perpetuate cycles of disadvantage for marginalized groups (De Leon, 2023).

Expanding upon the theme of economic impact while also including environmental analysis is Arthur Maxwell Levine's research titled "Measuring and Mapping Warehouse Impacts on Carbon Storage and Sequestration," which provides a quantitative assessment of how warehouse proliferation affects ecosystem services in the Inland Empire. Levine's study notes that between 2004 and 2020, over 300 million square feet of warehouse space was constructed in the Inland Empire, significantly altering local landscapes and economies. While acknowledging the economic benefits, Levine critically assesses environmental consequences and job quality. Levine continues on to highlight rising levels of diesel particulate matter (PM2.5) associated with increased truck traffic servicing warehouses—a pressing concern given California's stringent air quality regulations. Finally, Levine's spatial analysis reveals that warehouses are

often located near low-income communities, which exacerbates pre-existing health disparities in these places (Levine 2023).

Both Levine and De Leon discuss how the rapid expansion of warehouses has brought significant economic benefits and disadvantages to the Inland Empire. Of the benefits, some include job creation and increased tax revenue for local municipalities. However, while the logistics sector has generated economic growth, many warehouse jobs offer wages below the living wage and lack comprehensive benefits or opportunities for career advancement (Levine, 2023; De Leon, 2023). This discrepancy raises concerns about the quality of employment available to local residents, particularly in communities of color where warehouses are disproportionately located (De Leon, 2023).

Along with these complex economic dynamics, the warehousing industry also has many environmental justice ramifications for the region. This is investigated in a senior thesis project by Kathrine Gelsey from Pomona College titled "Warehouses in the Inland Empire: Displacing Land and Life." Gelsey's mixed-methods approach combines quantitative spatial analysis with qualitative interviews to explore how warehouse locations correlate with the demographic characteristics of nearby populations. The findings reveal a concerning trend: warehouses are disproportionately situated in areas with high percentages of low-income residents and communities of color, particularly Latinx populations. This spatial analysis highlights not only the clustering of warehouses along major transportation corridors but also the historical zoning decisions that have facilitated such development at the expense of vulnerable communities. Gelsey emphasizes the need for equitable land use policies and greater community involvement in decision-making processes, pointing to a clear gap in existing policies that often overlook the voices of those most affected by industrial growth (Gelsey 2023).

Key to understanding the localized impacts of these economic, environmental, and health concerns are the shifting land use patterns across the region. This shift not only alters local landscapes but also affects community dynamics as new warehouse clusters emerge in previously undeveloped regions. The quantitative perspective offered by Jaller, Pineda, and Phong, in "Spatial Analysis of Warehouses and Distribution Centers in Southern California," analyzes building permit data from 1990 to 2012 to track warehouse growth patterns. Their findings indicate a significant increase in both the number and size of warehouses during this period, driven largely by proximity to transportation infrastructure and land availability. Notably, they document a shift in development from urban centers to more peripheral areas as land costs rise—a trend that raises important questions about future land use and community impacts (Jaller et al., 2017).

The environmental justice implications of rapid warehouse growth in the Inland Empire are a focal point between many of the sources. Research indicates that warehouses are often situated in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, exacerbating existing health disparities and environmental burdens (Gelsey, 2023.; Levine, 2023). The increase in diesel particulate matter and other pollutants associated with high truck traffic servicing these facilities poses significant health risks to nearby residents (Levine, 2023). Furthermore, the conversion of agricultural land and open spaces into industrial sites raises critical questions about sustainable land use practices in a region already grappling with air quality issues (Levine, 2023; Jaller et al., 2017).

Melissa Sanchez further explores shifting land use patterns in the region through localized analysis in "It’s Giving Crumbs: Warehouse Development in the City of Fontana," which provides a critical examination of how warehouse growth has transformed specific

communities within the Inland Empire. Focusing on Fontana—a city that has transitioned from steel manufacturing to logistics—Sanchez highlights both economic opportunities and environmental challenges arising from rapid warehouse development. While acknowledging job creation and economic growth, her research also emphasizes community concerns regarding air quality and traffic congestion due to increased industrial activity. Sanchez's localized research illustrates how local contexts can shape warehouse development and analyzes the impact on an individual community. (Sanchez, 2024).

A research paper from UC Riverside by Tejpaul Singh Bainiwal along with co-authors, titled, "The State of Work: Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics in the Inland Empire" offers a broader regional analysis that situates local findings within national trends observed from 2000 to 2020. This report reveals distinct spatial patterns in warehouse growth across the United States, highlighting shifts towards larger facilities located further from city centers due to changes in supply chain strategies driven by e-commerce growth. (Bainiwal et al., 2024)

The logistics industry's rapid expansion in the Inland Empire's economic landscape makes the impacts that warehouses can have on local communities all the more concerning. Factors such as proximity to major ports and transportation infrastructure have made the region an attractive site for warehouse development. The average size of new warehouses has increased significantly over time—from approximately 100,000 square feet in the early 1990s to over 300,000 square feet by 2012—indicating a trend towards larger facilities that can accommodate growing e-commerce demands (Jaller et al., 2017). This expansion has been fueled by changes in supply chain strategies and the increasing importance of e-commerce in driving warehouse demand (Bainiwal et al., 2024). However, this growth raises questions about sustainability and long-term community impacts as infrastructure strains under increased traffic and pollution.

Altogether, the existing literature on warehouse growth and geographic placement in the Inland Empire highlights key areas including environmental justice issues, socioeconomic impacts on young workers, shifting land use patterns, industry expansion dynamics, and strategic location advantages. Several studies underscore the disproportionate siting of warehouses in low-income areas dominated by minorities—exacerbating health disparities and environmental burdens—while others examine socioeconomic limitations imposed on young warehouse workers amid stagnant wages. Furthermore, researchers analyze environmental effects such as loss of ecosystem services alongside regional development trends like shifts from urban centers to peripheral areas. These points of overlap highlight the aspects of warehouse growth currently receiving the most attention from researchers.

However, by assessing the inverse of these key points, notable gaps begin to emerge. Many studies lack comprehensive exploration into structural factors perpetuating these inequities—such as zoning policies—and there is limited attention to community resistance or adaptation strategies. Addressing these gaps could provide a more holistic understanding of the long-term implications surrounding warehouse growth on regional equity and sustainability. Due to the time constraints of the semester, these gaps were not addressed in the following research and would be an interesting avenue for future research in the field.

