

## WHY IS KOREATOWN A NICE PLACE TO LIVE ?

### INTRODUCTION

Living in Koreatown has been a positive experience for me, but looking at the composition of what Koreatown has to offer and what is still lacking will give a foundation of how to analyze why Koreatown is a nice place to live in and its potential for further development in a more objective manner. The significance of this question is not only applicable to individuals deciding where to live, but also gives urban planners and city managers an idea of what draws people to live in places like Koreatown and how to grow specific neighborhoods within their own communities or municipal boundaries. I have my own assumptions of why people like to live in Koreatown, but of course my experiences are subjective and normative. The reason for this analysis is to look at what the data shows is available within this vibrant ethnic enclave. For this analysis Koreatown is roughly defined by Beverly Boulevard to the north, Virgil Avenue to the east, Wilton Place to the west, and Olympic Boulevard to the south. These boundaries were taken from the Los Angeles Times neighborhood mapping feature. Now that the boundaries are set, the following will dive into what type of amenities are available and what makes Koreatown a desirable place to live.

Using GIS is an appropriate tool for analyzing this question because we are looking at analyzing a place and what amenities are within the place. GIS allows you to show exactly where these amenities are located via mapping, which matters because the spatial distribution of amenities and specific location within a neighborhood matter. For example, if all the grocery stores are located in the corner of a neighborhood, then unless you live close to this specific corner, the neighborhood might not be a great place to live. This assumes that residents value being in close proximity. What GIS allows you to do is look at the data of the neighborhood and given the assumptions about preferences, a way to analyze the data giving spatial distribution weight. An example of this is Walkscores, which gives a location a score based on the available amenities within walking distance. GIS produces visuals that are easier to understand different data sets at the same time by layering on or combining data. The alternative would be looking at different graphs or data tables, which are usually confusing when overlapped with each other.

### DATA

The first set of data used for this analysis is demographic data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. This is used to show who lives in Koreatown now as people are an important factor in what makes a place special. Another important factor in deciding where to live is what public and private amenities are there. For this analysis public amenities include schools, transportation service, parks, open space, and recreation centers. Private amenities are defined as grocery stores, restaurants, bars, concert halls, and professional services. For public amenities, the location management system data set was used in order to show what is provided by the city. The next data set used is Metro data, which was taken from Metro Developer via the LA County GIS website. Metro was specifically chosen compared to other files because Koreatown is heavily serviced by Metro both via the Redline but also by many bus services. The reason public amenities and transportation are looked at is to give an idea of what the city has done to make Koreatown what it is or if the public involvement within the area is not special. The significance of this data to the original question is whether or not creating accessibility via transportation options or providing more public amenities creates a better place to live. The second part of the analysis is the private amenities available, such as business establishments within the area. Business establishments were used to show the amenities offered with the boundaries of Koreatown. The addresses for businesses were taken from Google Maps and the Wilshire Business Improvement District (BID) website. The addresses for religious centers were taken from the Wilshire BID and all

other business establishments were taken from Google Maps. These establishment locations give an idea of the available services within the area; grocery stores, laundromats, restaurants, and bars. The assumption is that the more services available, the nicer the place is to live because you do not have to travel to get the products or services you are looking for. This is also why a .25 mile buffer was added around rail stops. .25 mile buffers were used because this is the standard distance for walking distance in many transit studies. Buffers were not added to the bus stops because the stops are too close together and would not show anything significant because the entire area would be included within the buffers.

Demographic data, which includes both the diversity index and Gini index for income inequality, was taken from the U.S. Census Bureau site for 2010, which is the most current Census with easily available data. The reason why Business Analyst Online was used to extract the data was due to ease and convenience for an introduction to Koreatown. The following gives a quick image of what Koreatown looks like both ethnically and income wise. The answer is diverse. The boundaries of Koreatown were used to create a polygon within Business Analyst, then the diversity index report was added. Crime data was taken from L.A. Times Mapping LA for Koreatown and reported only for August 2012, which is the highest month for crime. The reason why the month with the most crime is used is that the map is less likely to underestimate the crime and is less a marketing tool but a true representation. Crime data was geocoded in order to place points of crime locations on the map. L.A. Times Mapping LA uses raw data provided through electronic records from the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County's Sheriff Department.

