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While the geographic center of population has some novelty value, it also inspires us to think about local settlement history and economic development patterns. We look forward to the Census Bureau’s 2020 edition of the measured center—or any guesses? (We’re going with the 640 Plaza on Western Avenue. Stay tuned.)

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**TOP EMPLOYERS NEAR THE KNOX COUNTY CENTER OF POPULATION, 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radius (Miles)</th>
<th>Employer Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 KNOXVILLE KNOX COUNTY HEAD START</td>
<td>2440 Parkview St</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>Individual &amp; Family Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 CUSTOM FOOD DIVISION PROCESSED FOODS</td>
<td>3600 Pleasant Ridge Rd</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Frozen Specialty Food Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ROCK TENN</td>
<td>1900 Third Creek Rd</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Folding Paperboard Box Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 COLE VISION</td>
<td>4716 Middle Creek Ln</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Optical Goods Store</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 FORT SANDERS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>1901 Clinch Ave</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 EAST TENNESSEE CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL</td>
<td>2018 W Clinch Ave</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>Children’s Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 BROADWAY ELECTRIC SERVICE</td>
<td>1800 N Central St</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>Electrical Contractors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ARC AUTOMOTIVE</td>
<td>1720 Malpark Rd</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>Motor Vehicles &amp; Car Bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 SHOFNERKALLOF MECHANICAL ELECTRIC SERVICES</td>
<td>3600 Popemill Dr</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>Mechanical &amp; Electrical Contractors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>1530 Cherokee Trl</td>
<td>3,802</td>
<td>University Medical &amp; Research Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 PHYSICIANS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>800 E Oak Hill Ave</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE</td>
<td>327 Morgan Sr</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>College, University, Professional School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 KNOX COUNTY GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>400 W Main St</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>County Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY</td>
<td>400 W Summit Hill Dr</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Distribution, Electric Power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 PARKWEST MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>8352 Parkwest Blvd</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 ELAVON</td>
<td>7380 Chapman Hwy</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Business &amp; Credit Card Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 ALCOA</td>
<td>2120 V Wright Rd</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Aluminum Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 SONY NEXUS NETWORKS INTERACTIVE</td>
<td>9721 Sherrill Blvd</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Cable &amp; Media Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 FASSET HIGHER EDUCATION GROUP</td>
<td>9815 Hardin Valley Rd</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>Junior College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dunn & Bradstreet, 2010

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**KNOX COUNTY CENTER OF POPULATION 1980, 1990, & 2010**

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**Do People Live Close to Where They Work?**

Every 10 years, with the release of its Census of Population and Housing, the U.S. Census Bureau reports an interesting piece of information—the mean geographic center of population. The Census Bureau defines the population center as the point at which an imaginary map of a selected area would balance perfectly if all residents weighed the same and were put on the map where they live.

With the latest release of decennial census data in 2010, Knox County’s population, totaling more than 432,000, found its center at the corner of Ball Camp Pike and Hazelwood Road.
The first U.S. census, conducted in 1790, found the center of population in Kent County, Maryland. Counts over the past several decades saw the center moving west across the U.S., and, as of 2010, it landed in central Missouri near the village of Plato, about 175 miles southwest of St. Louis. Measuring the center of population is a simple and colorful device to show general migration and settlement choices of people over time. For the U.S. as a whole, it reflects the centuries-long movement of people from original settlements in the Northeast in pursuit of new opportunities from the Midwest to the West Coast, and all points in between.

### Decades of Local Population Movement

Much like the historical westward migration seen nationally, Knox County’s center of population also followed a westerly shift over the past several decades. Back in 1980, the local population center landed near the intersection of Stonewall Street and Ely Avenue in the Lonsdale community. In 1990 it moved further west to the 3400 block of Pleasant Ridge Road, and by 2000, the migration trend had continued as the center was found in the vicinity of Western Avenue at I-640.