This literature on warehouse growth and geographic placement in Southern California's Inland Empire underscores a complex web of economic benefits, environmental justice issues, and shifting land use patterns. Existing research highlights the region's transformation into a logistics hub driven by e-commerce demand and strategic location advantages, with a disproportionate burden of health and environmental disparities falling on low-income, predominantly minority communities. The following research will contribute to this discourse by

offering an original analysis of warehouse growth patterns, size trends, and geographic placement in the Inland Empire. By examining recent data and visualizing these dynamics, this study aims to shed light on how these developments intersect with regional equity and sustainability while providing data to assess and compare between community impacts.

Methodology

The research is deeply informed by critical race theory (CRT) and critical urbanism, which provide complementary frameworks for understanding the systemic inequities associated with warehouse expansion. Critical race theory examines how systemic racism is embedded in policies and practices, such as zoning laws and industrial siting, which disproportionately burden communities of color. In this context, CRT highlights how logistics hubs are often concentrated in low-income, majority-minority areas, exacerbating environmental and socio-economic inequities. Meanwhile, critical urbanism interrogates how urban and regional development frequently prioritizes economic growth over equity, marginalizing vulnerable populations in the process. This perspective contextualizes the spatial distribution of warehouses, revealing how industry-driven land-use patterns undermine community health and sustainability. Together, these methodologies illuminate the structural nature of the inequalities observed in warehouse expansion, guiding the research toward insights that challenge the status quo of industrial development and advocate for systemic reform.

Methods:

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining historical data, statistical analysis, and community overlay analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of

warehouse expansion and its impacts. Research on historical data of warehouse developments formed the foundation of the study, using data gathered from the WarehouseCITY dataset and GIS maps to track warehouse development in terms of count, size, and geographic placement dating back to 1980. U.S. Census data was also utilized to provide demographic and population trends, creating a temporal framework to analyze changes in warehouse size, distribution, and per capita impact.

Building on this, I conduct quantitative statistical analysis to identify trends in warehouse size, regional distribution, and the relationships between warehouse density and demographic factors. I used statistical techniques to isolate key patterns, such as growth rates and regional shares of development, to enable a deeper understanding of the disparities in industrial expansion.

Data Analysis

This analysis examines trends in warehouse development across the Los Angeles and Inland Empire region, focusing on the scale and distribution of warehouses over time. The primary data source for this research is raw data from the WarehouseCITY platform, which provides a GIS-powered map to view the location of all warehouse developments in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. The WarehouseCITY platform was launched in June of 2024 as a collaborative effort between Pitzer Colleges Robert Redford Conservancy and Radical Research LLC, led by Susan Phillips and Michael McCarthy. This data includes the year built and square footage for all developments in 1981 or later, all warehouses developed in 1980 or earlier are grouped in the data under 1980. In this research, at times I overlay this core data set with U.S. Census population numbers from Counties and Cities to

incorporate per capita analysis. This inclusion of per capita data allows us to more accurately assess the community impacts of warehouses since total numbers can be skewed by the area of a place. The original data along with computation sheets have been stored in a Microsoft Excel file for the duration of the research process. Calculations derived from the data reveal patterns in square footage, size categories of warehouses, and regional concentrations. By investigating these trends, the analysis highlights areas where the warehousing industry in more prevalent and therefore causing higher impacts for communities.

Researchers gathered the WarehouseCITY dataset using a combination of publicly available parcel data and targeted queries. Data for Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties were obtained from open-access county databases. Information for Orange County was acquired through direct communication with Orange County Public Works and a specialized query of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) dataset in May 2022. Filtering criteria varied by county: Riverside County parcels included terms like "warehouse" and "light industrial"; San Bernardino County parcels incorporated land-use types such as warehouse, flex, light industry, and storage, but excluded specific categories like "auto storage yard" and "bulk fertilizer storage." In Los Angeles County, parcels classified as "Warehousing, Distribution, and Storage" were selected, with exclusions for "Open Storage," despite its common use for shipping container storage. Multi-parcel facilities were further refined under "Associated APN improvements," identified on a case-by-case basis. These tailored approaches to categorization reflect the complexities of warehouse classifications which introduce some variability across counties.

Due to these imperfections in the available data, the WarehouseCITY dataset is subject to several limitations inherent in the process of compiling and analyzing parcel data across multiple

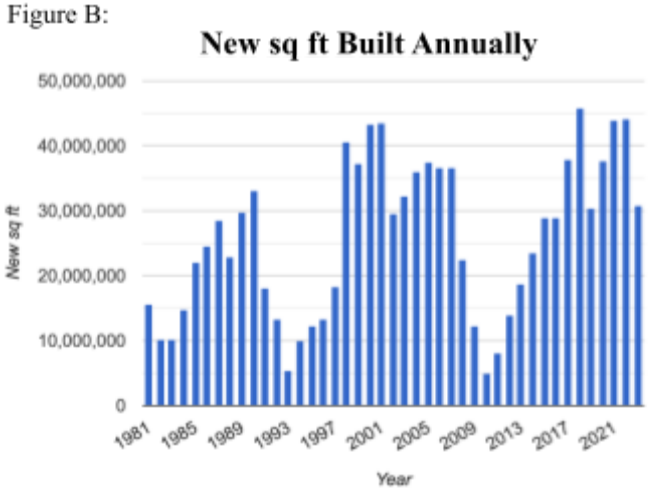
counties. In Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, the broad categorization of parcels under terms such as "light industrial" or "flex" may result in misclassifications of warehouse properties. Duplicate records are another challenge, particularly when multiple build years are associated with a single parcel number, potentially leading to double-counting of key metrics. This issue was handled by prioritizing the earliest recorded build year, though this means modifications and expansions to warehouses may not be fully accounted for. Los Angeles County parcels with multiple associated parcel numbers are consolidated to prevent duplication. Furthermore, parcels under one acre, totaling over 12,000 and approximately 270 million square feet, were excluded to optimize the system's mapping performance. Orange County data, acquired through external communication rather than directly from the assessor's office, is older and less complete, warranting its classification as preliminary. These limitations do not discount the value of the insights derived from WarehouseCITY's analysis, instead, they underscore the challenges of working with complex datasets and are integral to understanding the subsequent findings.

Trends in Regional Warehouse Development

This section will look into the rate of expansion and trends in the development of warehouses across the entirety of the Los Angeles and Inland Empire Region. I will begin by considering how the number and size of warehouses across the region have changed over time. To the left are two bar graphs displaying different metrics for annual warehouse development across the region. Figure A depicts the number of new warehouses developed each year, while Figure B shows the sum of new warehouse square footage developed each year.

