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# DREAMPlace: Deep Learning Toolkit-Enabled GPU Acceleration for Modern VLSI Placement

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***Abstract*—Placement for very-large-scale integrated (VLSI) circuits is one of the most important steps for design closure. We propose a novel GPU-accelerated placement framework DREAMPlace, by casting the analytical placement problem equivalently to training a neural network. Implemented on top of a widely-adopted deep learning toolkit `PyTorch`, with customized key kernels for wirelength and density computations, DREAMPlace can achieve around 40× speedup in global placement without quality degradation compared to the state-of-the-art multi-threaded placer RePlAce. We believe this work shall open up new directions for revisiting classical EDA problems with advancements in AI hardware and software.**

## I. Introduction

Placement is a critical but time-consuming step in the VLSI design flow. As it determines the locations of standard cells in the physical layout, its quality has significant impacts on the later stages in the flow, such as routing and post-layout optimization. A placement solution also provides relatively accurate estimation to routed wirelength and congestion, which is very valuable in guiding the earlier stages like logic synthesis. Commercial design flows often run core placement engines many times to achieve design closure. As placement involves large-scale numerical optimization, today's placers usually take hours for large designs, thus, slowing down design iterations. Therefore, ultra-fast yet high-quality placement is always desired.

Analytical placement is the current state-of-the-art for VLSI placement [1]–[15]. It essentially solves a nonlinear optimization problem. Although analytical placement can produce high-quality solutions, it is also known to be relatively slow [11], [13], [14], [16]. Here we provide a brief introduction to the analytical placement problem. Suppose a circuit is described as a hypergraph $H = (V, E)$, where $V$ denotes the set of vertices (cells) and $E$ denotes the set of hyperedges (nets). Let $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}$ denote the locations of cells. The objective of analytical placement is to determine the locations of cells with wirelength minimized and no overlap in the layout.

Analytical placement can be roughly categorized into quadratic placement and nonlinear placement. Quadratic placement tackles the problem by iterating between an unconstrained wirelength minimization step and a rough legalization or spreading step [10]–[15]. The wirelength minimization step usually adopts a quadratic wirelength model and minimizes the total wirelength regardless of the overlaps between cells. The rough legalization step removes the overlaps based on heuristic approaches without explicit consideration of the wirelength cost. By iterating between these two steps, cells can be gradually spread out. Meanwhile, the wirelength cost is minimized. Nonlinear placement directly solves the placement problem with nonlinear optimization techniques [1]–[9], [17]. It formulates a nonlinear optimization problem with a wirelength objective subjecting to a density constraint. By relaxing the density constraint into the objective, gradient descent based techniques can be adopted to search for a high-quality solution. In this paper, we focus on the nonlinear placement approach, as many commercial tools like Cadence Innovus [18] and Synopsys IC Compiler [19] adopt that.

To accelerate placement, existing parallelization efforts have mostly targeted multi-threaded CPUs using partitioning [16], [20], [21]. As the number of threads increases, speedup quickly saturates at around 5× in global placement with typical quality degradation of 2-6%. Cong et al. explored GPU acceleration for analytical placement [22]. They combined clustering and declustering with nonlinear placement optimization. By parallelizing the nonlinear placement part, an average of 15× speedup in global placement was reported with less than 1% quality degradation. Lin et al. proposed GPU acceleration techniques for wirelength gradient computation and area accumulation [23], but their experiments failed to consider real operations such as density cost computation, and it lacked the validation from real analytical placement flows. In addition, current research on placement is facing challenges in the lack of well-maintained public frameworks and the high development overhead, raising the bar to validate new algorithms systematically.

In this work, we propose *DREAMPlace*, a GPU-accelerated analytical placer developed with deep learning toolkit `PyTorch` [24] by casting an analytical placement problem to training a neural network. DREAMPlace is based on the state-of-the-art analytical placement algorithm ePlace/RePlAce family [6], [8], but the framework is designed in a generic way that is compatible with other analytical placers such as NTUplace [4]. The key contributions are summarized as follows.

- We take a totally new perspective of making an analogy between placement and deep learning, and build an open-source generic analytical placement framework that runs on both CPU and GPU platforms developed with modern deep learning toolkits.
- A variety of gradient-descent solvers are provided, such as Nesterov's method, conjugate gradient method, and Adam [25], with the help from deep learning toolkit.
- We propose efficient GPU implementations of key kernels in analytical placement like wirelength and density computation.
- We demonstrate around 40× speedup in global placement without quality degradation of the entire placement flow over multi-threaded RePlAce implementations. More specifically, a design with one million cells finishes in one minute even with legalization. The framework maintains nearly linear scalability with industrial designs up to 10-million cells.

The source code is released on Github[1]. To clarify, the casting of placement problem to deep learning problems aims at using the toolkit to solve placement, which is orthogonal to using deep learning models for placement. The rest of the paper is organized

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[1] https://github.com/limbo018/DREAMPlace

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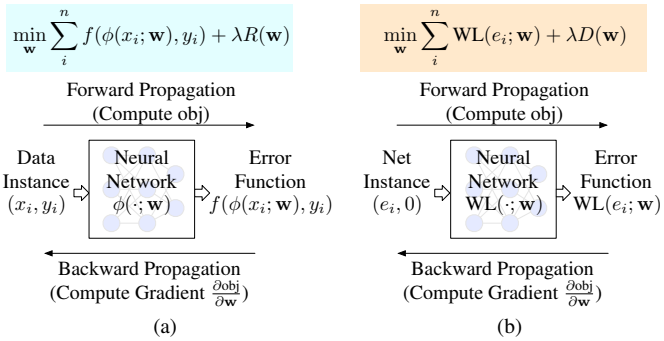


Fig. 1: Analogy between neural network training and analytical placement. (a) Train a network for weights $\mathbf{w}$. (b) Solve a placement for cell locations $\mathbf{w} = (\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$.

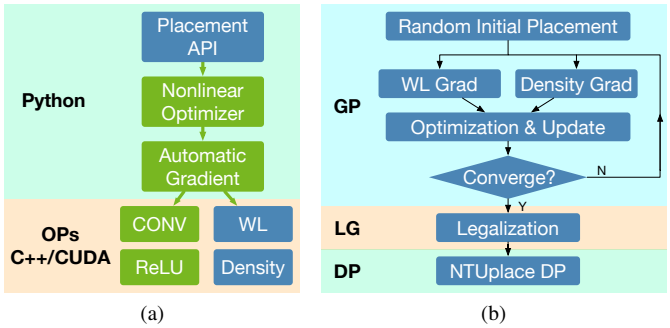


Fig. 2: (a) Software architecture for placement implementation using deep learning toolkits. (b) DREAMPlace flow.

as follows. Section II describes the background and motivation; Section III explains the detailed implementation; Section IV demonstrates the results; Section V concludes the paper.

## II. Preliminaries

This section will review the background and motivation.

### A. Analytical Placement

Analytical placement usually consists of three steps: global placement (GP), legalization (LG), and detailed placement (DP). Global placement spreads out cells in the layout with a target cost minimized; legalization removes the remaining overlaps between cells and aligns cells to placement sites; detailed placement performs incremental refinement to further improve the quality. Usually, global placement is the most time-consuming portion in analytical placement.

Global placement aims at minimizing the wirelength cost subjecting to density constraints. The formulation can be written as follows,

$$\min_{\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y}} \quad \sum_{e\in E} \mathrm{WL}(e;\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y}), \tag{1a}$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad d(\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y}) \le d_t, \tag{1b}$$

where $\mathrm{WL}(\cdot;\cdot)$ is the wirelength cost function that takes any net instance $e$ and returns the wirelength, $d(\cdot)$ is the density of a location in the layout, and $d_t$ is a given target density. A typical solving approach is to relax the density constraints to the objective as a density penalty [1], [4], [6],

$$\min_{\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y}} \quad (\sum_{e\in E} \mathrm{WL}(e;\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y})) + \lambda D(\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y}), \tag{2}$$

where $D(\cdot)$ is the density penalty to spread cells out in the layout. The density constraints can be satisfied by gradually increasing the weight of $\lambda$.

### B. Analogy to Deep Learning

As both solving an analytical placement and training a neural network are essentially solving a nonlinear optimization problem, we investigate the underlying similarity between the two problems: the analogy of the wirelength cost to the error of misprediction and that of the density cost to the regularization term. Figure 1 shows the objective functions of the two problems. In neural network training, each data instance with a feature vector $x_i$ and a label $y_i$ is fed to the network, and the neural network predicts a label $\phi(x_i;\mathbf{w})$. The task for training is to minimize the overall objective over weights $\mathbf{w}$, where the objective consists of the prediction errors for all data instances, and a regularization term $R(\mathbf{w})$ [26]. In the analogy of placement to neural network training, we combine cell locations $(\mathbf{x},\mathbf{y})$ into $\mathbf{w}$ for brevity. Each data instance is replaced with a net instance with a feature vector $e_i$ and a label zero. The neural network then takes a net instance and computes the wirelength cost $\mathrm{WL}(e_i;\mathbf{w})$. Using the absolute error function $f(\hat{y},y) = |\hat{y}-y|$ and noting that wirelength is non-negative, the minimization of prediction errors becomes $\sum_i^n \mathrm{WL}(e_i;\mathbf{w})$. The density cost $D(\mathbf{w})$ corresponds to the regularization term $R(\mathbf{w})$, as it is not related to net instances. With this construction, we find a one-to-one mapping of each component in analytical placement to neural network training, which makes it possible to take advantage of recent developments in deep learning toolkits for implementation. Then, we can solve the placement problem following the neural network training procedure, with **forward propagation** to compute the objective and **backward propagation** to calculate the gradient.