### Slowdown in Westward Shift

A noticeable trend took place in Knox County’s migratory center though. Despite the continual westward drift, a decline has been occurring in the straight-line distances from each decennial center. The migration from the 1980 to the 1990 population center was nearly a full mile, but from 1990 to 2000 that distance shrunk to just half a mile, and between 2000 and 2010, the shift slowed further to about a third of a mile.

So what do we attribute the slowing westward migration to? Over the past few decades, the Northwest and Southwest County sectors led all other sectors across Knox County in residential and non-residential development. However, the share of new investment that these two sectors captured has steadily fallen: from 45.9 percent during the 1990s, to 41.3 percent between 2000 and 2009.

And while the share of west-side development declined, substantial new construction and reinvestment occurred in downtown Knoxville and throughout the Central City sector. Building permits rose from a 3.7 percent share during the 1990s, to a nearly 10 percent share in the past 10 years. At the same time, other areas of Knox County, such as the North City Sector and the Northeast, East, and South County sectors, also saw growing shares of new development, contributing to a slowdown of the local population’s westerly movement.

### Access Considerations

We often hear local folks estimate that Knoxville’s population center is in the Cedar Bluff area. That might seem like a reasonable guess, based on the amount of new home construction in west Knox County over the past 30 years, but it simply is not correct.

Knowing the most central location of the county’s population is a useful piece of information, especially when considering fair access to community services, like the county’s main library, or courthouse, or health department, and major local destinations, like downtown employment centers or The University of Tennessee campus.

Do those locations still make sense in terms of accessibility to a majority of Knox County residents? All of those stops are 2 to 4 miles from the county’s population center. Cedar Bluff is more than 10 miles away.
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A circle drawn five miles from the population center captures 118,000 jobs, with The University of Tennessee Medical Center (3,800 employees) the largest employer. And, at 12 miles out, corresponding with the national average work commute distance, there are 236,000 jobs. The largest employer in that added coverage area is Parkwest Medical Center, with 2,000 workers.

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<th>Classification</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knoxville Utilities Board</td>
<td>4307 Middlebrock Pk</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Electric Power Generation and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knoxville Knox County Head Start</td>
<td>1440 Pavement St</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>Individual &amp; Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Custom Food Division Processed Foods</td>
<td>3600 Pleasant Ridge Rd</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Frozen Specialty Food Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rock-Tenn</td>
<td>1906 Third Creek Rd</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Folding Paperboard Box Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cole Vision</td>
<td>4716 Middle Creek Ln</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Optical Goods Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>1960 Clinch Ave</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>East Tennessee Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>2018 W Clinch Ave</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>Children’s Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Broadway Electric Service</td>
<td>1800 N Central St</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>Electrical Contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AVP Automotive</td>
<td>1729 Midpark Rd</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>Motor Vehicles &amp; Car Bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ShoffnerGalbraith Mechanical Electric Services</td>
<td>3600 Papermill Dr</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>Mechanical &amp; Electrical Contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>University of Tennessee Medical Center</td>
<td>1320 Cherokee Trl</td>
<td>3,802</td>
<td>University Medical &amp; Research Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Physicians Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>800 E Oak Hill Ave</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
<td>2827 Morgan Gr</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>College, University, Professional School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knox County Government</td>
<td>400 W Main St</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>County Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tennessee Valley Authority</td>
<td>400 W Summit Hill Dr</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Distribution, Electric Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Parkwest Medical Center</td>
<td>5352 Parkwest Blvd</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>General Medical &amp; Surgical Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Elanor</td>
<td>7360 Chapman Hwy</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Business &amp; Credit Card Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ALCOR</td>
<td>2315 N Wright Rd</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Aluminum Manufacturing</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sonips Networks Interactive</td>
<td>9721 Sherm Blvd</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Cable &amp; Media Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fidel Education Group</td>
<td>10615 Hardin Valley Rd</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>Junior College</td>
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