Figure A:

Figure B:

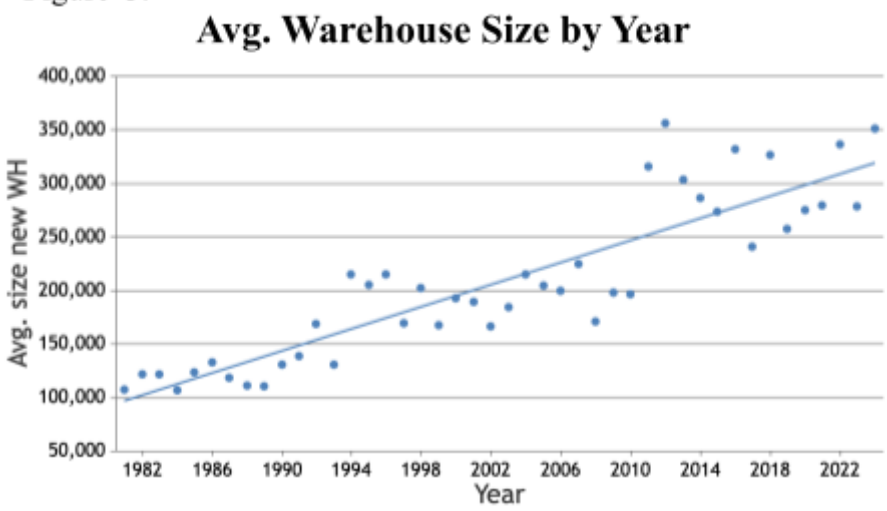


By analyzing these graphs aligned vertically we can see the similarity between high and low years of growth in each figure. However, when isolating the years of high growth, we see that square footage is increasing at a faster rate than the number of new warehouses. This relationship would lead us to believe that warehouses are increasing in size. Furthermore, the graphs give a nod to the impact of external economic factors having an impact on development. We can see this with the large dip following the 2008 recession which took the industry years to fully recover from. We see a similar dip in 1993 which aligns with a smaller economic downturn taking place (Singleton 1993). This could be attributed to a higher volatility of the warehousing industry in the 90s, making it more susceptible to the impact of smaller economic downturns. I speculate that over the following decade as the industry grew this volatility went down.

Using the data provided above, Figure C depicts the mean square footage of new warehouses developed annually with a scatterplot.

In Figure C we see the upward trend in mean warehouse size since 1981. There is a correlation rate of 0.89 between the average warehouse size per year, indicating a strong positive linear relationship.

Figure C:



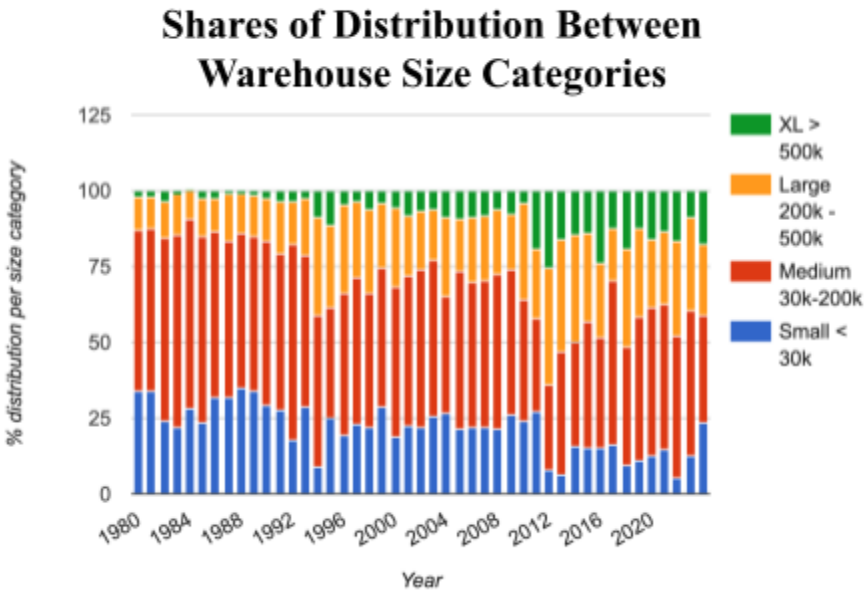
This shows a shift in industry standards away from smaller developments and towards fewer, but larger warehouses being developed. This data also explains the disparities mentioned above between the findings of Figure A and Figure B. Looking back to the literature review, this is backed up by previous research alos finding an uncreas in number and size of warehouses across the region (Jaller et al., 2017).

To further examine the changing distribution of warehouse size, Figure D compares the number of warehouses annually in the industry size categories Small, Medium, Large, and XL. Traditionally, large is considered anything greater than 200,000 sq ft, but for the purpose of this research, I have chosen to add on the XL category to track mass developments greater than 500,000 sq ft. The choice to add the XL category was to convey a new standard of warehouse size in the industry that has become prevalent since 2011. Furthermore, these mass developments can single-handedly have extreme impacts on communities through space used and increased truck traffic, whereas smaller warehouses require some clustering to have similar impacts.

Figure D allows us to analyze the changes over time in the distribution of warehouses by size from 1980 to 2024. We can see that through the duration of the sample period, Medium

warehouses (30,000 - 200,000 sq ft) remain the dominant size category, although their percentage has slowly been declining. We also see the continuous decline of warehouses developed in the Small category (less than 30,000 sq ft) with 41 developments in 1981, 42 in 2000, and just 17 in 2020. The graph also highlights the emergence of mass developments in the XL category (greater than 500,000 sq ft), especially over the past two decades with a mean distribution of 16.5% from 2011 to 2024, and a peak year of 27 XL developments in 2018.

Figure D:



These findings underscore a transformation in the logistics landscape since 1980, driven by the demand for larger, centralized facilities across the region. Understanding this context of rapid industry expansion leads me to ask which areas in the region are being impacted most heavily. In the following section, we will begin to address this uneven distribution of impact in a county-level analysis.

Growth at the County Level

This section aims to analyze trends specific to each county, highlighting differences in growth and development patterns across the region. The data continues to be pulled from

warehouse development statistics of all four counties, as well as incorporating US Census population data to include per capita analysis.

Figues E and F displayed to the right convey data on the warehouse distribution between Los Angeles (LA), Orange, San Bernardino (SB), and Riverside counties from 1980 to 2022. Figure E graphs the share of new warehouses built each year per county. Figure F shows the percentage of new square footage from the warehouse industry distributed to each county. The graphs a plotted as scatter plots, with color coded regression lines showing the trends in each region over time.