Deep learning toolkits nowadays consist of three stacks, low-level operators (OPs), automatic gradient derivation, and optimization engines, as shown in Figure 2a. Toolkits like `TensorFlow` and `PyTorch` offer mature and efficient implementation of these three stacks with compatibility to both CPU and GPU acceleration. The toolkits also provide convenient APIs to extend the existing set of low-level operators. Each custom operator requires well defined forward and backward functions for cost and gradient computation. To develop an analytical placement with deep learning toolkits, we only need to implement the custom operators for wirelength and density cost in C++ and CUDA. Then we can construct a placement framework in Python with very low development overhead and easily incorporate a variety of optimization engines in the toolkit. The placement framework can run on both CPU and GPU platforms. The conventional development of placement engines takes huge efforts in building the entire software stacks with C++. Thus, the bar of designing and validating a new placement algorithm is very high due to the development overhead. Taking advantage of deep learning toolkits, researchers can concentrate on the development of critical parts like low-level operators and high-level optimization engines.

### C. The ePlace/RePlAce Algorithm

ePlace/RePlAce is a state-of-the-art family of global placement algorithms that model the layout and netlist as an electrostatic system [6]–[8]. It uses weighted-average wirelength (WA) for wirelength cost originally proposed by [27], [28],

$$\mathrm{WA}_e = \frac{\sum_{i\in e} x_i e^{\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}}{\sum_{i\in e} e^{\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}} - \frac{\sum_{i\in e} x_i e^{-\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}}{\sum_{i\in e} e^{-\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}}, \tag{3}$$

where $\gamma$ is a parameter to control the smoothness and accuracy of the approximation to half-perimeter wirelength (HPWL). The smaller $\gamma$ is, the more accurate it is to approximate HPWL, but the less smooth.

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TABLE I: Notations

| Notation | Description | Notation | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| $V$ | Set of cells | $E$ | Set of nets |
| $P$ | Set of pins | $B$ | Set of bins |
| $x_e^+$ | $\max_{i\in e} x_i, \forall e \in E$ | $x_e^-$ | $\min_{i\in e} x_i, \forall e \in E$ |
| $a_i^+$ | $e^{\frac{x_i - x_e^+}{\gamma}}, \forall i \in e, e \in E$ | $a_i^-$ | $e^{-\frac{x_i - x_e^-}{\gamma}}, \forall i \in e, e \in E$ |
| $b_e^+$ | $\sum_{i\in e} a_i^+, \forall e \in E$ | $b_e^-$ | $\sum_{i\in e} a_i^-, \forall e \in E$ |
| $c_e^+$ | $\sum_{i\in e} x_i a_i^+, \forall e \in E$ | $c_e^-$ | $\sum_{i\in e} x_i a_i^-, \forall e \in E$ |
| $\mathbf{x}^+$ | $\{x_e^+\}, \forall e \in E$ | $\mathbf{x}^-$ | $\{x_e^-\}, \forall e \in E$ |
| $\mathbf{a}^+$ | $\{a_i^+\}, \forall i \in P$ | $\mathbf{a}^-$ | $\{a_i^-\}, \forall i \in P$ |
| $\mathbf{b}^+$ | $\{b_e^+\}, \forall e \in E$ | $\mathbf{b}^-$ | $\{b_e^-\}, \forall e \in E$ |
| $\mathbf{c}^+$ | $\{c_e^+\}, \forall e \in E$ | $\mathbf{c}^-$ | $\{c_e^-\}, \forall e \in E$ |

Its density penalty is quite different from other analytical placers [1], [3], [4]. With analogy to an electrostatic system, cells are modeled as charges, density penalty is modeled as potential energy, and density gradient is modeled as the electric field. The electric potential and field distribution can be computed by solving Poisson's equation from the charge density distribution.

$$\nabla \cdot \nabla \psi(x,y) = -\rho(x,y), \tag{4a}$$

$$\hat{\mathbf{n}} \cdot \nabla \psi(x,y) = \mathbf{0}, \quad (x,y) \in \partial R, \tag{4b}$$

$$\iint_R \rho(x,y) = \iint_R \psi(x,y) = 0, \tag{4c}$$

where $R$ denotes the placement region, $\partial R$ denotes the boundary to the region, $\hat{\mathbf{n}}$ denotes the outer normal vector of the placement region, $\rho$ denotes the charge density, and $\psi$ denotes the electric potential.

The numerical solution of Poisson's equation can be obtained with spectral methods. Given an $M \times M$ grid of bins and $w_u = \frac{2\pi u}{M}$ and $w_v = \frac{2\pi v}{M}$ with $u = 0, 1, \ldots, M-1, v = 0, 1, \ldots, M-1$, the solution can be computed as follows [6],

$$a_{u,v} = \frac{1}{M^2} \sum_{x=0}^{M-1} \sum_{y=0}^{M-1} \rho(x,y) \cos(w_u x) \cos(w_v y), \tag{5a}$$

$$\psi_{\text{DCT}}(x,y) = \sum_{u=0}^{M-1} \sum_{v=0}^{M-1} \frac{a_{u,v}}{w_u^2 + w_v^2} \cos(w_u x) \cos(w_v y), \tag{5b}$$

$$\xi_{\text{DSCT}}^X(x,y) = \sum_{u=0}^{M-1} \sum_{v=0}^{M-1} \frac{a_{u,v} w_u}{w_u^2 + w_v^2} \sin(w_u x) \cos(w_v y), \tag{5c}$$

$$\xi_{\text{DCST}}^Y(x,y) = \sum_{u=0}^{M-1} \sum_{v=0}^{M-1} \frac{a_{u,v} w_v}{w_u^2 + w_v^2} \cos(w_u x) \sin(w_v y), \tag{5d}$$

where $\psi_{DCT}$ denotes the numerical solution of the potential function, and $\xi_{DSCT}^X$ and $\xi_{DCST}^Y$ denote the solution of the electric field in horizontal and vertical directions respectively. Equation (5) requires Discrete Cosine Transform (DCT) and Inverse Discrete Cosine Transform (IDCT) routines to solve efficiently. The detailed computation is explained in Section III. With the electric field defined for each bin, the density gradient of each cell is the overall force taken by the cell in the system.

After defining wirelength cost and density penalty, RePlAce adopts gradient-descent optimizers, such as Nesterov's method and conjugate gradient method, to solve the optimization problem. RePlAce was implemented with multi-threading support [8]. The runtime breakdown for RePlAce [8] is elaborated in Figure 3. GP including initial placement (GP-IP) and nonlinear optimization (GP-Nonlinear) takes about 90% of the runtime with both single thread and 10 threads. Therefore, accelerating GP is the most effective in reducing the overall runtime.

## III. The DREAMPlace Algorithms

Our overall placement flow is given in Figure 2b. It is slightly different from the typical one that starts from a bound-to-bound

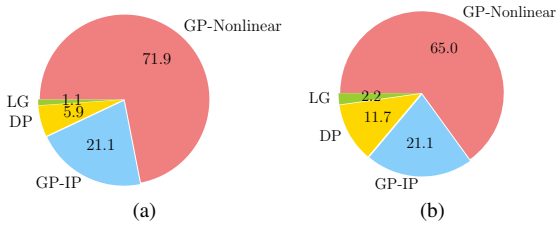


Fig. 3: RePlAce [8] runtime breakdown in percentages on `bigblue4` (2 million cells). (a) 1 thread; (b) 10 threads.

initial placement [4], [6]. We observe that starting from a random initial placement also achieves the same quality ($< 0.04\%$ difference) with significantly less runtime (21.1% in Figure 3). In initial placement, standard cells are placed in the center of the layout with a small Gaussian noise. In our experiments, the scales of the noise are set to 0.1% of the width and height of the placement region. The kernel global placement iterations refer to the loop that involves the computation of wirelength and density gradient, optimization engines, and cell location updating. After the global placement converges, legalization is performed to remove remaining overlaps and align cells to placement sites. The last step before the output is detailed placement to refine the placement solutions relying on NTUplace3 [4]. The rest of this section will focus on GPU acceleration to the ePlace/RePlAce algorithm [6], [8].

### A. Wirelength Forward and Backward

As RePlAce adopts WA wirelength, we also use it as an example for the GPU acceleration to wirelength forward and backward. Similar insights also apply to other wirelength costs like log-sum-exp (LSE) [29], which is also implemented in the framework. For brevity, we only discuss the equations in the $x$ dimension, as those in the $y$ dimension are similar. The real implementation will separate the computation for $x$ and $y$ into different GPU streams as they are independent.