The rest of the data was mostly taken using the Los Angeles County GIS Portal. Since most of these files were already shape files, there was no need to adjust them. The base layer is a road boundary map from the U.S. Census Bureau. This may be where my bias comes in on how the data was chosen. When I think of Koreatown, I think about accessibility, affordability, and abundant choices in respect to available amenities. The base map gives an idea of where the roads are, but not much else. In addition, this base map is from 2010, while many of the data sets are from more recent time period and may not match perfectly, but should be close. This base map was just used to organize the data for the multiple layers, so this particular file was chosen because it is simple and did not distract from any other data.

In order to examine public provided amenities a shapefile for LA County Land Type was used. This data was collected from the Los Angeles County eGIS group at the county level. The reason this file was used opposed another files was that it contained schools, open spaces, parks, and recreation centers within the same file. In retrospect, a better alternative could have been to load base map with landscapes on there and lay on top of it schools and recreation centers. Bus and Rail information was already described previously. The first limitation of this data was that it had broad categories, so that some types of private recreation were included in the arts and recreation category. The Metro data used was updated this summer for the most up to date information on the available transportation. For this analysis bus stops rather than lines were used so that business establishments along the lines can easily be seen.

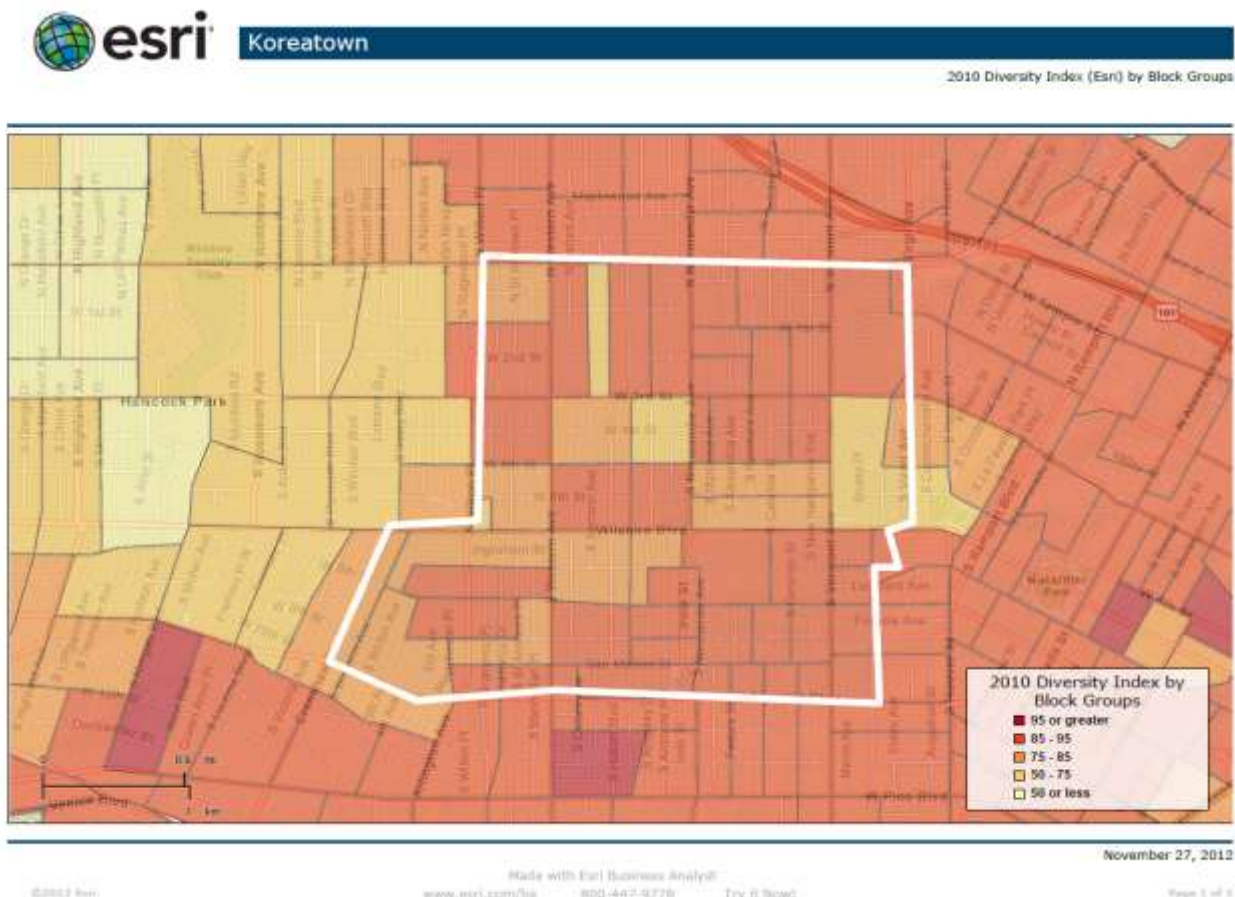
For the business establishments, they were taken from the Wilshire Center website and Google Maps as representation of the type of amenities located within Koreatown. Originally, I had thought of using the business locator within the Business Analyst Online tool, but there were only a small sample of businesses chosen. Not only was the sample small, but they were all located close to each other, which did not give a good visual representation of the layout of Koreatown. On the other hand, taking the locations from the Wilshire Center Business Improvement District website still led to a bias by showing a significantly greater concentration of establishments along Wilshire Boulevard and little business anywhere else. What was interesting about these two data sets was the way in which they were biased and these biases led to completely different images of Koreatown. The Business Analyst tool had many establishments within a half mile square, but evenly distributed throughout the square. This data captured had many establishments having suite numbers indicating some type of mall whether

