



that infused money into downtown improvements. “They laid the framework that has become our master plan,” Johnson says.

All the events we now take for granted arose from the DBA: The Fall Festival, Victorian Street Walk, Christmas Tree Lighting, Restaurant Week, Hats Off, Final Circuit. Add to that First Night, WinterFest, and our highly successful Convention business, and Saratoga continues to grow and feed itself from outside of the community without sole dependence on our local population.

He expects even more of that stimulation from the outside once AMD becomes a reality in Malta. The employees that move to the area, he believes, “will vastly be engineers who will settle outside of Saratoga Springs, because that’s where there is housing availability. It will be great for our tax base, because we will not have to provide city services, but, instead, will benefit from the sales tax revenue when they support our local businesses.”

Up until now, we never had a single organization addressing the promotion of the city. It was a combination of efforts of the Chamber, the DBA, and the Convention and Tourism Bureau. During the past year, however, Johnson was happy to give his support to the new marketing initiative—[downtownsaratogasprings.com](http://downtownsaratogasprings.com)—that was put forth by a number of merchants making up what is essentially a sub-committee of the DBA. The group unveiled a new logo and slogan:

Downtown Saratoga Springs: Visit it again and again. It is an effort to reinforce that Saratoga is more than the Track, more than SPAC, more than “The August Place To Be,” it’s a year-round destination. It is prepared to market every Saratoga-related event.

### UP, UP, UP

When it comes to our city’s physical growth – whether or not it is slowing or making an impact on our services, we can see from a December ’07 interview Johnson gave to the Post Star. He reiterated what had already been touted back in the ‘80s: “The city of Saratoga Springs is pretty much built out to capacity so we don’t see a lot of housing developments that are going to significantly impact our population and the demand on our services, whether that’s school, police or fire.” When asked for elucidation, he explained that the high-rise condos were already considered in that conclusion. He says the main buyers of such properties are second-home-owners, empty-nesters, young professionals – those who are either here seasonally, are moving down from larger homes, or those who haven’t begun their families yet. So, they are people who help the tax base without over-taxing our services.

As to whether the drop in our school population might be a bellwether of an aging population, he says it’s because there is not as much single-family home turnover and little single-family housing space. That’s part of the reason why our homes are retaining their value. The people who want to move into the city and raise their children here, instead of in our surrounding towns and villages, have to wait for inventory to open up. He sees it as a natural cycle.

Since [snopes.com](http://snopes.com) doesn’t deal in the urban legends of such small cities, our mayor was ready to debunk the old Saratoga myth that no building was allowed to be higher than Broadway: “Our zoning laws allow vertical construction up to 70-feet, so buildings can easily approach six stories without violation. We have a Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals – all volunteers – who are vigilant in enforcing zoning compliance.”

When the subject turns to the future of “affordable housing” here, Johnson explains that might be a misnomer. He cites standards for lending, financial and qualifying institutions that set a home price of \$272,000 as “affordable housing” in Saratoga Springs. (Sperling sets the Saratoga Springs median home price at over \$389,000.) Instead, he feels we need to be looking more toward rental than purchase for the kind of pricing that is necessary for workforce housing. He would encourage the separation of ownership and rental in such discussions, because, he says, “It’s easier to develop rental properties than sales properties.” The