Direct implementation of WA wirelength defined in Equation (3) may result in numerical overflow, so we convert $e^{\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}$ to $e^{\frac{x_i - \max_{j\in e} x_j}{\gamma}}$, and $e^{-\frac{x_i}{\gamma}}$ to $e^{-\frac{x_i - \min_{j\in e} x_j}{\gamma}}$ in Equation (3), which is an equivalent transformation. With the notations in Table I, the gradient of WA wirelength to a pin location can be written as,

$$\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_i} = \frac{(1 + \frac{x_i}{\gamma}) b_e^+ - \frac{1}{\gamma} c_e^+}{(b_e^+)^2} \cdot a_i^+ - \frac{(1 - \frac{x_i}{\gamma}) b_e^- + \frac{1}{\gamma} c_e^-}{(b_e^-)^2} \cdot a_i^-. \tag{6}$$

A native parallelization scheme is to allocate one thread for each net. This scheme has also been discussed in [23], which only demonstrated limited speedup because the maximum number of threads to allocate is $|E|$, and the workload for each thread is imbalanced due to the heterogeneity of net degrees.

Noting that the total number of pins $|P|$ is much larger than $|E|$, we consider the possibility of pin-level parallelization. The dependency graph for WA wirelength forward and backward is elaborated in Figure 4a. A straight-forward implementation of this pin-level parallelism is to compute $\mathbf{a}^\pm$, $\mathbf{b}^\pm$, $\mathbf{c}^\pm$ in separate CUDA kernels by using multiple CUDA streams. The computation can be completed in four steps: 1) compute $\mathbf{x}^\pm$; 2) compute and store $\mathbf{a}^\pm$; 3) compute and store $\mathbf{b}^\pm, \mathbf{c}^\pm$; 4) compute $\text{WL}_e$ in forward or $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_i}$ in backward. Algorithm 1 illustrates this multi-stream version of pin-level parallel implementation of WA wirelength forward and backward functions. We make all the CUDA kernel functions inline, which should be separate in practice, for brevity. Specifically, computations for an array with different $\pm$ signs, e.g., $\mathbf{x}^+$ and $\mathbf{x}^-$, are separated into different CUDA streams in the implementation. In

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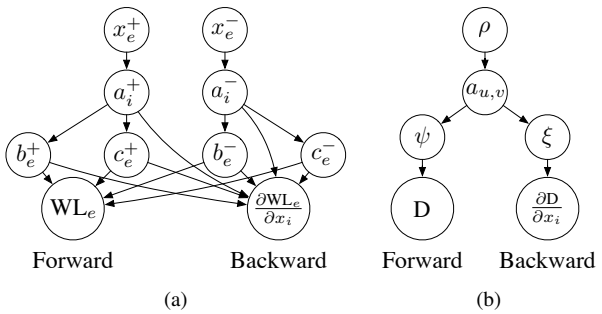


Fig. 4: Forward and backward dependency graph for (a) weighted average wirelength and (b) density computation.

the algorithm, six kernels are needed. The $\mathbf{x}^{\pm}$ kernel requires atomic maximum and minimum operations, and the $\mathbf{b}^{\pm}, \mathbf{c}^{\pm}$ kernels require atomic addition. At the end of the forward function, summation reduction is needed to compute the overall wirelength cost, which is provided by the deep learning toolkit. In our implementation, multiple CUDA streams are adopted for independent computations, such as $x/y$ directions and positive/negative components.

We observe that Algorithm 1 [30] has several drawbacks: expensive CUDA streams, sequential launches of many kernels, contention, and frequent global memory access. Among these drawbacks, frequent global memory access, especially frequent writing to intermediate variables $\mathbf{x}^{\pm}, \mathbf{a}^{\pm}, \mathbf{b}^{\pm}, \mathbf{c}^{\pm}$, becomes the major runtime bottleneck. In other words, it is memory bounded rather than computation bounded. Thus, we review the natural net-by-net and pin-by-pin approaches again. We discover that the net-by-net strategy has the potential to remove all the intermediate variables by merging the forward and backward functions, as shown in Algorithm 2. Instead of storing $\mathbf{x}^{\pm}, \mathbf{a}^{\pm}, \mathbf{b}^{\pm}, \mathbf{c}^{\pm}$ in global memory, we only create local variables in the kernel function, and directly compute the wirelength for each net and the gradient for each pin. Although variable $\mathbf{a}^{\pm}$ is computed twice, the store instructions only happen to the variables $\text{WL}_e$ and $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_p}$, which significantly alleviate the memory pressure. The efficiency of the two algorithms is empirically compared in Section IV-B.

For parallel CPU implementation, we adopt the net-by-net strategy and dynamic scheduling for heterogeneous net degrees. We observe that a chunk size of $\frac{|E|}{\#threads \times 16}$ works well for most designs, where $|E|$ is the number of nets in the design.

### B. Density Forward and Backward

Forward and backward of density cost is a computation-intensive procedure. Figure 4b plots the dependency graph for density cost forward and backward. The computation consists of four steps:

1) compute density map $\rho$;
2) compute $a_{u,v}$;
3) compute $\psi$ in forward or $\xi$ in backward;
4) compute D in forward or $\frac{\partial \text{D}}{\partial x_i}$ in backward.

We model this computation flow as a dynamic bipartite graph forward and backward process, as shown in Figure 5. First, density map calculation is modeled as a bipartite graph forward or a special 2D histogram problem where one cell may update multiple bins [31]. Then the electric potential and field are solved via DCT and other Fourier-related transforms. Finally, the electric force inflicted on each cell is collected from its overlapped bins, which can be modeled as a 2D gathering problem [31].

*1) Dynamic Bipartite Graph Forward for Density Map:* Each step of density map computation updates bins based on the overlapping area of corresponding cells. Thus, it can be modeled as a particular

**Algorithm 1** Wirelength Forward and Backward Atomic [30]

**Require:** A set of nets $E$, a set of pins $P$, and pin locations $x$;
**Ensure:** Wirelength cost and gradient;
**function** `Forward`$(E, P, x)$
  $\mathbf{x}^+ \leftarrow -\infty, \mathbf{x}^- \leftarrow \infty, \mathbf{b}^{\pm} \leftarrow 0, \mathbf{c}^{\pm} \leftarrow 0$;
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |P|$ **do** ▷ $\mathbf{x}^{\pm}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net that pin $t$ belongs to;
    $x_e^+ \xleftarrow{at.} \max(x_e^+, x_t)$; ▷ atomic max
    $x_e^- \xleftarrow{at.} \min(x_e^-, x_t)$; ▷ atomic min
  **end for**
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |P|$ **do** ▷ $\mathbf{a}^{\pm}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net that pin $t$ belongs to;
    $a_t^{\pm} \leftarrow e^{\pm \frac{x_t - x_e^{\pm}}{\gamma}}$;
  **end for**
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |P|$ **do** ▷ $\mathbf{b}^{\pm}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net that pin $t$ belongs to;
    $b_e^{\pm} \xleftarrow{at.} b_e^{\pm} + a_t^{\pm}$; ▷ atomic add
  **end for**
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |P|$ **do** ▷ $\mathbf{c}^{\pm}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net that pin $t$ belongs to;
    $c_e^{\pm} \xleftarrow{at.} c_e^{\pm} + x_t a_t^{\pm}$; ▷ atomic add
  **end for**
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |E|$ **do** ▷ $\text{WL}_e$ kernel
    Define $e$ as $t^{th}$ net in $E$;
    Compute $\text{WL}_e \leftarrow \frac{c_e^+}{b_e^+} - \frac{c_e^-}{b_e^-}$;
  **end for**
  **return** reduce$(\sum_{e \in E} \text{WL}_e), \mathbf{a}^{\pm}, \mathbf{b}^{\pm}, \mathbf{c}^{\pm}$;
**end function**
**function** `Backward`$(E, P, x, \mathbf{a}^{\pm}, \mathbf{b}^{\pm}, \mathbf{c}^{\pm})$
  **for** each thread $0 \le t < |P|$ **do** ▷ $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_t}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net that pin $t$ belongs to;
    Compute $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_t}$;
  **end for**
  **return** $\{\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_i}\}, \forall i \in P$;
**end function**

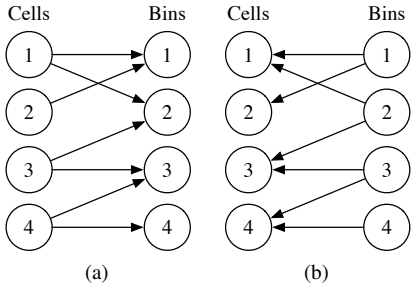


Fig. 5: Computation flow of (a) density map; (b) electric force.

2D histogram problem or a dynamic bipartite graph forward, as shown in Figure 5a. Each edge in the bipartite graph represents an update to the entry of the target bin in the density map, where the edge weight represents the overlapping area of the {cell, bin} pair. The reason why we call it "dynamic" is that, as cells move, edges in the bipartite graph, which indicate overlaps between cells and bins, will change accordingly.