Figure E:

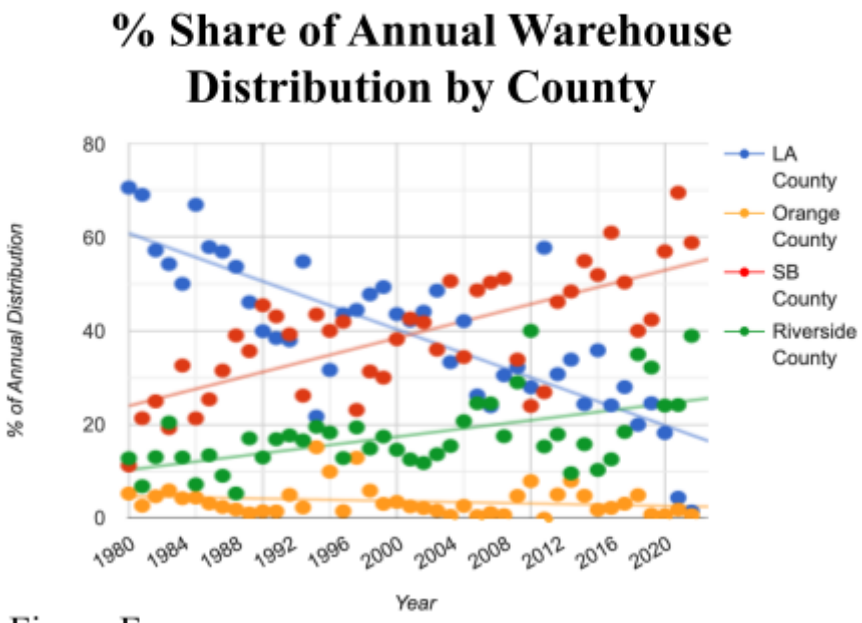
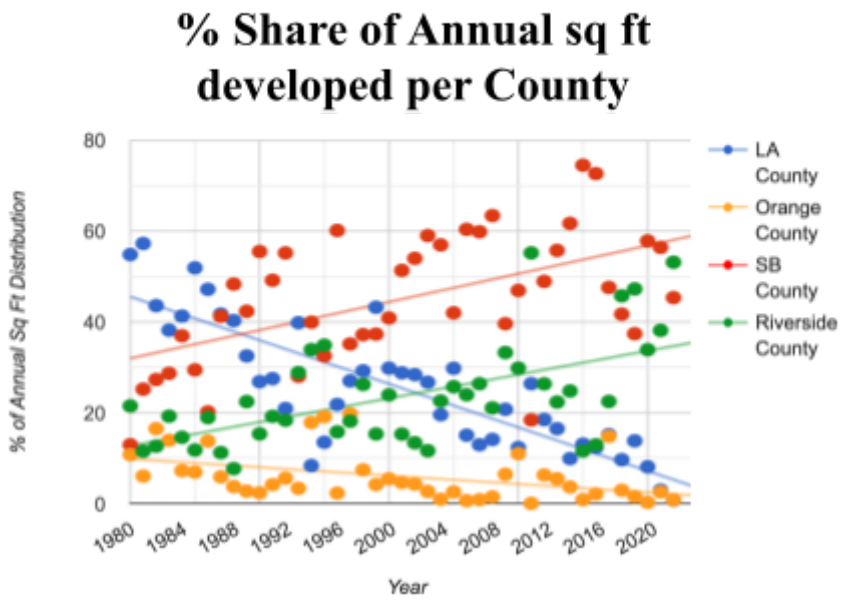


Figure F:



Similarly to what was found in the regional analysis, we see the disparity between the number of warehouses developed in a given year and the total square footage developed in that year. Looking at Figure F, we can see that San Bernardino County has most frequently had the highest distribution of new square feet in a given year, along with the fact that its percentage of annual square feet developed has been rising. Furthermore, we also see a decline in the share of square feet developed in LA County. Using a representative example, 2004 shows San Bernardino had 57.0%, Riverside got 22.5%, and LA got 19.5%. In a more recent example from 2020, San Bernardino took 57.8%, Riverside had 33.9%, and LA had 8.1%. This example highlights San Bernardions consistent place receiving the highest shares of growth, along with how shares that were seemingly once going to Los Angeles are now being channeled to Riverside.

Moving forward, Figure G depicts the cumulative sum of warehouse square footage developed annually in each county. This allows us to visualize the impact that regional trends can have over time by adding data year over year. Moreover, we can examine the rate of expansion in each county as it is depicted through the slope of each line, with a steeper slope meaning more rapid expansion. The vertical axis displays the cumulative square footage of warehouses developed by each date, with the horizontal axis showing the year. The data has not been adjusted to account for warehouse closures, so it displays cumulative growth, not true totals.

Figure G:

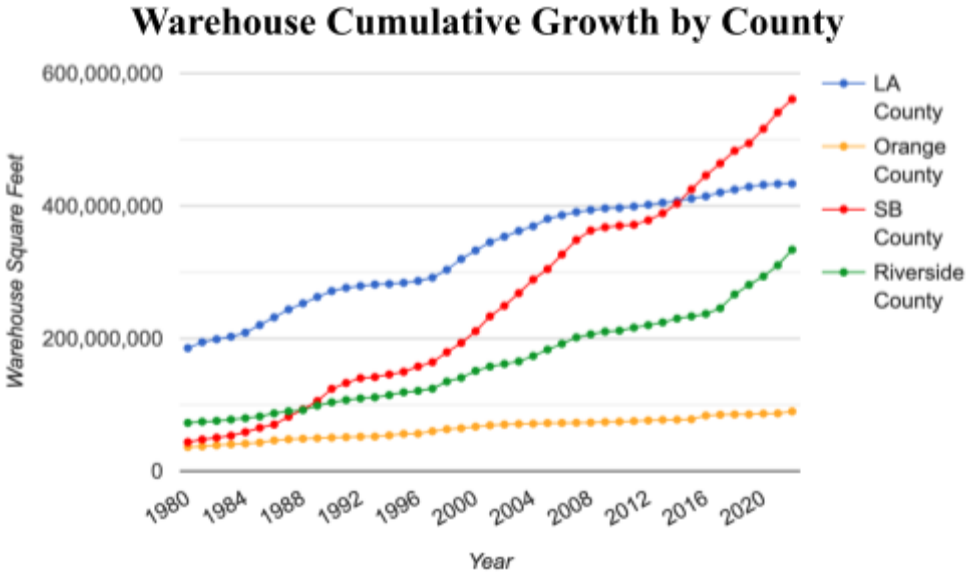


Figure G tells a story of the rapid expansion of warehouse space in San Bernardino. In 1980 LA County was by far the most developed with 185,541,000 square feet of warehouse space while the other three counties remained relatively undeveloped. Over the following 44 years expansion was dispersed across the region, with over 200,000,000 square feet of growth in LA, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. However, San Bernardino stands out with an average rate of expansion of 6.3% from 1980 to 2022. In comparison, the average rate of expansion over this period in Riverside was 3.7%, and the rate of expansion in LA was 2.1%. Spurred by this intensified rate of expansion, San Bernardino County notably overtakes LA County for the highest number of cumulative square feet developed in 2015 and has continued upwards since. Other interesting takeaways from this graph include the slowed growth in LA County, with a mean expansion rate of only 0.7% from 2008 to the present. Conversely, we can notice a recent uptick of growth in Riverside County, with a mean expansion rate of 6.3% since 2017. This recent increase in the rate of expansion in Riverside aligns with the analysis discussed in the literature review that suggested as space along major transportation corridors becomes

harder to find, new developments would begin expanding east and to undeveloped areas (Jaller et al., 2017).

