

leading to more sprawl via "leap frog" development in outlying cities. But that's not supported by U.S. Census and state population estimate data.

From 1990 to 2006, Eugene has accounted for 63 percent of the population growth in Lane County, despite starting with only about 40 percent of the county population. Outlying cities have grown faster than Eugene, but they started out tiny and remain small. Since 1990 growth in Veneta has accounted for only 3 percent of the countywide population increase while Coburg accounts for only 1 percent of the growth.

Race to the Bottom

Another key argument by bill proponents was that Springfield should be free to compete with Eugene by luring away its residents and businesses.

The current joint UGB planning "does not address the reality of this [development] occurring by virtue of individuals selecting between one of two cities within the UGB," Leiken testified. A unified UGB "may indeed absorb future growth, but denies the inevitability that people may choose to live in one city rather than the other."

Rep. Terry Beyer joked with a legislator that Springfield wants to annex Eugene, and said, "We are certainly doing it one homeowner and one business at a time."

If Springfield is trying to compete with Eugene for businesses and residents, it has a long way to go. Since 1990, Eugene's population growth rate has outpaced Springfield's.

Eugene also remains the region's job supplier. According to Census data, almost two-thirds of workers in Springfield work outside of Springfield, most likely in Eugene.

From crime to income to education, Springfield, with its roots as a mill town, trails Eugene, a college town, in a host of common measures of desirability (see sidebar). While Eugene routinely makes national best places lists, Springfield is struggling to win a contest as the city most like the dysfunctional Springfield in *The Simpsons* animated TV series. Recently, *The Register-Guard* reported that residents of a huge new upscale development in Springfield told people they lived in "MountainGate" to avoid the stigma of the "S-town."

But while Springfield officials and their developer friends appear eager to egg Eugene into a race to the regulatory bottom, Eugene officials are trying to ignore it.

"Engaging in that level of destructive public discourse is not progressive; it doesn't get you anywhere," said Eugene Councilor Bettman. "We have a city to run."

"I certainly don't feel it from our side," Piercy said of the supposed competition with

Springfield. Asked if developers were trying to play the two cities off each other, Piercy responded, "Whereas I see cooperation as being good for the success of this region, others may see fueling the flames of supposed dispute as serving their purposes."

Leiken also argued that the bill was about municipal freedom. "Local elected officials are in the best position to determine the most appropriate course of action for their cities," he testified.

But that freedom came at Eugene's expense. "They got the entire state Legislature to impose their will on a neighboring jurisdiction," Bettman said. "It is very bad public policy."

HB 3337 may be bad policy, but it's big profits for developers. Studies have shown that cheap farm and forest land bought outside the UGB by land speculators can multiply in value by a factor as high as 10 when the UGB expands.

Though developers may cash in, citizens may be left holding the bill.

More sprawl may mean higher taxes or cuts in services in Springfield to pay for it. Eugene taxpayers will also have to foot the bill for the expensive land inventory required by the bill. City officials say the residential lands mandate will also effectively require the city to complete related commercial and industrial lands inventories at a total cost of about \$200,000.

Bettman said the cost could get even higher, "probably more than a million dollars," as the city tries to fix all of its interrelated planning documents that assume a joint UGB.

"It could be very complicated," Piercy said.

The Eugene City Council is waiting for a memo from the city attorney spelling out exactly what the bill may require of the city.

State law forbids "unfunded mandates" on municipalities, but the high vote margin in the Legislature effectively waived the prohibition.