A naive algorithm to parallelize this step is to allocate one GPU thread for each cell and use atomic addition to accumulate the overlapping areas with bins [30]. However, as a cell may cover multiple bins, simply using one GPU thread to update all overlapped bins sequentially will cause load imbalance problem due to the

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**Algorithm 2** Wirelength Forward and Backward Merged

**Require:** A set of nets $E$, a set of pins $P$, and pin locations $x$;
**Ensure:** Wirelength cost and gradient;
**function** `Forward_Backward`$(E, P, x)$
  **for** each thread $0 \leq t < |E|$ **do** ▷ $\text{WL}_e$, $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_p}$ kernel
    Define $e$ as the net corresponds to thread $t$;
    $x_e^+ \leftarrow \max_{p \in e} x_p$; ▷ $x_e^\pm$ are local in the kernel
    $x_e^- \leftarrow \min_{p \in e} x_p$;
    $b_e^\pm \leftarrow 0, c_e^\pm \leftarrow 0$; ▷ $b_e^\pm, c_e^\pm$ are local in the kernel
    $\text{WL}_e \leftarrow 0$; ▷ $\text{WL}_e$ is in the global memory
    **for** each pin $p \in e$ **do**
      $a_p^\pm \leftarrow e^{\pm \frac{x_p - x_e^\pm}{\gamma}}$; ▷ $a_p^\pm$ is local in the loop
      $b_e^\pm \leftarrow b_e^\pm + a_p^\pm$;
      $c_e^\pm \leftarrow c_e^\pm + x_p \cdot a_p^\pm$;
    **end for**
    $\text{WL}_e \leftarrow \frac{\mathbf{c}^+}{\mathbf{b}^+} - \frac{\mathbf{c}^-}{\mathbf{b}^-}$;
    **for** each pin $p \in e$ **do**
      $a_p^\pm \leftarrow e^{\pm \frac{x_p - x_e^\pm}{\gamma}}$; ▷ Compute $a_p^\pm$ again
      Compute $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_p}$; ▷ $\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_p}$ is in the global memory
    **end for**
  **end for**
  **return** reduce$(\{\text{WL}_e\}), \{\frac{\partial \text{WL}_e}{\partial x_p}\}, \forall p \in P, e \in E$;
**end function**

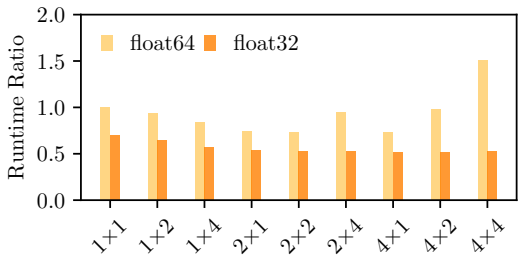


Fig. 6: Comparison of different numbers of threads to update one cell in density forward and backward on `bigblue4`. The numbers are normalized by the runtime of $1 \times 1$ thread with `float64`.

variety in cell sizes. Empirically, the number of bins covered by a cell can vary from $\sim$ 10 to $\sim$ 1000. This ill-balanced workload within a thread warp introduces a big chunk of idle time and significantly degrades the performance. Therefore, we develop the following techniques to address this issue.

**Sort cells by area**. We sort the standard cells by their areas, such that the 32 threads in a warp can process 32 consecutively-indexed cells with similar sizes. In this way, the cell-level workloads will be automatically balanced within a warp.

**Update one cell with multiple threads**. We use multiple threads to update a single cell, which can effectively reduce the workload of each thread. Thus the issue of load imbalance can be further alleviated. An appropriate number of threads need to be selected given that this fine-grained parallelism inevitably introduces some runtime penalty. Specifically, more computational redundancy and memory write contention from atomic operations will happen among threads updating the same cell. We experimentally evaluate different settings of threads. Figure 6 shows the comparison on the `bigblue4` benchmark. Based on the above results, we empirically adopt $2 \times 2$ threads, i.e., 2 threads for both vertical and horizontal directions. It provides about 20 $\sim$ 30% runtime improvement with both `float32` and `float64`.

For parallel CPU implementation, we adopt the native atomic operations and dynamic scheduling for heterogeneous cell sizes. We set the chunk size to $\frac{|V|}{\#threads \times 16}$, where $|V|$ is the number of cells in the design.

*2) Dynamic Bipartite Graph Backward for Electric Force:* In the electric force computation, each cell receives the forces from the bins it overlaps with. Thus, the computation can be viewed as a 2D gathering problem or a dynamic bipartite graph backward, as shown in Figure 5b. Each edge represents the force from a bin, and the edge weight is the amount of the force. The weight is computed as the product of the overlapping area between the cell and the bin and the electric field at the bin.

A natural strategy to accelerate this step is to allocate one thread for each cell and accumulate the forces sequentially from its overlapping bins [30]. However, considering this computation task shares a similar structure with the density map computation, we borrow the same idea from Section III-B1 by sorting the cells and allocating multiple threads for each cell.

*3) DCT/IDCT for Electric Potential and Field:* The electric potential and field computation in Equation (5) requires fast DCT/IDCT kernels for efficient calculation. The standard DCT/IDCT for one-dimensional (1D) length-$N$ sequence $x$ is,

$$\text{DCT}(\{x_n\})_k = \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} x_n \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{N}(n+\frac{1}{2})k\right), \tag{7a}$$

$$\text{IDCT}(\{x_n\})_k = \frac{1}{2}x_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} x_n \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{N}n(k+\frac{1}{2})\right), \tag{7b}$$

where $k = 0, 1, \ldots, N-1$. We further derive IDXST as,

$$\text{IDXST}(\{x_n\})_k = \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} x_n \sin\left(\frac{\pi}{N}n(k+\frac{1}{2})\right), \tag{8a}$$

$$= (-1)^k \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} x_n (-1)^k \sin\left(\frac{\pi n(k+\frac{1}{2})}{N}\right), \tag{8b}$$

$$= (-1)^k \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} x_n \cos\left(\frac{\pi (N-n)(k+\frac{1}{2})}{N}\right), \tag{8c}$$

$$= (-1)^k \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} x_{N-n} \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{N}n(k+\frac{1}{2})\right), \tag{8d}$$

$$= (-1)^k \text{IDCT}(\{x_{N-n}\})_k, \tag{8e}$$

where $x_N = 0$. The equality between Equation (8d) and Equation (8e) can be derived by incorporating $x_{N-n}$ into Equation (7b). Given an $M \times M$ density map $\rho$, the electric potential and field can be computed using DCT/IDCT, IDXST routines.

$$a_{u,v} = \text{DCT}(\text{DCT}(\rho)^T)^T, \tag{9a}$$

$$\psi_{\text{DCT}} = \text{IDCT}(\text{IDCT}(\{\frac{a_{u,v}}{w_u^2 + w_v^2}\})^T)^T, \tag{9b}$$

$$\xi_{\text{DSCT}}^X = \text{IDXST}(\text{IDCT}(\{\frac{a_{u,v} w_u}{w_u^2 + w_v^2}\})^T)^T, \tag{9c}$$

$$\xi_{\text{DCST}}^Y = \text{IDCT}(\text{IDXST}(\{\frac{a_{u,v} w_v}{w_u^2 + w_v^2}\})^T)^T, \tag{9d}$$

where $(\cdot)^T$ denotes matrix transposition. The two-dimensional (2D) DCT/IDCT is computed by performing 1D DCT/IDCT to columns and then rows. We can see all the computations can be broken down into the 1D DCT/IDCT kernels with proper transformations. Thus, highly optimized DCT/IDCT kernels are critical to the performance.

As the highly optimized fast Fourier transform (FFT) is provided by many deep learning toolkits, we leverage FFT to compute DCT. There are multiple ways to compute DCT using FFT with linear time additional processing. For example, `TensorFlow` adopts the implementation using $2N$-point FFT. We choose the $N$-point FFT

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**Algorithm 3** DCT/IDCT with $N$-Point FFT

**Require:** An even-length real sequence $x$;
**Ensure:** An even-length transformed real sequence $y$;
**function** DCT($x$)
  $N \leftarrow |x|$;
  **for** each thread $0 \leq t < N$ **do** ▷ Reorder kernel
    **if** $t < \frac{N}{2}$ **then**
      $x'_t \leftarrow x_{2t}$;
    **else**
      $x'_t \leftarrow x_{2(N-t)-1}$;
    **end if**
  **end for**
  $x'' \leftarrow$ RFFT($x'$); ▷ One-sided real FFT kernel
  **for** each thread $0 \leq t < N$ **do** ▷ $e^{-\frac{j\pi t}{2N}}$ kernel
    **if** $t \leq \frac{N}{2}$ **then**
      $y_t \leftarrow \frac{2}{N}\Re(x''_t e^{-\frac{j\pi t}{2N}})$; ▷ get real part
    **else**
      $y_t \leftarrow \frac{2}{N}\Re(\overline{x''_{(N-t)}} e^{-\frac{j\pi t}{2N}})$; ▷ get real part
    **end if**
  **end for**
  **return** $y$;
**end function**
**function** IDCT($x$)
  $N \leftarrow |x|$;
  **for** each thread $0 \leq t < \frac{N}{2} + 1$ **do** ▷ Complex kernel
    $x'_t \leftarrow (x_t - jx_{(N-t)})e^{\frac{j\pi t}{2N}}$; ▷ let $x_N \leftarrow 0$
  **end for**
  $x'' \leftarrow$ IRFFT($x'$); ▷ One-sided real IFFT kernel;
  **for** each thread $0 \leq t < N$ **do** ▷ Reverse kernel
    **if** $t \mod 2 == 0$ **then**
      $y_t \leftarrow \frac{N}{4} x''_{\frac{t}{2}}$;
    **else**
      $y_t \leftarrow \frac{N}{4} x''_{(N-\frac{t+1}{2})}$;
    **end if**
  **end for**
  **return** $y$;
**end function**

implementation [32] and demonstrate better efficiency in the experiments, as shown in Algorithm 3. Due to the symmetric property of FFT for real input sequences, we utilize one-sided real FFT/IFFT to save almost half of the sequence. With additional processing kernels like linear-time reordering and multiplication, DCT/IDCT can be computed with an $N$-point real FFT/IFFT.