Building upon this nderstanding the dynamics between counties in terms of total growth, to obtain a clearer picture of community impacts, I will compare warehouse data with population totals to conduct a per capita analysis. The population data was gathered from the U.S. Census which collects city and county population data at ten year intervals. To contextualize the per capita analysis to follow, Figure H shows the census population totals for each county since 1980.

Figure H:

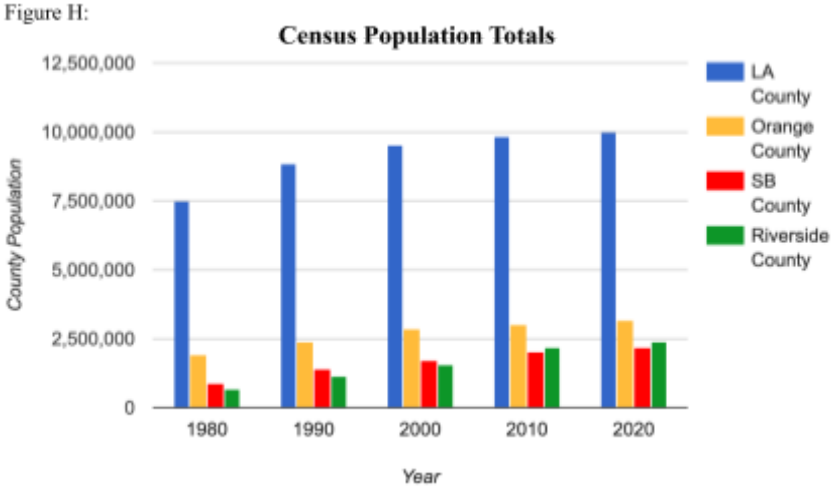
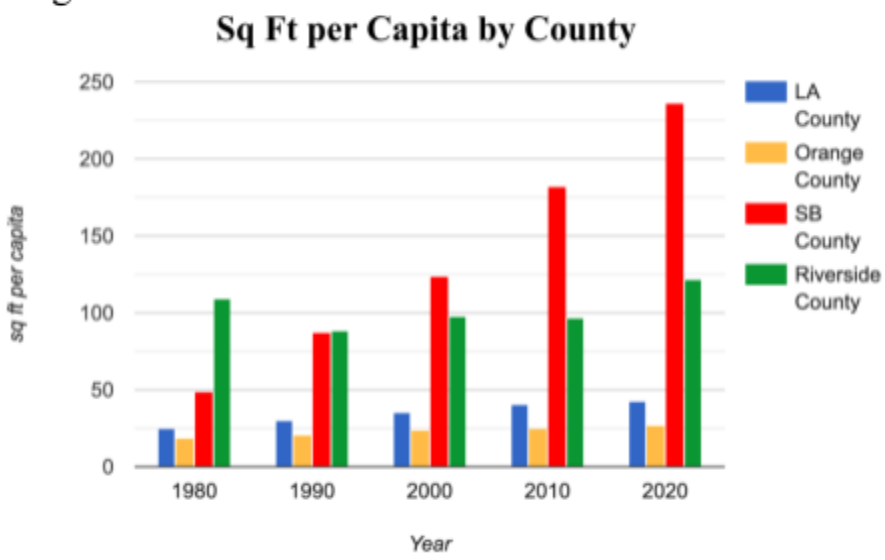


Figure H provides population totals compared next to each other along with changes in county growth based on bar height between years. The rate of population expansion in San Bernardino County from 1980 to 2020 was 26.3%, in Riverside County it was 40.1%, in Los Angeles County it was 7.8%, and in Orange County, it was 13.6%. This graph and the concurrent growth rates of the population show considerably more population growth in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties than in LA or Orange Counties. It is worth noting that this lines up with San Bernardino and Riverside showing the highest growth rates of square footage over the same time period (6.3% and 3.7% respectively).

Building upon this analysis of population growth between the four counties, Figure I adds in each counties cumulative square footage of warehouse space to visualize the per capita impact of warehouses in each county.

Figure I shows that there are far more warehouses proportionally to the number of people in Riverside and San Bernardino counties compared to LA or Orange. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the number of sq ft per capita in San Bernardino County makes a large jump at every ten-year interval, while all others counties remain more stable.

Figure I:



The analysis of county-level trends highlights significant disparities in warehouse development across the Los Angeles and Inland Empire region. San Bernardino County stands out with the highest rate of warehouse expansion from 1980 to 2024 (6.3%), far surpassing Riverside (3.7%) and Los Angeles (2.1%), reflecting its dominant role in regional growth. San Bernardino and Riverside Counties both saw the most dramatic population growth, aligning with their rapid industrial expansion. However, per capita analysis reveals a disproportionate concentration of warehouse space in San Bernardino and Riverside compared to Los Angeles and Orange Counties, underscoring the unequal distribution of the industry's impact. Based on

this dissonance between the growth in LA and Orange County vs San Bernardino and Riverside, the following section will compare the growth seen in the coastal versus inland counties.

Coastal Counties vs. The Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside)

This section continues to analyze regional disparities of warehouse distribution across the region, with a side-by-side comparison between the costal counties of LA and Orange County and the Inland Empire (IE), comprised of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

Below, Figure J shows the share of new warehouses developed in a given year in costal counties vs. the IE. To it's right, Figure K shows the share of square footage developed annually between LA and the IE.