strip or enclosed. Not only does Koreatown have a high population density, but also a high density of businesses to accommodate all of its residents. The Wilshire Center data on the other hand shows that there are businesses throughout the length of Koreatown and they are not just in a preselected half mile square. The ideal business location data set would be to increase the area covered by Business Analyst. What makes Business Analyst data seemingly most complete is the fact that they take their data from employment identification numbers, which most businesses have to file on their tax forms. Although this may be the most complete list, it leaves out many of the affordable amenities and arguably the tastiest food provided by informal establishments. During the second draft, Google Maps was used to give a better representation of the density of establishments throughout Koreatown rather than a small section.

## PROCESS

In order to combine all of the data, the Census road map was laid out as a base to define boundaries. A new layer was created in order to draw a polygon representing Koreatown's boundaries. A bold outline was chosen purposely to show where Koreatown is, but also not to disconnect it with amenities that are along the border. Metro data was then added to see whether or not accessibility would be an issue for its residents. Also, the Metro data was an addition to base to see if there is a specific pattern of where amenities are located and whether or not residents are able to get to available amenities. Again, not much manipulation was needed since all of the files were already in shapefile format minus the boundary polygon. Buffers were created to see what amenities were within walking distance (.25 miles) of Metro rail stops. Business locations were taken individually off the Wilshire Center BID website and Google Maps after they were entered into Excel. The only further manipulation needed was to smooth out data to minimize mismatches later on, which entailed correcting some of the abbreviations of street names and separating out the suite numbers.

## ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION



The first part of the analysis was to look at the Business Analyst map of the diversity index for Koreatown. Part of Koreatown's allure is the likely possibility of encountering those that are different from ourselves. The Ersi's 2011 White Paper describes the diversity index as "the likelihood that two persons, chosen at random from the same area, belong to different race or ethnic groups." The reason for taking a look at the diversity index is to show what makes Koreatown a little different. Diverse communities are desirable for two completely different reasons. First, a diverse population makes living in an area more exciting as you learn about other people and cultures. The added benefit is that more population diversity tends to result in more diversity among restaurants and stores (i.e. more options). Diverse communities are also said to be more resilient as they are less dependent on a specific group to survive. What is interesting is that although Koreatown is an ethnic enclave, it does not only cater to one specific race.