In the placement problem, we need to compute 2D DCT/IDCT. A widely adopted algorithm aforementioned is to perform 1D DCT/IDCT through the rows and columns sequentially [30]. This row-column DCT algorithm is easy to implement but limited by its two-step procedure, redundant computation, and frequent memory transaction. To achieve better efficiency, we implement 2D DCT/IDCT directly through 2D FFT, proven in [32]. Algorithm 4 illustrates the 2D DCT/IDCT implementation with 2D pre-processing and post-processing kernels. This implementation eliminates unnecessary computations with a one-time call to 2D FFT kernels. The pre- and post-processing routines can be fully parallelized. This algorithm is adopted for both GPU and CPU implementations. We evaluate the efficiency of the DCT/IDCT transforms and the density operator in Section IV-B.

### C. Density Weight Updating

We need to update the density weight $\lambda$ in Equation (2) in each iteration to penalize the density cost. RePlAce [8] uses the following equations to update $\lambda$.

$$\mu \leftarrow \begin{cases} \mu_{max}, & \text{if } p < 0; \\ \max(\mu_{min}, \mu_{max}^{1-p}), & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases}, \tag{18a}$$

$$\lambda \leftarrow \lambda \cdot \mu, \tag{18b}$$

where $\mu_{min} = 0.95, \mu_{max} = 1.05$ and $p = \frac{\Delta HPWL}{3.5\times10^5}$. We follow almost the same scheme with one minor difference. When $p < 0$, we set $\mu \leftarrow \mu_{max} \cdot \max(0.9999^k, 0.98)$ instead of $\mu_{max}$, where $k$ is the current iteration. This equation indicates that from iteration 0 to 200, $\mu$ gradually drops from 1.05 to 1.03 and keeps this value afterward, given the previous $\mu_{max}$ setting. We found that this minor change provides relatively stable convergence in our experiments.

### D. Optimization Engine

ePlace/RePlAce [6], [8] uses Nesterov's method as the gradient-descent solver with a Lipschitz-constant approximation scheme for line search. We implement the same approach in Python leveraging the efficient API provided by the deep learning toolkit. The framework is compatible with other well-known solvers in deep learning toolkits, i.e., various momentum-based gradient descent algorithms like Adam [25] and RMSProp [33], providing additional solver options.

### E. Legalization

We also develop legalization as an operator in DREAMPlace. It first follows the Tetris-like procedure similar to NTUplace3 [4]. Then it performs Abacus row-based legalization [34]. This step copies the cell locations from GPU to CPU and executes legalization purely on CPU because we observe that it only takes several seconds even for million-size designs with a single CPU thread.

### F. Extension to Consider Routability

To optimize routing congestion, we adopt cell inflation to optimize congested regions [35]. We follow a similar scheme to RePlAce [8], which invokes the NCTUgr global router [36] to get the routing overflow map during placement iterations. For each metal layer, we compute the ratio between routing demand and capacity at each routing tile. Then we use the maximum ratio across all layers to compute the inflation ratio for each tile.

$$ratio = \min((\max_{\forall l \in L} \frac{demand_l}{capacity_l})^{2.5}, 2.5), \tag{19}$$

where $L$ is the set of metal layers. The exponent and maximum limits can be adjusted according to the benchmarks. We choose 2.5 in the experiments. After that, we obtain an inflation ratio map. A cell will be inflated according to the inflation ratios of the tiles it overlaps with. If cells inflate too much, there may not be enough total whitespace to digest the area increment. Thus, we limit the area increment to be 10% of the total whitespace area in the layout every time. If the attempted area increment exceeds this ratio, we uniformly scale down the inflation ratio for each cell. During the placement iterations, once the cell overflow drops to 20%, we invoke the global router and perform inflation. The overflow will increase after inflation. Then, the solver is restarted to optimize wirelength and density again. We keep on looping until the total inflation ratio is less than 1% of the total cell area, or we reach a maximum of 5 times of inflation. Starting from the first round of cell inflation,

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**Algorithm 4** 2D DCT, 2D IDCT, IDCT_IDXST, and IDXST_IDCT with $N$-Point 2D FFT

**Require:** An real $N_1 \times N_2$ matrix $x$; ▷ $N_1$ and $N_2$ can be any positive number

**function** 2D_DCT($x$)

$x' = \texttt{2d\_dct\_preprocess}(x)$ using Equation (10),

$$x'(n_1,n_2) = \begin{cases} x(2n_1, 2n_2), & 0 \leqslant n_1 \leqslant \lfloor \frac{N_1-1}{2} \rfloor, 0 \leqslant n_2 \leqslant \lfloor \frac{N_2-1}{2} \rfloor, \\ x(2N_1 - 2n_1 - 1, 2n_2), & \lfloor \frac{N_1+1}{2} \rfloor \leqslant n_1 \leqslant N_1 - 1, 0 \leqslant n_2 \leqslant \lfloor \frac{N_2-1}{2} \rfloor, \\ x(2n_1, 2N_2 - 2n_2 - 1), & 0 \leqslant n_1 \leqslant \lfloor \frac{N_1-1}{2} \rfloor, \lfloor \frac{N_2+1}{2} \rfloor \leqslant n_2 \leqslant N_2 - 1, \\ x(2N_1 - 2n_1 - 1, 2N_2 - 2n_2 - 1), & \lfloor \frac{N_1+1}{2} \rfloor \leqslant n_1 \leqslant N_1 - 1, \lfloor \frac{N_2+1}{2} \rfloor \leqslant n_2 \leqslant N_2 - 1; \end{cases} \tag{10}$$

$x'' = \texttt{2D\_RFFT}(x')$; ▷ 2D real FFT kernel

**return** $y = \texttt{2d\_dct\_postprocess}(x'')$ using Equation (11),

$$y(n_1,n_2) = 2\Re\Big(e^{-\frac{j\pi n_2}{2N_2}}\big(e^{-\frac{j\pi n_1}{2N_1}}x''(n_1,n_2) + e^{\frac{j\pi n_1}{2N_1}}x''(N_1-n_1,n_2)\big)\Big), \quad \text{where } x''(N_1,n_2) = x''(n_1,N_2) = 0, \forall n_1, n_2; \tag{11}$$

**end function**

**function** 2D_IDCT($x$)

$x' = \texttt{2d\_idct\_preprocess}(x)$ using Equation (12)

$$x'(n_1,n_2) = e^{-\frac{j\pi n_1}{2N_1}}e^{-\frac{j\pi n_2}{2N_2}}\Big(x(n_1,n_2) - x(N_1-n_1,N_2-n_2) - j\big(x(N_1-n_1,n_2) + x(n_1,N_2-n_2)\big)\Big), \quad \text{where } x(N_1,n_2) = x(n_1,N_2) = 0, \forall n_1, n_2; \tag{12}$$

$x'' = \texttt{2D\_IRFFT}(x')$; ▷ 2D real inverse FFT kernel

**return** $y = \texttt{2d\_idct\_postprocess}(x'') = \texttt{2d\_dct\_preprocess}^{-1}(x'')$ using Equation (13)

$$y(n_1,n_2) = \begin{cases} x''(\frac{n_1}{2}, \frac{n_2}{2}), & n_1 \text{ is even, } n_2 \text{ is even}, \\ x''(N_1 - \frac{n_1+1}{2}, \frac{n_2}{2}), & n_1 \text{ is odd, } n_2 \text{ is even}, \\ x''(\frac{n_1}{2}, N_2 - \frac{n_2+1}{2}), & n_1 \text{ is even, } n_2 \text{ is odd}, \\ x''(N_1 - \frac{n_1+1}{2}, N_2 - \frac{n_2+1}{2}), & n_1 \text{ is odd, } n_2 \text{ is odd}; \end{cases} \tag{13}$$

**end function**

**function** IDCT_IDXST($x$)

$x' = \texttt{idct\_idxst\_preprocess}(x)$ using Equation (14)

$$x'(n_1,n_2) = \begin{cases} x(n_1, N_2 - n_2), & n_2 \neq 0, \\ 0, & n_2 = 0; \end{cases} \tag{14}$$

$x'' = \texttt{2D\_IDCT}(x')$;

**return** $y = \texttt{idct\_idxst\_postprocess}(x'')$ using Equation (15)

$$y(n_1,n_2) = (-1)^{n_2}x''(n_1,n_2); \tag{15}$$

**end function**

**function** IDXST_IDCT($x$)

$x' = \texttt{idxst\_idct\_preprocess}(x)$ using Equation (16)

$$x'(n_1,n_2) = \begin{cases} x(N_1 - n_1, n_2), & n_1 \neq 0, \\ 0, & n_1 = 0; \end{cases} \tag{16}$$

$x'' = \texttt{2D\_IDCT}(x')$

**return** $y = \texttt{idxst\_idct\_postprocess}(x'')$ using Equation (17)

$$y(n_1,n_2) = (-1)^{n_1}x''(n_1,n_2); \tag{17}$$

**end function**

we slow down the density weight updating to make the gradient descent more stable. That is, we update the density weight $\lambda$ every 5 iterations instead of every iteration.

### G. Other Possible Extensions

The framework is general and can be extended to consider various advanced design objectives and constraints, e.g., timing and fence regions. Timing can be considered by net weighting or additional differentiable timing costs in the objective [29], [37]. Fence regions can be implemented by introducing multiple electric fields, e.g., one for each region, to enable independent spreading between regions.