Figure J:

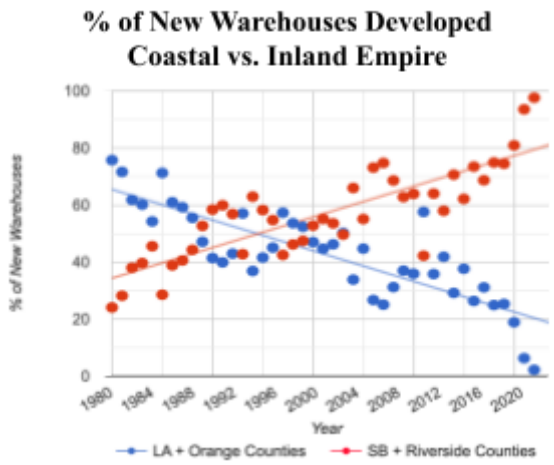
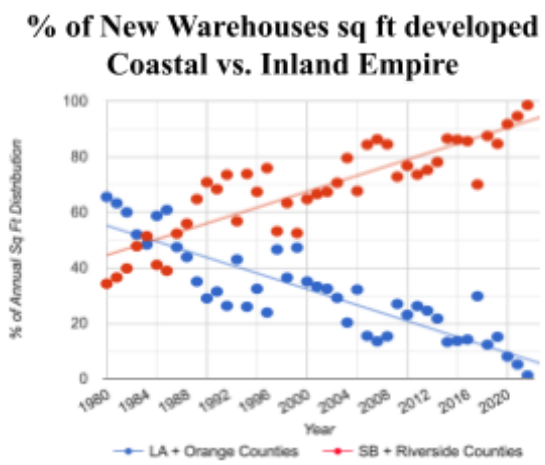


Figure K:



These graphs illustrate the clear disparity in warehouse distribution found with much higher shares of distribution in the IE than in LA in recent years. It hasn't always been this way, we can see based on totals in Figure G that warehouse space was more prevalent in LA prior to 1980. Figure J shows a fairly even distribution of new developments through the 90s into the early 2000s, until shares in the IE spike in the 2010s. Figure K shows that the growth of square footage

has been leaning toward the IE for much longer, surpassing LA in 1987 and showing continuously higher shares throughout the 21st century.

City-Level Distribution and Impact

This section explores the distribution of warehouse space across cities, examining the total square footage of warehouses, their populations, and the per capita impact. By highlighting cities with the most warehouse space and those with the highest square footage per capita, the analysis offers insights into the community-level implications of warehouse development. Analysis of cities was done through the use of lists ranking cities with the highest warehouse count, cities with the highest number of warehouses per capita, cities with the most square feet, and cities with the most square feet per capita. To view these complete rankings, see the Appendix.

Figure L:

Figure L, shows the cities across Los Angeles and the Inland Empire with the five highest total square footage of warehouse space. Each city listed in this table is a place of interest, holding the highest individual placements of warehouses across the region. This mass placement undoubtedly has a large impact on the economy and environmental standings of these communites. Comparing between them, it is relevant to note how much more warehouse space is present in Onterio even compared to other top cities. One explanation for this is the logistics industries link to the Onterio Internation Airport, which also serves as a mass logistics distribution hub. This corelation would

align with findings in the literature review that highlight corelation between warehouse placement and transportation infrastructure (Gelsey 2023).

Continuing, Figure M pivots from assessing total numbers to ranking community impacts through per capita analysis. The table shows the top 5 cities in LA and the IE ranked by the highest number of warehouse square feet per capita. The table also shows each city's total square feet of warehouse space and population total as of 2020 for further context.

Figure M:

	City	Total sq ft	Population	**Sq ft per capita**
1	City of Industry	59,490,000	264	225,340.9091
2	Vernon	24,358,000	222	109,720.7207
3	Irwindale	16,674,000	1,472	11,327.44565
4	City of Commerce	31,170,000	12,378	2,518.177412
5	Santa Fe Springs	44,078,000	19,219	2,293.459597

This chart lists the incorporated cities with the top five square feet of warehouse space per capita in LA and the IE, however, some of these cities may exist as outliers when attempting to measure community impact due to the history of how they were designed. The City of Industry, incorporated in 1957, was explicitly created as a hub for industrial and commercial activity, with minimal residential development. This focus results in an unusually high warehouses-per-capita ratio, as the city's small population of 264 residents significantly inflates the metric. Similarly, the City of Commerce, incorporated in 1960, prioritized industrial and commercial growth, favoring warehouses and logistics centers over residential development. Both cities were planned to maximize industrial and economic output rather than serve as

traditional living spaces. A potential next step for improving this research would be to identify a statistical commonality between the outliers and use this to remove them from the rankings.

While the intentional focus on industrial growth in certain locations may make it difficult to derive clear community impacts from Figure M's rankings, they are still useful to identify incorporated cities being heavily impacted by the warehouse industry.

Moving forward, a category of cities that stands out when comparing the complete total sq ft and per capita ranked tables are those that fall much higher in the per capita than total sq ft rankings.

Figure N:

City	Total sq ft rank	Total sq ft	Per capita rank	Sq ft per capita
Vernon	22nd	24358000	2nd	109720.7207
Irwindale	23rd	16674000	3rd	11327.44565
Calimesa	45th	10185000	7th	1015.858767

The trend noted above identifies cities with a lower population, which would imply a higher impact on the average resident as it leaves less room for clustering and concentration within the city's borders. Figure N identifies notable cities with higher per capita than total sq ft rankings.

Conclusion

This data and analysis reveals profound shifts in the development and distribution of warehouses across the Los Angeles and Inland Empire region over the last four decades. Regionally, the industry has trended toward fewer but significantly larger warehouses, as evidenced by the strong correlation (0.89) between years and mean warehouse size. This transformation reflects changing industry standards and the increasing demand for large-scale, centralized facilities. Additionally, the rise of XL warehouses (greater than 500k sq ft), particularly since 2011, signifies a focus on mass developments that are reshaping the logistics landscape to require larger, more centralised facilites.

County-level analysis highlights San Bernardino and Riverside Counties as epicenters of warehouse expansion, driven by rapid industrial and population growth. San Bernardino leads with a a mean annual expansion rate of 6.3% from 1980 to 2024, far exceeding that of Riverside (3.7%) and Los Angeles (2.1%). However, per capita analysis underscores the disproportionate impact of warehouse development on the Inland Empire, with San Bernardino and Riverside far outpacing Los Angeles and Orange Counties in square footage per capita. This uneven distribution alleviates the pressures of the warehousing industries impact on the inland counties of Los Angeles and Orange county, while placing an undue burden of economic, health, and environment impacts on resedents of the Inland Empire.

At the city level, analysis highlights the disproportionate impact of warehousing between cities, comparing total square footage, per capita rankings, and land use intensity. While Ontario leads in total warehouse space, smaller industrial cities like the City of Industry and Vernon dominate per capita rankings, reflecting their design as industrial hubs with minimal residential

populations. The research also reveals cities like Irwindale and Calimesa, where warehousing has a significant per capita and land use impact, causing the most direct impact on resident due to the cities small sizes.