Another way to look at the diversity of Koreatown is to look at the diversity in income distribution and crime within the area. Please refer to the 2010 Koreatown Income Inequality Crime Data Map at the end of the paper. Gini Coefficient measures the income inequality among households within each census tract. The Gini index of income inequality was calculated using the American Community 5 year average (2006-2010) data, where the values vary between zero and one. A value of zero would indicate complete equality. The reason income inequality is looked at rather than median income of a household is due to the fact that census tracts or blocks are not specific enough to show the diversity in income if reported only using the median value. The reasoning behind adding crime data to the income inequality map is to see if there is a trend between inequality and high crime. Because most of the crime within Koreatown is property crime, there seems to be a stronger relationship between major roads and business locations rather than census tracts with higher inequality. It was interesting to see that many of the crime data points were located at intersections rather than number addresses, which may be due to how crime is reported.

The next step was to map out what else Koreatown has to offer in the Koreatown Amenities Map 2012 and Restaurants and Bars in Koreatown map. The two maps, located at the end of the paper, give a snapshot of the types of amenities within Koreatown. The first map shows land types, which are provided publicly; religious centers, laundromats, and grocery stores. The second map is geared more entertainment, where restaurants and bars were used. From the Koreatown Amenities Map 2012, almost all of the religious centers are within walking distance from a Metro rail stop. Those that are not are very close to bus stops; hence, easily accessible via public transit. While the locations of education institutions are not as accessible via rail, they are both closer to the residential areas and in close proximity to bus stops. Grocery stores are scattered along the major street within the area. The only area that seems to lack grocery stores is the southwest corner, which may be due less density and single family homes versus rental units. It is difficult to tell from the data the specific reason this corner lacks the number of grocery stores the rest of Koreatown enjoys.

The Entertainment Map shows while most bars are within walking distance of rail stops, restaurants are not as close. For the purpose of pedestrian safety, bars within walking distance of the rail stops are more ideal. Because restaurants line the major streets, it is likely that they cater to locals or those with access to cars. From personal experience it seems that most restaurants cater to those within the area as most restaurants do not offer valet services. In addition, restaurants tend to rely on both pedestrian and vehicle traffic, so it is not surprising that they are located almost solely on major streets. While there are restaurants along Olympic in the southwest corner, the number of restaurants and bars are lacking compared to other areas of Koreatown.

By leaving the land use types on the map, we can see that because of Koreatown's density, bars are in close proximity to education institutions. This is a limitation of this map, where it is limited to spatial relationships without being cognoscente of time. While it may look negative that bars are so close to schools, but in actuality they are not open at the same time. This is a limitation in general of looking at data spatially.

One thing I did expect to find was high accessibility. Although I do have access to a car, having the option to take public transportation is extremely important. The dull yellow lines represent bus lines and the red lines represent the Metro rail lines that are available. As you can see there are bus stops within .25 miles most locations within Koreatown. What is unique to the red line is that it quickly reaches downtown, one of the biggest employment centers in Los Angeles County, and entertainment districts. Koreatown is also in close proximity to USC, which makes for a very convenient location for many aspects of life. Although not unexpected, there is a lack of open space and parks. While the density allows more efficiency of public infrastructure, it limits the amount of space for nonresidential or commercial uses. While now as a student of urban planning I am excited for dense communities that have “eyes on the street” at all hours of the night, I am left wondering who Koreatown is really planned for if, planned at all. On the map there is a beige polygon near Vermont and Wilshire, which is also where the Metro stop is located. Not until I looked at the map did I realize the severity of lack of open space options. That school’s playground is the roof top of the school enclosed by metal fences. While businesses clustered around Wilshire are not surprising, there is likely to be an exaggeration of the concentration and it is discussed in the section, “things I wish I could have or should have done.”

What I was surprised about was the number of available schools within Koreatown. While Koreatown is dense with many families, the average median age in 2000 was 30, which indicates an older demographic (L.A. Times Neighborhood Mapping, 2012). What seems to be unique is the size of the schools. Excluding the large school between 8<sup>th</sup> and Wilshire, many of the schools seem like neighborhood schools. What surprises me most is not the ethnic diversity as Koreatown, Little Bangladesh, and a large Salvadorian community borders each other, but rather the diversity in needs that such as small community can cater to.

