

SLANT

- **Tax breaks for developers** have persisted for decades as a major economic development strategy, and for decades we at *EW* and progressives in local government have insisted they do more harm than good. *The New York Times* has investigated these billions of dollars in tax incentives nationwide and published a story Dec. 1 saying "The giveaways are adding up to a gigantic bill for taxpayers," and the results are tenuous at best. Meanwhile, taxes are diverted away from education, public safety, infrastructure and other government functions that are key to economic health, and yes, jobs.

Eugene's city government lured Hyundai/Hynix to build a highly polluting semiconductor plant in west Eugene in the 1990s. Millions in property tax breaks, subsidized wastewater facility expansion and other incentives were negotiated in secret. When Hynix shut down, more than 1,000 people joined Lane County's unemployment lines, and EWEB lost its biggest customer. Today, more millions in tax breaks and lease guarantees are going to private developers to revitalize a downtown that was sucked dry by poor city planning that encouraged big box stores on the outskirts and a sprawling Valley River Center. When will we pull the plug on unnecessary tax giveaways and focus on more enlightened planning? Find the *NYT* story at <http://wkly.ws/1e9>



- What could keep Duck football **head coach Chip Kelly** in Eugene? Nobody seems to be talking about the lavish 6,281 sq. ft. home he had built in 2010 in a quiet neighborhood in far north Eugene. But we're not sure he actually lives there; his big tax bills go to a different address. The two-story home looks like a mountain resort lodge — without the mountains. It has lots of stonework and wood, a big swimming pool, a massive garage and a market value pushing \$1 million, according to county records. Is there really a basketball court in there? We also hear rumors that Kelly built his mom a house next door for when she comes to visit. We're happy to see he's investing at least some of his \$3.5 million a year here, boosting the local economy. But if he goes, he can't take it with him. Any other bachelor need a mansion?

- Eugene **architect Mark Gillem** wrote about School District 4J facilities in an *EW* cover story July 19, arguing against consolidating neighborhood elementary schools and for renovating rather than replacing old schools. He made his case again at City Club of Eugene last Friday as part of a panel discussion, and his arguments make sense. Consolidation appears to be off the table, for now, but 4J is looking at bonds to build new schools despite serious budget problems and struggling taxpayers. As he says, it doesn't make sense to teach kids to recycle bits of paper while the adults throw away entire buildings. What does make sense economically is to renovate, upgrade and reinforce as many of Eugene's old neighborhood schools as possible, and meanwhile not let them deteriorate through neglect. Architecture is important in creating a positive and flexible learning environment, but great teachers and appropriate class sizes have much more impact.

- Our Most Valuable Player in Eugene has nothing to do with football. He's **Bill Hulings**, dancer, singer, actor, playing his way through *Singin' in the Rain* until Dec. 16 at the Shedd. Not easy to fill Gene Kelly's tap shoes, but Hulings with Ewynne Hollens and a sparkling cast do light up the stage in that great old downtown Baptist church in these wet December days. An Actors' Equity actor, Hulings has appeared in 10 Shedd shows, plus performances with the Eugene Ballet, Opera, Symphony, Concert Choir, the Lord Leebrick and the Willamette Rep. Lucky for us that the UO attracted his spouse and Hulings to Eugene more than a dozen years ago.

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