The juxtaposition of these findings with insights from the literature underscores systemic inequities that exacerbate the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. The trend toward larger, consolidated facilities amplifies these disparities, concentrating environmental and social harms in specific areas while creating logistical efficiencies for the industry. By tying the spatial trends identified in this study to existing research on environmental and demographic impacts, it becomes evident that unchecked warehouse development risks perpetuating cycles of inequality. Addressing these challenges requires informed policy interventions that prioritize equitable land use, sustainable transportation options, and meaningful community involvement in decision-making. Without meaningful intervention, the unchecked expansion of warehouses will continue to deepen existing inequalities, underscoring the urgency for sustainable and inclusive policy solutions.

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Appendix

This appendix includes two full lists ranking the cities in Los angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties by there total warehouse square feet, and there number of warehouse square feet per capita.

The list ranking totals includes all cities and neighborhoods as listed in the WarehouseCITY dataset, which includes neighborhoods in unincorporated areas. For the per capita rankings, only incorporated areas are listed, as this is all this is given in the Censis population totals.

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
1	Ontario	161,283,000.00	1	Industry	225,340.91
2	Moreno Valley	106,895,000.00	2	Vernon	109,720.72
3	unincorporated-Riverside County	98,115,000.00	3	Irwindale	11,327.45
4	Fontana	90,697,000.00	4	Commerce	2,518.18
5	Perris	81,347,000.00	5	Santa Fe Springs	2,293.46
6	unincorporated-San Bernardino County	77,469,000.00	6	Perris	1,033.63
7	unincorporated-Los Angeles County	76,328,000.00	7	Calimesa	1,015.86
8	Rialto	64,273,000.00	8	Ontario	920.22
9	Jurupa Valley	59,786,000.00	9	Rialto	617.86
10	Industry	59,490,000.00	10	Chino	615.79
11	San Bernardino	58,046,000.00	11	Jurupa Valley	569.10
12	Chino	56,285,000.00	12	Adelanto	512.67
13	Los Angeles	54,011,000.00	13	Moreno Valley	512.36

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
14	Rancho Cucamonga	48,712,000.00	14	Fontana	435.22
15	Santa Fe Springs	44,078,000.00	15	Apple Valley	434.87
16	Riverside	43,364,000.00	16	Carson	387.08
17	Carson	36,989,000.00	17	Banning	348.92
18	March ARB	34,495,000.00	18	Needles	339.48
19	Apple Valley	32,959,000.00	19	Rancho Cucamonga	279.23
20	Commerce	31,170,000.00	20	San Bernardino	261.35
21	Corona	28,578,000.00	21	Colton	258.40
22	Vernon	24,358,000.00	22	San Jacinto	256.82
23	Hesperia	24,036,000.00	23	Redlands	256.75
24	Victorville	21,358,000.00	24	Hesperia	240.80
25	Mead Valley	20,977,000.00	25	Eastvale	237.35
26	Adelanto	19,505,000.00	26	Desert Hot Springs	232.65
27	Menifee	19,349,000.00	27	La Mirada	225.17
28	Redlands	18,786,000.00	28	Beaumont	206.61
29	Long Beach	18,635,000.00	29	Cerritos	198.98
30	Temescal Valley	18,042,000.00	30	Menifee	188.72
31	Palmdale	17,035,000.00	31	Corona	181.87
32	Irwindale	16,674,000.00	32	Victorville	158.43
33	Eastvale	16,557,000.00	33	Coachella	154.31
34	Irvine	16,076,000.00	34	Riverside	137.66

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
35	Lancaster	15,879,000.00	35	Brea	134.20
36	Colton	13,930,000.00	36	Signal Hill	132.51
37	San Jacinto	13,842,000.00	37	Compton	119.96
38	Anaheim	12,397,000.00	38	Bell	118.36
39	Compton	11,485,000.00	39	Barstow	111.94
40	Pomona	11,184,000.00	40	Buena Park	110.12
41	Beaumont	10,958,000.00	41	Pico Rivera	106.22
42	La Mirada	10,810,000.00	42	Palmdale	100.53
43	Bloomington	10,628,000.00	43	Cypress	99.70
44	Banning	10,295,000.00	44	Yucaipa	94.66
45	Calimesa	10,185,000.00	45	Lancaster	91.51
46	Santa Clarita	10,121,000.00	46	Palm Springs	85.05
47	Cerritos	9,865,000.00	47	South El Monte	85.04
48	Torrance	9,619,000.00	48	Hemet	82.30
49	Buena Park	9,254,000.00	49	Montebello	82.30
50	Fullerton	9,102,000.00	50	Norco	80.22
51	Temecula	7,884,000.00	51	Grand Terrace	78.10
52	Santa Ana	7,782,000.00	52	Indio	77.97
53	Desert Hot Springs	7,564,000.00	53	Azusa	76.50
54	Hemet	7,393,000.00	54	Montclair	76.32
55	Indio	6,950,000.00	55	La Palma	74.39

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
56	Pico Rivera	6,595,000.00	56	Pomona	73.72
57	Coachella	6,472,000.00	57	Temecula	71.67
58	Brea	6,351,000.00	58	Paramount	66.33
59	Thousand Palms	6,245,000.00	59	Torrance	65.41
60	West Rancho Dominguez	5,344,000.00	60	Fullerton	63.38
61	Yucaipa	5,163,000.00	61	El Segundo	60.33
62	Montebello	5,155,000.00	62	La Verne	53.42
63	Cypress	5,000,000.00	63	Irvine	52.25
64	South Gate	4,400,000.00	64	Walnut	48.65
65	Good Hope	4,122,000.00	65	Twentynine Palms	47.96
66	Bell	3,972,000.00	66	South Gate	47.45
67	Azusa	3,825,000.00	67	Canyon Lake	45.66
68	Palm Springs	3,791,000.00	68	Lake Elsinore	44.57
69	Downey	3,790,000.00	69	Santa Clarita	44.26
70	Paramount	3,564,000.00	70	Yucca Valley	44.07
71	Lake Forest	3,404,000.00	71	San Dimas	43.75
72	El Monte	3,259,000.00	72	Long Beach	39.93
73	Lake Elsinore	3,132,000.00	73	Blythe	39.74
74	Huntington Beach	3,094,000.00	74	Lake Forest	39.65
75	Murrieta	3,055,000.00	75	Highland	36.70
76	Garden Grove	3,017,000.00	76	Arcadia	36.17