## **NEXT TIME: THINGS I WISH I COULD HAVE OR SHOULD HAVE DONE**

While the original question was what makes Koreatown a nice place to live, more analysis is needed. While there are patterns of a high concentration of amenities on major streets, further analysis is needed to show how dense the amenities truly are and if there is clustering of certain amenities, are they evenly spread out throughout the area? Because of the questionable accuracy of business establishment location data, the map really does not due Koreatown town justice in its diverse and vibrant culture. We can see there are many restaurants, but what makes Koreatown unique is the diversity of the types of restaurants and other amenities.

The biggest limitation of this analysis was my lack of knowledge in how best to show Koreatown. Many people live in Koreatown for different reasons, which is why it possesses such a diverse population. The rents are affordable, but if median rental prices were mapped out with businesses would the resulting map seem too busy? After attempting to use GIS to answer why Koreatown is a good place to live, I realized I had many more questions not only about functions within ArcGIS but also about how to frame a specific question to create a clear, concise, yet telling map.

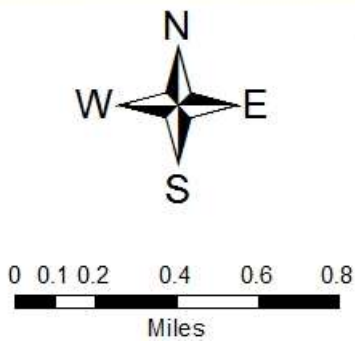
Another part of this analysis I would like to take another look is how the question was approached, such as to analyze different variables to cater to specific resident populations. For example, for a young family, I would try to use graduated colors to tell the story of monthly rent prices then use points to where high crime has taken place and then layer on top of that polygons of schools. I think what happened was that I was so focused on what Koreatown offers me I failed to really analyze the question in its entirety. An alternative way would be to tackle each part of life separately, although this may also have its limitations. An example would be to look at transportation, travel times, and proximity to employment hubs within the same map. While this not is the best way for everyone, it would be easier to produce clear maps for people who prioritize one part of their life heavily compared

to others.

In respect to accuracy, the only data set that is blatantly questionable is the business establishment locations. In the future I would probably use a different file for schools and parks, but overall the spatial representation of how big certain education institutions or recreation centers are make the clear lack of businesses in certain areas more understandable. The impacts of the biased and overly general data sets make this analysis inconclusive. While accuracy of the data set is vital to any analysis, the way the data is presented is more important as it can easily be used to persuade viewers in one direction or another even with an accurate data set.



