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Statement of

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**Draft Economic Development Plan
Town of Montgomery**

January 15, 2009

Scenic Hudson has worked since the late 1980s to ensure that expansion at Stewart Airport benefits surrounding communities and avoid land consumptive sprawl. In the 1990s we worked with local community groups and residents to help establish Stewart State Forest, which has proved to be not only a valuable ecological asset, but also a recreational resource as well.

Today, Scenic Hudson is working with the stakeholders to create a regional smart growth plan that directs development to the appropriate areas, such as the northwest section of the airport property and identify and integrate open space areas such as Stewart State Forest into a larger open plan. Montgomery's economic development plan must have a consistent vision with the various other studies and plans currently being conducted.

We commented on the previous version of this economic plan and are glad to see our recommendation to explore the implementation of a form-based code intended to accommodate a mix of uses within the industrial zone. Scenic Hudson also agrees that industrial uses are appropriate in the I-84 corridor. Within this area, we support the plan's recommendation that the buildings should be clustered to protect as much open space as possible.

Scenic Hudson believes that this draft of the economic development plan is too narrowly focused toward industrial development and, as a result, misses an opportunity to direct other contributors of economic development, such as small-scale uses, to the hamlets. The draft plan includes a marketing strategy for the hamlets, but could make other recommendations to encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) in and around hamlets with mixed use buildings, increased density, limits on commercial square footage, reduced setbacks and a safe pedestrian environment.

In addition, we recommend that the economic development plan should also address how big box retailers can be designed and function in a manner that is consistent with community character.

Scenic Hudson remains concerned that the recommendation for road access through the Stewart Buffer Zone is “still on the table”. Scenic Hudson and many other local organizations worked to permanently protect this large contiguous area for open space and recreation, which contributes to economic development of the town. Bisecting this State Forest fragments the habitat, sets a bad precedent and diminishes the work of so many that see the forest as an asset to the community.

Scenic Hudson understands the need for road access to certain isolated industrial sites. However the plan indicates that the alignment of a new access road would likely impact wetlands. We believe that new road construction should not come at the expense of wetlands and other natural resources such as the Stewart State Forest. Thus we recommend that the economic development plan should add a recommendation that new roads and other transportation infrastructure shall be constructed without degrading natural resources, such as wetlands and the Stewart State Forest.

Scenic Hudson also recommends that the Open Space Plan be initiated immediately at the conclusion of the economic development plan. Any action taken while implementing the economic development plan should respect the ongoing initiative to create an open space plan and not preclude opportunities and protections that the Open Space Plan might afford.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the plan.