

decide to locate in a specific community,” Warren writes. “But when negotiating with a company like Broadcom, with 8,400 employees and revenues over \$4 billion last year, our team appears to have been in way over their heads. They gave away \$7 million to close a deal that was already done.”

Eugene city leaders’ business savvy explains why some are less than stoked to see their once-crummy city climb internet top-10 lists of quaint tech meccas. Other good reasons for trepidation might be explained in the deeper layers of Bruckner’s neat Shire metaphor.

Parochial, laid back and out-of-the-way; plentitudes of greenery and institutional gardening knowledge; decent brunch options and lots of beer: Many Eugeneans dig Eugene for the exact same reasons hobbits prefer the Shire.

Getting noticed, however, doesn’t go well for the fictional Shire or its native inhabitants. Those who’ve read Tolkien’s three-part epic know a band of thieves invade the pleasantly quiet hobbit village. Figuratively speaking, the same is true of tech cities.

Seattle morphed into something glassy and sleek. Hearing what friends pay for even shitty rentals in Portland nowadays sends chills up the spine.

For the down-and-outs who live on the edges of those bellwether burbs, tech was the opening through which crawled a mostly-straight-white plague of skyrocketing rent payments, clogged roadways and brutal competition for what’s left over.

Sayre likes to say “a rising tide raises all boats,” and leave it at that; the whole region benefits from a prosperous tech sector, he argues.

Sayre is correct to point out that every new tech job fans employment in other sectors.

UC Berkeley Economics professor Enrico Moretti says tech’s multiplier effect is greater than that of any other industry, calling it “almost magical.” In his 2012 book *The New Geography of Jobs*, he says that “for each new high-tech job in a city, five additional jobs are ultimately created outside of the high-tech sector in that city, both in skilled occupations (lawyers, teachers, nurses) and in unskilled ones (waiters, hairdressers, carpenters).”

Tenderloin neighborhood. Google, Apple, Facebook and many others have opened offices in the city.

In the last five years, SF has added roughly 60,000 people and home prices have almost doubled. A couple years ago *Buzzfeed* published a list of nine private islands that cost less than an apartment in the city.

Things have gotten so out of control that even tech workers find themselves looking for creative housing solutions. *The Washington Post* ran a story this year about a freelance illustrator who moved to SF and now pays \$400 a month to live in a crate in his friend’s living room.

Bruckner says tech shoulders an undue share of the blame for social problems like gentrification, which same-ifies everywhere by reaming the color and flavor out of cultural centers in order to make more elbow room for well-to-do Apatow-Americans.

“It’s a matter of optics,” he adds. “Tech is just more visible than other things going on at the same time.”

The president of web development company Concentric Sky recommends looking at other mid-sized tech cities like Boulder, Colorado, and Bend to get a clearer picture of where Eugene’s headed. But those cities, too, are experiencing excruciating tech-induced growing pains that make life particularly difficult for those already hanging from the bottom rung.

Poor and middle-class families are leaving Boulder because rents and home prices have gone through the roof — Boulder surpassed Aspen and Denver to become the most expensive housing market in Colorado; a Boulder County business journal reported this summer that the average home price in the area is more than \$1 million — and Bend is in the process of expanding its urban growth boundary to deal with a serious housing shortage.

The words Silicon Shire suggest Eugene and Springfield can have it both ways, but the record speaks for itself. No city has yet solved the perhaps impossible equation that balances progress and growth with fairness and humanity.

It’s not tech’s fault, though; business flows mindlessly to where opportunity presents itself.

Our last prophylactic is only as thick as the integrity and spirit of our city councilors and county commission, which is scary given their pro-business votes. A quick lay of the land suggests that the battle for Eugene’s soul is over but for the shouting.

When he coined the term Silicon Shire to help raise Eugene’s tech profile, Bruckner may have inadvertently doomed the city he loves. At the time this article goes to press, the relentless all-searching eye of Sauron circles our neck of the woods in ever-tightening patterns. ■

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Tech cities the world over have a lot of the same social diseases. And the signs are clear as day because we’ve seen their symptoms before, but never this close.

From hundreds of miles away, Oregonians looked on with superior Church Lady judgment as overnight billionaire tech brats took San Francisco by storm and continued south before nestling into the warm crotch of the SF Bay. We began to sweat a little after grunge city

Still, that’s cold comfort to those who’ve been priced-out of their homes and chased from their neighborhoods by indifferent market forces.

In 2011, then-San Francisco mayor Ed Lee started giving out tax breaks — calling them “community benefit agreements” — to tech companies such as Twitter, Yammer and Spotify in order address high unemployment numbers and lure businesses to the city’s struggling

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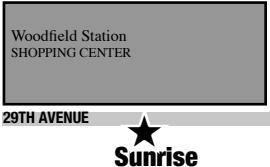
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