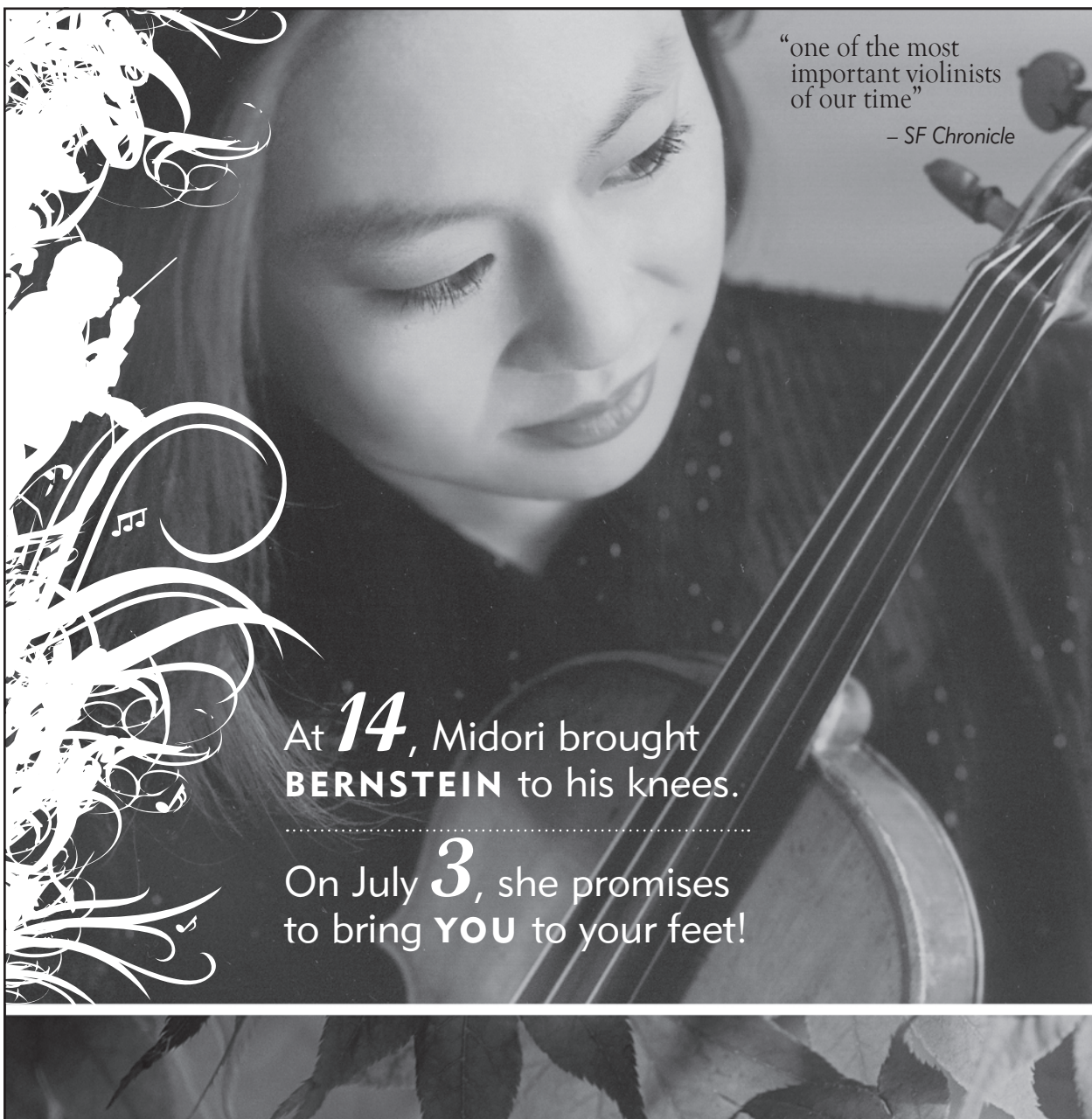
If Eugene's study does force a UGB expansion, Eugene taxpayers could also pay more for sprawl. A city committee last week proposed to help defer that cost with a tax on windfall developer profits from UGB expansions. Piercy said the proposal "would be worth looking at."

A less tangible cost of the measure may be regional cooperation. Piercy said in the past she's gone out of her way to help Springfield. For example, she said she lobbied for Springfield priorities in Washington, D.C., when their officials couldn't make the trip.

But Springfield's recent surprise actions in Salem against Eugene "does put us in an awkward position," Piercy said. "It's going to cause us to be very cautious and careful." **EW**

'They want unlimited land to build low-density expensive housing.'

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