## IV. Experimental Results

The framework was developed in Python with `PyTorch` for optimizers and API, and C++/CUDA for low-level operators. The CPU parallelism was implemented with `OpenMP` for wirelength and density operators. Both the DREAMPlace and the RePlAce [8]

programs run on a Linux server with 40-core Intel E5-2698 v4 @ 2.20GHz and 1 NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPU based on Volta architecture. ISPD 2005 contest benchmarks [38] and large industrial designs were adopted. We conducted experiments with both double-precision (`float64`) and single-precision (`float32`) floating point numbers on CPU and GPU. We use the same dimensions of bins as RePlAce.

### A. Placement Acceleration

Table II and Table III show the HPWL and runtime details on ISPD 2005 and industrial benchmarks. With almost the same solution quality (within 0.3% difference on average), DREAMPlace running on GPU is able to achieve 38× and 47× speedup in GP on the two benchmark suites compared to RePlAce with 40 threads. DREAMPlace running on CPU is also 2× faster than RePlAce with 40 threads in GP. RePlAce [8] crashed on the 10-million-cell industrial benchmark at the 6th iteration for Nesterov's optimization. The potential reason is that the peak memory usage of RePlAce exceeded the maximum memory (64GB). Before crashing, it took 3396 seconds for initial placement and on average 7.5 seconds for each Nesterov iteration. As this benchmark takes 1000 iterations with DREAMPlace, we made a runtime estimation of $3396 + 1000 \times 7.5 \approx 10896$ seconds. Meanwhile, among all RePlAce runs, initial placement takes $25 \sim 30\%$ of the entire global placement time, and solving the nonlinear placement takes around $70 \sim 75\%$. The LG of DREAMPlace is also around 10× faster than the NTUplace3 legalizer in the RePlAce flow. As NTUplace3 does the DP for both placers, so the runtime is similar. The speedup for the entire placement flow on GPU is 4.6×, and that on CPU is 2.7×.

Figure 7 plots the GP runtime comparison between multi-threaded DREAMPlace and RePlAce with different precisions and implementations. It can be seen that the parallel CPU version of DREAMPlace is consistently faster than RePlAce. Meanwhile, this TCAD extension further improves the efficiency of the GPU implementations from the DAC version [30] except for the smallest benchmark `adaptec1`. Figure 8 plots the average runtime ratio for different cases. By switching from `float64` to `float32`, an average speedup of 1.4× on CPU and 1.3× on GPU can be achieved, while the quality stays almost the same. Compared with the previous DAC version [30], this extension achieves 1.3× speedup with `float64` and 1.8× speedup with `float32`. From Figure 8, we also observe that the speedup of CPU implementations saturates quickly from single thread to 40 threads. This observation holds for both RePlAce and DREAMPlace. For RePlAce, the best number of threads is 40 with a speedup of 3.2×, while for DREAMPlace, 20 threads provide the best efficiency with a factor of 5.0×.

Figure 9 draws the runtime breakdown of DREAMPlace on a 2-million-cell design `bigblue4`, where GP and LG only take 6.2% runtime of the entire flow. The runtime of GP and LG is even less than that of file IO for benchmark reading and writing. The majority of the runtime (82%) is taken by DP, which still relies on the external placer currently. Previous studies [39], [40] have demonstrated more than 6× speedup from GPU acceleration for DP over multi-threaded CPU. While DP is not the focus of this paper, there is a potential of 18× speedup for the entire placement by future incorporation of GPU-accelerated DP, e.g., $\frac{2400}{25+9+332/6+45} \sim 18$ for `bigblue4` according to Table II. On the other hand, within each forward and backward pass of GP, the density-related computation takes longer than wirelength (73.4% v.s. 26.5%). With efficient DCT/IDCT implementation, the electric field computation is no longer the bottleneck for density forward and backward.

### B. Acceleration of Low-Level Operators

We further investigate the efficiency of the low-level operators, e.g., wirelength forward and backward, DCT/IDCT, and density forward and backward. Figure 10 compares three approaches discussed in Section III-A. "Net-by-Net" denotes the net-level parallelization; "Atomic" denotes the pin-level parallelization with atomic operations in Algorithm 1 [30]; "Merged" denotes the combined forward and backward implementation in Algorithm 2. When using `float32` on GPU, the merged approach achieves 3.7× speedup over the net-by-net one and 1.8× speedup over the atomic one. On CPU, the atomic strategy is 20% slower than the net-by-net strategy with 40 threads, while the merged strategy is over 30% faster. Meanwhile, a promising speedup factor of 7.5× from a single thread to 40 threads can be achieved with the net-by-net strategy.

Figure 11 compares the 2D DCT/IDCT implementation using $2N$-point FFT ("DCT-2N" and "IDCT-2N"), $N$-point FFT ("DCT-N" and "IDCT-N"), and $N$-point 2D FFT ("DCT-2D-N" and "IDCT-2D-N") [32]. Considering the map sizes in the experiment (from $512 \times 512$ to $4096 \times 4096$) with `float32`, the $N$-point DCT implementation is 2.1× faster [30] and the $N$-point 2D implementation can be 5.0× faster. For IDCT, the $N$-point implementation achieves 1.3× speedup and the 2D implementation achieves 4.1× speedup. This result demonstrates the efficiency of Algorithm 4.

As DCT/IDCT is used in the density operator, in Figure 12, the efficiency of the entire density forward and backward procedure is compared for GPU and CPU implementations. With all the speedup techniques, an average of $1.5 \sim 2.1\times$ speedup on GPU can be achieved with the current implementation over the preliminary DAC version [30]. For the parallel CPU implementation, 3.1× runtime reduction can be achieved with 40 threads.

### C. Comparison with Solvers in `PyTorch`

As mentioned, DREAMPlace can enable easy adoption of native solvers in `PyTorch`. Here we compare with the widely-used solvers implemented in the toolkit, like Adam [25] and stochastic gradient descent (SGD) with momentum, as shown in Table IV. As these solvers do not have line search, we add simple learning rate decay in each iteration to control the step size of gradient descent with the decay factor shown in the "LR Decay" columns. We use the default configurations for these solvers and report the final HPWL after detailed placement and the runtime for global placement in seconds. In our experiments, we find the gradient descent process may be unable to converge if the learning rate is not properly designed. Therefore, we customize the decay factor for each design. It can be seen that Adam can achieve slightly better results than the Nesterov's accelerated gradient decent method (shortened to Nesterov's method for brevity) implemented in RePlAce, while the Nesterov's method converges much faster. Meanwhile, the results for SGD with momentum are about 1.2% worse. As the solvers have many parameters to tune, it is hard to simply conclude that Adam or SGD with momentum is definitely worse than the Nesterov's method with the experiments, but the preliminary results are at least promising enough to worth further exploration. With the DREAMPlace framework, we can investigate new solvers easily by scripting in `PyTorch`.

### D. Routability-Driven Placement

To verify the runtime benefits in routability-driven placement, we conducted experiments on the DAC 2012 contest benchmarks [41]. We consider two major metrics for solution quality: "sHPWL" as scaled wirelength and "RC" as routing congestion. In the contest, the RC is defined as a weighted average of overflows in the top

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TABLE II: Experimental results on ISPD 2005 benchmarks [38] with `float64`.

| Design | #cells | #nets | RePlAce (40 threads) | | | | | DREAMPlace (40 threads) | | | | | | DREAMPlace (V100) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | |
| | | | | GP | LG | DP | Total | | GP | LG | DP | IO | Total | | GP | LG | DP | IO | Total |
| adaptec1 | 211 | 221 | 73.22 | 80 | 4 | 21 | 112 | 73.22 | 67 | 0.4 | 24 | 4 | 96 | 73.22 | 5 | 0.5 | 25 | 4 | 34 |
| adaptec2 | 255 | 266 | 81.86 | 159 | 7 | 27 | 201 | 82.23 | 98 | 0.5 | 31 | 5 | 134 | 82.22 | 6 | 0.5 | 31 | 5 | 42 |
| adaptec3 | 452 | 467 | 193.34 | 297 | 20 | 48 | 378 | 193.81 | 133 | 1 | 57 | 9 | 201 | 193.72 | 8 | 1 | 57 | 9 | 76 |
| adaptec4 | 496 | 516 | 175.25 | 336 | 20 | 55 | 426 | 173.85 | 187 | 2 | 65 | 10 | 264 | 174.08 | 9 | 2 | 65 | 9 | 85 |
| bigblue1 | 278 | 284 | 89.87 | 130 | 4 | 27 | 170 | 89.40 | 87 | 0.3 | 32 | 5 | 125 | 89.38 | 6 | 0.4 | 31 | 6 | 43 |
| bigblue2 | 558 | 577 | 138.07 | 299 | 22 | 82 | 419 | 136.73 | 143 | 9 | 91 | 10 | 254 | 136.54 | 8 | 9 | 95 | 10 | 123 |
| bigblue3 | 1097 | 1123 | 305.09 | 787 | 41 | 120 | 1030 | 303.89 | 316 | 3 | 142 | 21 | 484 | 303.90 | 14 | 3 | 142 | 20 | 180 |
| bigblue4 | 2177 | 2230 | 743.80 | 1789 | 51 | 299 | 2400 | 743.69 | 655 | 9 | 336 | 45 | 1047 | 743.75 | 25 | 9 | 332 | 45 | 413 |
| ratio | - | - | 1.003 | 38.2 | 10.1 | 0.9 | 4.6 | 1.000 | 18.7 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.7 | 1.000 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |

TABLE III: Experimental results on industrial benchmarks with `float64`.

| Design | #cells | #nets | RePlAce (40 threads) | | | | | DREAMPlace (40 threads) | | | | | | DREAMPlace (V100) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | | HPWL | Runtime (s) | | | | |
| | | | | GP | LG | DP | Total | | GP | LG | DP | IO | Total | | GP | LG | DP | IO | Total |
| design1 | 1345 | 1389 | 340.76 | 787 | 39 | 140 | 1039 | 340.64 | 341 | 4 | 173 | 30 | 549 | 340.67 | 17 | 4 | 172 | 30 | 224 |
| design2 | 1306 | 1355 | 274.65 | 793 | 39 | 134 | 1057 | 275.41 | 363 | 4 | 166 | 30 | 564 | 275.36 | 17 | 5 | 167 | 29 | 218 |
| design3 | 2265 | 2276 | 524.36 | 1369 | 74 | 233 | 1777 | 522.68 | 543 | 14 | 299 | 48 | 906 | 522.62 | 27 | 14 | 302 | 48 | 393 |
| design4 | 1525 | 1528 | 454.86 | 857 | 48 | 166 | 1136 | 453.86 | 384 | 8 | 200 | 33 | 626 | 453.83 | 18 | 8 | 202 | 33 | 262 |
| design5 | 1316 | 1364 | 287.46 | 776 | 38 | 138 | 1016 | 287.14 | 335 | 3 | 167 | 29 | 535 | 287.11 | 17 | 4 | 169 | 31 | 221 |
| design6 | 10504 | 10747 | NA | ∼10896 | NA | NA | NA | 2360.94 | 3056 | 77 | 1650 | 246 | 5037 | 2358.44 | 181 | 76 | 1666 | 253 | 2184 |
| ratio | - | - | 1.001 | 47.3 | 8.1 | 0.8 | 4.6 | 1.000 | 19.9 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.4 | 1.000 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |

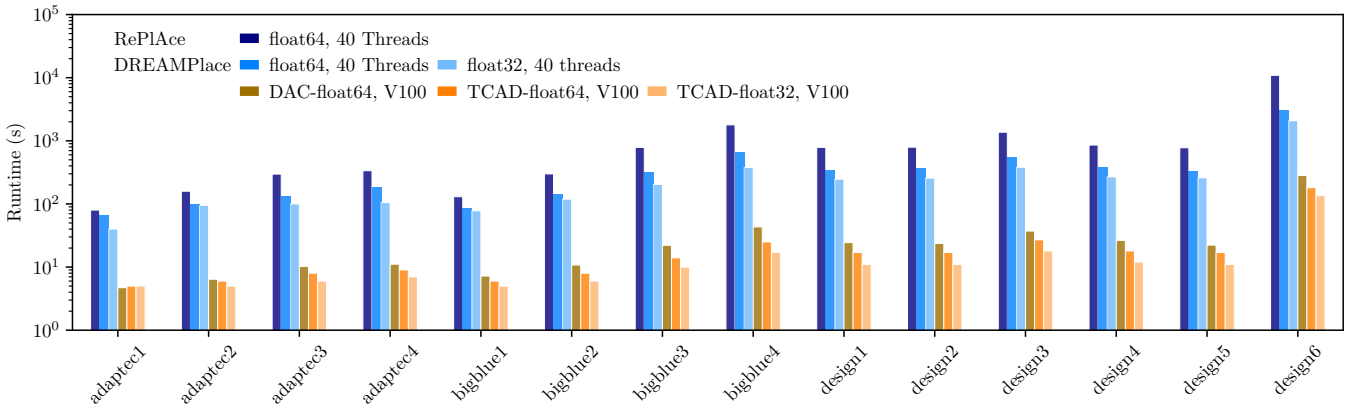


Fig. 7: GP runtime comparison for ISPD2005 and industrial benchmarks between various implementations and precisions. The runtime of `design6` for RePlAce for different number of threads is estimated with the method mentioned in first paragraph of Section IV-A.

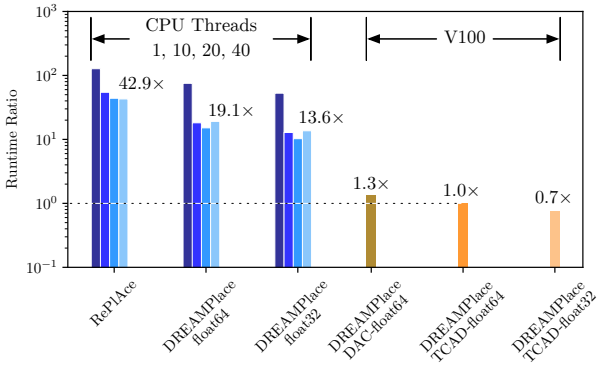


Fig. 8: Average GPU runtime ratio for ISPD2005 and industrial benchmarks with different number of CPU threads. Normalized by the runtime of the TCAD version of DREAMPlace on V100 with `float64`, which is consistent with the ratios in Table II and Table III. The normalized ratios for 40 threads and GPUs are annotated for easier comparison.

0.5%, 1%, 2%, 5% congested tiles. The minimum value for RC is 100, indicating no overflow. The sHPWL is computed using the

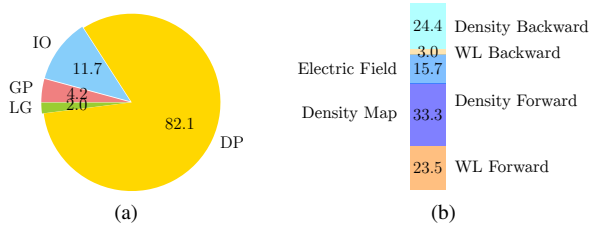


Fig. 9: Runtime breakdown in percentages of DREAMPlace with `float32` on V100 (a) for `bigblue4` and (b) one forward and backward pass in GP.

following equation [41],

$$sHPWL = HPWL \times (1 + 0.03 \times (RC - 100)), \qquad (20)$$

indicating that unit increase in routing congestion is counted as 3% HPWL overhead.

In this experiment, we obtained the RePlAce binary from the authors of [8] to keep consistent experimental settings. Table V shows the solution quality and runtime. As NCTUgr is repeatedly invoked as an external congestion estimator and it only runs on CPU with single-thread, we separate the runtime of GP into two parts: nonlinear optimization ("NL") and global routing ("GR").

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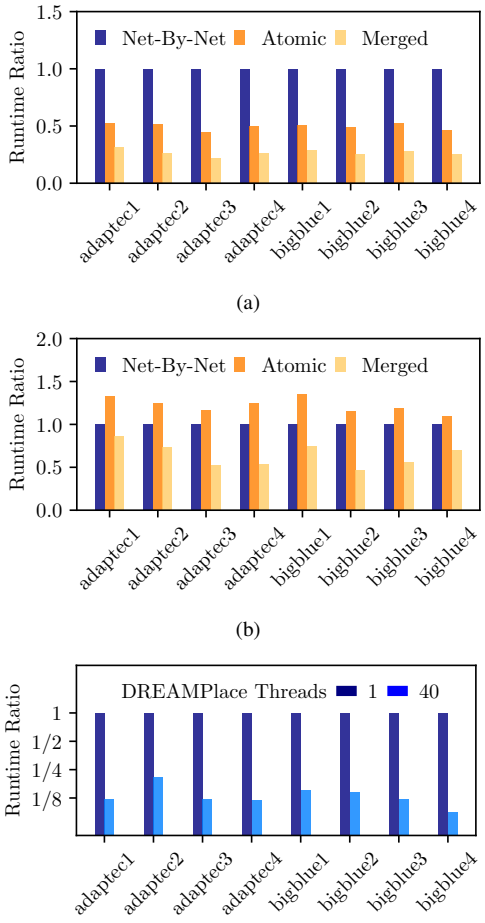


Fig. 10: Wirelength forward and backward with `float32`. (a) GPU runtime comparison of different implementations. (b) CPU runtime comparison of different implementations with 40 threads. (c) CPU runtime comparison of the net-by-net strategy between single thread and 40 threads.

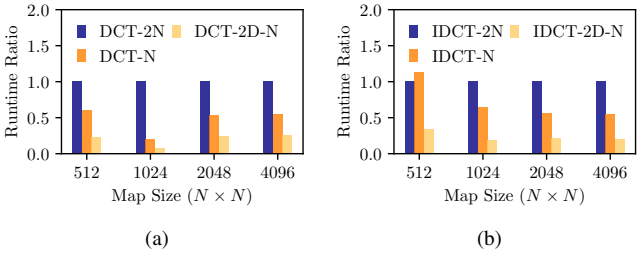


Fig. 11: GPU runtime comparison of DCT/IDCT algorithms with `float32`.

NTUplace3 [4] is adopted as the LG and DP for RePlAce, and DP for DREAMPlace. We can see that DREAMPlace with GPU acceleration can provide very similar solution quality, while 20× faster in NL and 9× faster in GP including the runtime of the global router. For the entire placement flow, we can achieve 5× speedup. DREAMPlace also shows compelling efficiency and quality with 40 threads on CPU. We also observe that DREAMPlace invokes the global router less often than RePlAce, leading to shorter GR time. Meanwhile, for DREAMPlace, GR takes around 70% of the GP time, which is the runtime bottleneck.