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
77	Orange	2,938,000.00	77	Anaheim	35.74
78	Montclair	2,890,000.00	78	Downey	33.14
79	Barstow	2,845,000.00	79	Cathedral City	32.84
80	unincorporated-Orange County	2,390,000.00	80	Baldwin Park	31.84
81	Baldwin Park	2,298,000.00	81	El Monte	29.78
82	Hawthorne	2,204,000.00	82	Los Alamitos	29.37
83	Burbank	2,138,000.00	83	Gardena	28.33
84	Norco	2,111,000.00	84	Murrieta	27.54
85	Highland	2,092,000.00	85	Tustin	25.29
86	Arcadia	2,050,000.00	86	Santa Ana	25.08
87	Tustin	2,030,000.00	87	Hawthorne	25.02
88	Mecca	1,899,000.00	88	Lynwood	23.98
89	Lenwood	1,854,000.00	89	Westlake Village	23.79
90	Thermal	1,823,000.00	90	La Habra	22.96
91	Norwalk	1,808,000.00	91	Calabasas	21.99
92	Whittier	1,791,000.00	92	Orange	21.00
93	Gardena	1,729,000.00	93	San Fernando	20.88
94	Cathedral City	1,691,000.00	94	Whittier	20.51
95	La Verne	1,674,000.00	95	Burbank	19.92
96	Needles	1,674,000.00	96	Culver City	19.81
97	South El Monte	1,664,000.00	97	Seal Beach	19.13

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
98	Lynwood	1,613,000.00	98	Loma Linda	18.39
99	Signal Hill	1,570,000.00	99	Norwalk	17.59
100	San Dimas	1,528,000.00	100	Garden Grove	17.55
101	La Habra	1,449,000.00	101	Wildomar	16.92
102	Walnut	1,383,000.00	102	Upland	16.88
103	Twentynine Palms	1,346,000.00	103	Aliso Viejo	16.41
104	Upland	1,334,000.00	104	Huntington Beach	15.57
105	Inglewood	1,303,000.00	105	Duarte	14.64
106	La Palma	1,159,000.00	106	Redondo Beach	14.21
107	Avocado Heights	1,149,000.00	107	Los Angeles	13.85
108	El Segundo	1,042,000.00	108	Cudahy	13.85
109	Grand Terrace	1,027,000.00	109	Huntington Park	13.45
110	Redondo Beach	1,017,000.00	110	Inglewood	12.09
111	Yucca Valley	958,000.00	111	Claremont	11.65
112	Costa Mesa	923,000.00	112	Alhambra	10.43
113	Warm Springs	904,000.00	113	Palm Desert	9.73
114	Rowland Heights	889,000.00	114	Agoura Hills	9.66
115	Alhambra	864,000.00	115	Lakewood	9.05
116	Aliso Viejo	856,000.00	116	San Juan Capistrano	8.81
117	Culver City	808,000.00	117	Costa Mesa	8.25
118	Lucerne Valley	765,000.00	118	Bell Gardens	8.15

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
119	Lakewood	747,000.00	119	Placentia	8.10
120	Huntington Park	738,000.00	120	Covina	7.61
121	Glendale	736,000.00	121	Artesia	5.79
122	Blythe	728,000.00	122	West Covina	5.79
123	El Cerrito	712,000.00	123	Rancho Santa Margarita	5.21
124	Fountain Valley	688,000.00	124	Manhattan Beach	5.13
125	West Carson	665,000.00	125	Maywood	4.57
126	Phelan	651,000.00	126	Hawaiian Gardens	4.52
127	West Covina	634,000.00	127	Rosemead	4.36
128	Wildomar	624,000.00	128	Santa Monica	4.32
129	Calabasas	511,000.00	129	Chino Hills	4.27
130	Canyon Lake	506,000.00	130	Diamond Bar	4.16
131	San Fernando	500,000.00	131	Monterey Park	4.03
132	Palm Desert	498,000.00	132	San Gabriel	3.84
133	Agua Dulce	497,000.00	133	Glendale	3.74
134	East Los Angeles	488,000.00	134	Bellflower	3.67
135	Mentone	488,000.00	135	Westminster	3.00
136	Seal Beach	483,000.00	136	Glendora	2.80
137	Loma Linda	456,000.00	137	Monrovia	2.40
138	French Valley	447,000.00	138	Lawndale	2.39
139	Highgrove	439,000.00	139	Pasadena	1.79

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft		Place Name	sq.ft. per capita
140	Claremont	434,000.00	140	La Puente	1.58
141	Placentia	420,000.00	141	Temple City	1.07
142	Nuevo	419,000.00			
143	Desert Edge	411,000.00			
144	Santa Monica	402,000.00			
145	Covina	390,000.00			
146	Los Alamitos	346,000.00			
147	Chino Hills	335,000.00			
148	Bell Gardens	322,000.00			
149	Duarte	318,000.00			
150	Cudahy	316,000.00			
151	San Juan Capistrano	310,000.00			
152	Bellflower	291,000.00			
153	Winchester	278,000.00			
154	South San Jose Hills	273,000.00			
155	Westminster	273,000.00			
156	Rancho Santa Margarita	250,000.00			
157	Florence-Graham	248,000.00			
158	Pasadena	248,000.00			
159	Monterey Park	246,000.00			
160	Big Bear City	236,000.00			

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft
161	Diamond Bar	229,000.00
162	Oasis	224,000.00
163	Rosemead	223,000.00
164	Piñon Hills	222,000.00
165	Oak Hills	209,000.00
166	Agoura Hills	196,000.00
167	Lake Arrowhead	196,000.00
168	Ripley	194,000.00
169	Westlake Village	191,000.00
170	Topanga	190,000.00
171	Homeland	188,000.00
172	Manhattan Beach	182,000.00
173	Home Gardens	152,000.00
174	San Gabriel	152,000.00
175	Glendora	147,000.00
176	Idyllwild-Pine Cove	140,000.00
177	Lakeview	138,000.00
178	Whitewater	118,000.00
179	Maywood	115,000.00
180	Altadena	114,000.00
181	Artesia	95,000.00

	Place Name	Warehouse sq ft
182	Anza	94,000.00
183	Joshua Tree	93,000.00
184	Monrovia	91,000.00
185	West Whittier-Los Nietos	79,000.00
186	Lawndale	76,000.00
187	East Hemet	72,000.00
188	Del Aire	71,000.00
189	Valle Vista	67,000.00
190	Hawaiian Gardens	64,000.00
191	La Puente	60,000.00
192	Quartz Hill	58,000.00
193	Bermuda Dunes	46,000.00
194	Temple City	39,000.00
195	Lennox	35,000.00
196	West Puente Valley	33,000.00
197	Cabazon	32,000.00
198	Castaic	32,000.00
199	South Whittier	32,000.00