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Suburbanites work closer to home *Nashville's neighbors swap drive to city for jobs in home counties*

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When **Hendersonville** resident Eric Jackson worked in downtown Nashville, he rushed home to make it to his daughter's activities, spending at least 30 minutes both ways behind the wheel.



Eric Jackson meets daughter Kaitlin at the bus stop near their home in Hendersonville. Since starting his own information technology firm 10 minutes from his home, Jackson no longer has to race home from work for her youth soccer games. (JOHN PARTIPILO / THE TENNESSEAN)

Since 2003, when Jackson opened his own information technology firm in Hendersonville, his hour-and-a-half commute "on a bad day" has shrunk to 10 minutes.

"I coached her soccer team for a while," Jackson, 38, said. "I'd have to race home to get there on time.

"That's all changed. I was able to work till 6:30 (Wednesday) night, and get to her pageant in plenty of time, at 7 o'clock."

His experience is becoming more common, as a greater

share of suburban county residents are working close to home instead of commuting into Nashville.

From 2000 to 2006, the share of residents in Rutherford, Sumner and Williamson counties who worked in Davidson County fell to less than one-third, according to an analysis of census figures and a market survey by the Louisville, Ky.-based firm Wilkerson and Associates.

Over the same period, the proportion of residents in those counties who worked in their home county edged up, with **the most dramatic increase taking place in Sumner County.**

As more office space has been built and businesses have expanded, these suburban counties have begun to shed their bedroom identities in favor of work-live characters.

Places like McEwen in Williamson County typify the trend.

The 190-acre Cool Springs development, which will have its own new interstate exit, is planned to include offices, boutique-style shops, a 140-room hotel, townhouses, condos and apartments.

Green space, plazas and lakes will be built into the development to create walking areas.

"The idea is to work there, walk home, change clothes, and walk out and get something to eat," said Jim Cheney, spokesman for Southern Land Co., which is developing the project. "It's going to be a regional draw, too. ... This is going to be someplace that people in northern Alabama and southern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee all are going to, we hope, see as a destination."

And if more places like McEwen are built, Cool Springs should eventually become what's termed an "edge city," a self-contained urban development outside the urban core, a place where more people work than live.

Wayne Killebrew's commute from his Franklin home to his Franklin business is as simple as leaving the house and turning right.

URBAN GROWTH GLOSSARY

Edge city— a self-contained development outside the urban core, it has more than 5 million square feet of office space, more jobs than bedrooms, and is considered a destination for shopping or entertainment.

Exurbs— A rural community beyond the suburbs. Demographers say the greater Nashville area has one of the highest populations of exurban residents.

Smart growth— Mixed-use developments that consider the economy, the community and the environment through a focus on walkable neighborhoods, preserving open space, offering transit options and compact building design.

SOURCES: Tennessean archives, Environmental Protection Agency

He said he hadn't commuted to Nashville since the mid-'80s, but he used to drive just about anywhere for estate sales to find merchandise for his antique store, Rooster Tales.

About a year ago, Killebrew said, he eliminated trips to Nashville altogether, deciding it wasn't worth the drive.

"Traffic is the main thing," Killebrew said. "I don't go now, because it's so time-consuming."

COMMUTING TRENDS

The percentage of suburban residents who work in their home county is rising, while the share who commute into Davidson County is falling.

PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS WHOSE JOB IS IN HOME COUNTY

	1990	2000	2006
Rutherford	70%	63%	68%
Sumner	53%	49%	61%
Williamson	47%	51%	55%
Wilson	46%	44%	41%

PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS WHOSE JOB IS IN DAVIDSON CO.

	1990	2000	2006
Rutherford	24%	27%	16%
Sumner	39%	40%	26%
Williamson	44%	39%	28%
Wilson	44%	45%	34%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Wilkerson and Associates

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Edge cities in the making

In Sumner County, the 265-acre **Indian Lake Village** development, currently under construction, should rival Cool Springs in office space, said Don Long, **Hendersonville's** director of economic and community development.

The development is planned to have roughly 2.5 million square feet of office space, along with retail and residential units, Long said. The term "edge city" was coined in 1991 by journalist Joel Garreau.

The criteria, according to Garreau's *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, are at least 5 million square feet of office space, at least 600,000 square feet of retail, more jobs than bedrooms, and being a destination point for work, shopping and entertainment. And the shift from bedroom or rural community to all-in-one destination must have occurred within the last 30 years, under the definition.

Cool Springs doesn't hit the mark on office space but meets the other standards.

The once-rural area had 2.4 million square feet of offices in 2005, according to a Grubb & Ellis report. That's about half what constitutes an "edge city."



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McEwen will add 300,000 square feet to that figure, Cheney said.

But economic development boosters said that, even if the numbers don't exactly line up with the "edge city" definition, the character of Nashville's suburban counties meshes with the central idea of a destination point.

Bob Iannacone, director of the Williamson County Economic Development Council, said that even though the office space numbers haven't met the 5 million mark, the Cool Springs area still feels like a destination. "In every other sense I would consider edge city to be correct," he said. "It's just a matter of time, with Nissan and other corporations coming on board."

Davidson growing, too

But the suburban growth doesn't necessarily imply a loss for Davidson County.

In metro areas, it is common for suburban counties to see more and different types of jobs created close to home as their residential populations grow, said Garrett Harper, research director for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Harper said that Davidson County, as well as each of its surrounding counties, saw job and population growth in recent years.

"While the rate of growth may not always be as high in the central county or in particular counties, all of the counties experienced growth," Harper said.

Likewise, the commuting trends don't necessarily mean less traffic congestion.

The percentage of suburban workers making the commute to Davidson may be decreasing but, because of population growth, the actual number isn't necessarily going down.

For example, state transportation officials in 2005 recorded on average more than 98,300 cars passing both ways daily on Interstate 24 in Rutherford County near the Davidson County line. That was up from almost 93,300 in 2004.

"(There) is no magic bullet in addressing traffic congestion," state department of Transportation spokeswoman Julie Oaks said.