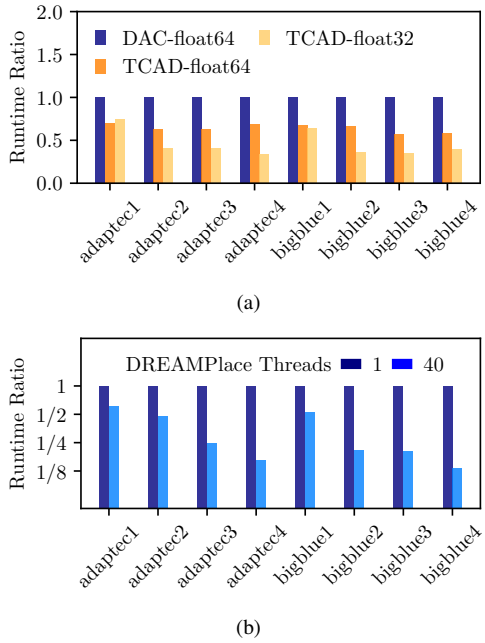


Fig. 12: Density forward and backward comparison. (a) GPU runtime comparison between DAC [30] and this extension. (b) CPU runtime comparison between single thread and 40 threads with `float32`.

TABLE IV: Comparison with native `PyTorch` solvers like Adam [25] and SGD with momentum with `float64` on GPU.

| Design | Nesterov [8] | | Adam | | | SGD Momentum | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | HPWL | GP (s) | HPWL | GP (s) | LR Decay | HPWL | GP (s) | LR Decay |
| adaptec1 | 73.22 | 5 | 73.02 | 8 | 0.995 | 73.84 | 8 | 0.993 |
| adaptec2 | 82.22 | 6 | 82.44 | 7 | 0.995 | 83.72 | 9 | 0.993 |
| adaptec3 | 193.72 | 8 | 191.22 | 12 | 0.995 | 198.07 | 12 | 0.993 |
| adaptec4 | 174.08 | 9 | 172.84 | 13 | 0.995 | 175.77 | 14 | 0.993 |
| bigblue1 | 89.38 | 6 | 89.89 | 10 | 0.995 | 89.64 | 9 | 0.993 |
| bigblue2 | 136.54 | 8 | 136.43 | 14 | 0.995 | 137.48 | 14 | 0.993 |
| bigblue3 | 303.90 | 14 | 302.95 | 33 | 0.997 | 312.79 | 24 | 0.995 |
| bigblue4 | 743.75 | 25 | 740.60 | 66 | 0.997 | 744.55 | 57 | 0.995 |
| ratio | 1.000 | 1.000 | 0.997 | 1.781 | | 1.012 | 1.687 | |

## V. Conclusion

In this paper, we take a new perspective on solving classical analytical placement by casting it into a neural network training problem. Leveraging the deep learning toolkit `PyTorch`, we develop a new open-source placement engine, *DREAMPlace* with GPU acceleration. It achieves around 40× speedup in global placement without quality degradation for academic and industrial benchmarks, compared to the state-of-the-art RePlAce running on many threads. We explore different implementations of low-level operators for forward and backward propagation to boost the overall efficiency.

Furthermore, DREAMPlace is highly extensible to incorporate new algorithms/solvers and new objectives by simply writing high-level programming languages such as `Python`. We plan to further investigate cell inflation for routability and net weighting for timing optimization [29], [35], [37] as well as GPU-accelerated detailed placement. It can also be extended to leverage multi-GPU platforms for further speedup. Meanwhile, we plan to investigate the efficiency of implementations using fixed point numbers to guarantee run-to-run determinism. As DREAMPlace decouples the high-level algorithmic design and low-level acceleration efforts, we believe this work shall open up new directions for revisiting classical EDA problems.

TABLE V: Experimental results on DAC 2012 benchmarks [41] for routability-driven placement.

| Design | #nodes | #nets | RePlAce† | | | | | | | DREAMPlace (40 threads) | | | | | | | DREAMPlace (RTX 2080TI) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | sHPWL | RC | Runtime (s) | | | | | sHPWL | RC | Runtime (s) | | | | | sHPWL | RC | Runtime (s) | | | | |
| | | | | | GP | | LG | DP | Total | | | GP | | LG | DP | Total | | | GP | | LG | DP | Total |
| | | | | | NL | GR | | | | | | NL | GR | | | | | | NL | GR | | | |
| SB2 | 1014K | 991K | 62.39 | 102.47 | 6981 | 2168 | 46 | 160 | 9382 | 61.06 | 101.57 | 3953 | 1200 | 30 | 183 | 5390 | 61.20 | 101.76 | 293 | 1215 | 31 | 184 | 1746 |
| SB3 | 920K | 898K | 30.69 | 100.81 | 2354 | 969 | 70 | 149 | 3565 | 30.18 | 100.73 | 3306 | 524 | 16 | 172 | 4040 | 30.18 | 100.65 | 131 | 485 | 16 | 182 | 835 |
| SB6 | 1014K | 1007K | 31.30 | 100.61 | 1874 | 548 | 44 | 144 | 2634 | 30.92 | 100.26 | 1888 | 309 | 27 | 168 | 2414 | 31.00 | 100.33 | 169 | 309 | 27 | 168 | 694 |
| SB7 | 1365K | 1340K | 37.20 | 101.13 | 2068 | 438 | 54 | 201 | 2794 | 36.73 | 100.60 | 963 | 144 | 23 | 234 | 1395 | 36.73 | 100.61 | 78 | 143 | 23 | 233 | 509 |
| SB9 | 847K | 834K | 21.48 | 101.09 | 1866 | 369 | 23 | 148 | 2426 | 21.21 | 100.61 | 677 | 87 | 11 | 170 | 964 | 21.23 | 100.65 | 54 | 83 | 11 | 171 | 337 |
| SB11 | 955K | 936K | 34.28 | 102.65 | 2676 | 549 | 28 | 108 | 3385 | 32.86 | 100.86 | 1218 | 214 | 24 | 125 | 1602 | 32.80 | 100.79 | 150 | 283 | 24 | 125 | 603 |
| SB12 | 1293K | 1293K | 26.69 | 103.02 | 3040 | 441 | 153 | 230 | 3898 | 26.90 | 101.25 | 2767 | 319 | 5 | 278 | 3398 | 26.38 | 100.72 | 171 | 398 | 5 | 278 | 883 |
| SB14 | 635K | 620K | 21.26 | 100.75 | 740 | 188 | 22 | 87 | 1052 | 21.25 | 100.55 | 1067 | 146 | 15 | 104 | 1345 | 21.24 | 100.51 | 65 | 148 | 15 | 108 | 349 |
| SB16 | 699K | 697K | 25.57 | 102.29 | 1669 | 539 | 16 | 91 | 2331 | 25.42 | 101.77 | 649 | 119 | 2 | 105 | 891 | 25.53 | 101.94 | 44 | 115 | 2 | 106 | 283 |
| SB19 | 523K | 512K | 14.21 | 101.05 | 1288 | 257 | 17 | 110 | 1685 | 15.10 | 103.28 | 701 | 108 | 1 | 126 | 948 | 14.67 | 102.73 | 71 | 57 | 1 | 133 | 274 |
| ratio | | | 1.010 | 1.005 | 21.6 | 2.7 | 6.2 | 0.8 | 5.4 | 1.004 | 1.001 | 14.0 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 3.4 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |

Both results for RePlAce and DREAMPlace are collected from a Linux machine with two 20-core Intel Xeon Gold 6230 CPUs (40 cores in total) and 1 NVIDIA RTX 2080TI GPU.
† We obtain the binary of RePlAce [8] to keep consistent experimental settings for this benchmark suite. As the RePlAce binary uses `float32` for nonlinear placement, we use the same setting for DREAMPlace in this experiment. The binary also only supports single-thread and the external global router NCTUgr is also single-thread.

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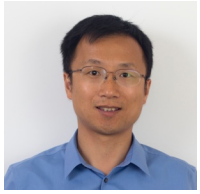

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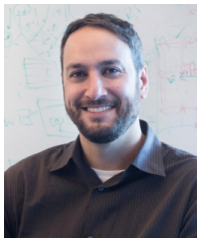

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He has received a number of prestigious awards for his research contributions, including the SRC Technical Excellence Award in 2013, DAC Top 10 Author in Fifth Decade, DAC Prolific Author Award, ASP-DAC Frequently Cited Author Award, 19 Best Paper Awards at premier venues (ISPD 2020, ASPDAC 2020, DAC 2019, GLSVLSI 2018, VLSI Integration 2018, HOST 2017, SPIE 2016, ISPD 2014, ICCAD 2013, ASPDAC 2012, ISPD 2011, IBM Research 2010 Pat Goldberg Memorial Best Paper Award, ASPDAC 2010, DATE 2009, ICICDT 2009, SRC Techcon in 1998, 2007, 2012 and 2015) and 15 additional Best Paper Award finalists, Communications of the ACM Research Highlights (2014), UT Austin RAISE Faculty Excellence Award (2014), Cadence Academic Collaboration Award (2019), and many international CAD contest awards, among others. He is a Fellow of IEEE and SPIE.