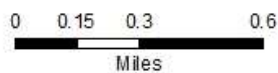
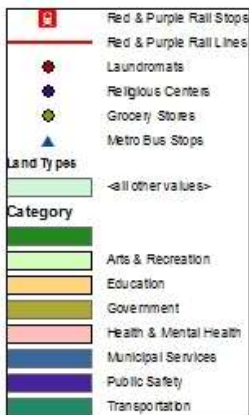
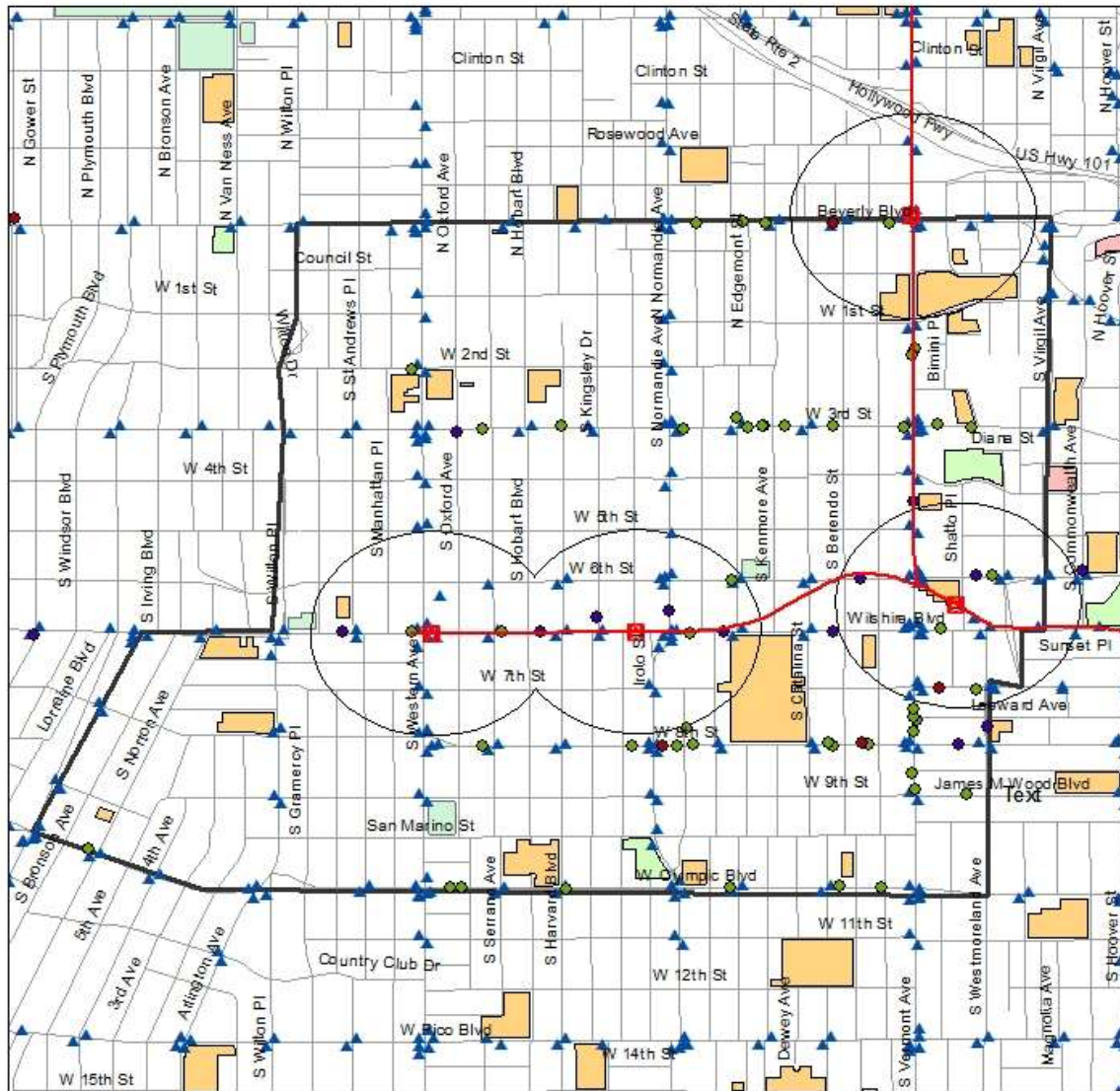
# 2010 Koreatown Income Inequality and Crime Data



Map Source: U.S. Census Bureau All Roads Shapefile for California, 2010. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles2010/file-download>.

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau Gini Index Income Inequality Shapefile for California, 2010. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_11\\_1YR\\_B19083&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_1YR_B19083&prodType=table). Los Angeles Times Crime Mapping, 2012. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://projects.latimes.com/mapping-la/neighborhoods/neighborhood/koreatown/crime/by-week/2012>

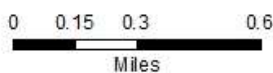
# Koreatown Amenities Map 2012



Map Source: U.S. Census Bureau All Roads shapefile for California, Los Angeles County, 2010. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles2010/file-download>  
 Data Source: Metro Developer for Rail and Bus shapefiles, 2012. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://developer.metro.net/introduction/gis-data/download-gis-data/>. LA County's GIS Group for land\_types\_201201 Shpaefile, 2012. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://egis3.lacounty.gov/dataportal/2011/02/22/la-county-land-types/>. Business locations were geocoded using addresses from Google Maps and <http://www.wilshirecenter.com/>.



# Restaurants & Bars in Koreatown



Map Source: U.S. Census Bureau All Roads shapefile for California, Los Angeles County, 2010. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles2010/file-download>  
 Data Source: Metro Developer for Rail and Bus shapefiles, 2012. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://developer.metro.net/introduction/gis-data/download-gis-data/>. LA County's GIS Group for land\_types\_201201 Shpaefile, 2012. Retrieved November 27, 2012 from <http://egis3.lacounty.gov/dataportal/2011/02/22/la-county-land-types/>. Business locations were geocoded using addresses from Google Maps and <http://www.wilshirecenter.com/>.