

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The flavors of industrial buildings – a primer

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Today's column deals with features that define the different types of industrial buildings. There are three categories of industrial buildings: manufacturing, distribution warehouses, and flex. So, how do you know which category appeals to the genre of industrial occupant?

Manufacturing Buildings

Manufacturing buildings are locations – generally built of concrete, concrete block or metal – where products are made, stored and shipped.

The raw materials of the manufacturing process are generally stored on-site (many times in an outside storage yard so as to not poach inside floor space), as well as the machinery that makes the products and the employees that operate the machinery and support the process.

These buildings can be “freestanding” or parts of a larger building but typically have: greater power feeds into the building, 10 percent to 30 percent of the total square footage in office space, ground level loading doors vs. truck-high loading doors (some may have both), fenced outside storage areas, and a warehouse clearance of 14 feet to 24 feet under beam in the warehouse/plant area.

Because these locations typically have more office space, they also have more parking spaces – a minimum of two parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of building. Manufacturers can generally operate in a building with lower ceilings because their plant is consumed with machinery and raw materials vs. finished goods waiting to be shipped. Most products are made and shipped within days, which means less inventory to store.

More important: power, office space, outside yard storage space

Less important: loading, warehouse ceiling height

Distribution Warehouses

Distribution warehouse buildings are locations – generally made of concrete (because of the wall height) – where products are staged, stored, and shipped.

Generally, no manufacturing or assembly is done on-site. Consequently, fewer support staff and no raw materials are housed here. Distribution warehouses require truck-high loading, warehouse clearance of a minimum of 24 feet and a truck-turning radius of 130 feet or more.

The ideal set up for a distribution warehouse is a rectangular building with “cross dock” loading, so the point from stored goods to loading doors is minimized.

Because these buildings typically house fewer employees, the premium on office space and parking is lessened. These buildings generally have a parking ratio of one parking space per 1,000 square foot of building space.

More important: loading, warehouse clear height, truck turning radius

Less important: office space, parking, power, outside yard storage

Flex (or Flexible)

The personal computer boom of the early/mid-1980s gave birth to a new industry and consequently a new type of industrial building – the flex building – once referred to as a research and development building.

Since computer companies housed a large number of employees, the typical industrial building didn't contain enough office space or enough parking for additional office to be added.

Developers of R&D buildings created the "mezzanine second story," which enabled a smaller land area to accommodate a larger building. The Silicon Valley and the Irvine Spectrum is populated with flex buildings. These buildings are locations – generally made of concrete and glass because they are modern – that house a high technology manufacturing or assembly function and a large employee function. Parking, power, office percentage and layout are the important features with these buildings. They are generally parked with three or four spaces per 1,000 square feet of building, and in some cases, can accommodate a use that requires 100 percent office. Less important are loading, clear height in the warehouse and outside yard storage.

More important: office space, parking, power

Less important: outside yard storage, loading, warehouse clear height.

The world is built on exceptions. True with locations as well. You may have some of the characteristics of all of the above in your location and it functions just fine. The above are true in the "classic" definition of commercial building types.

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