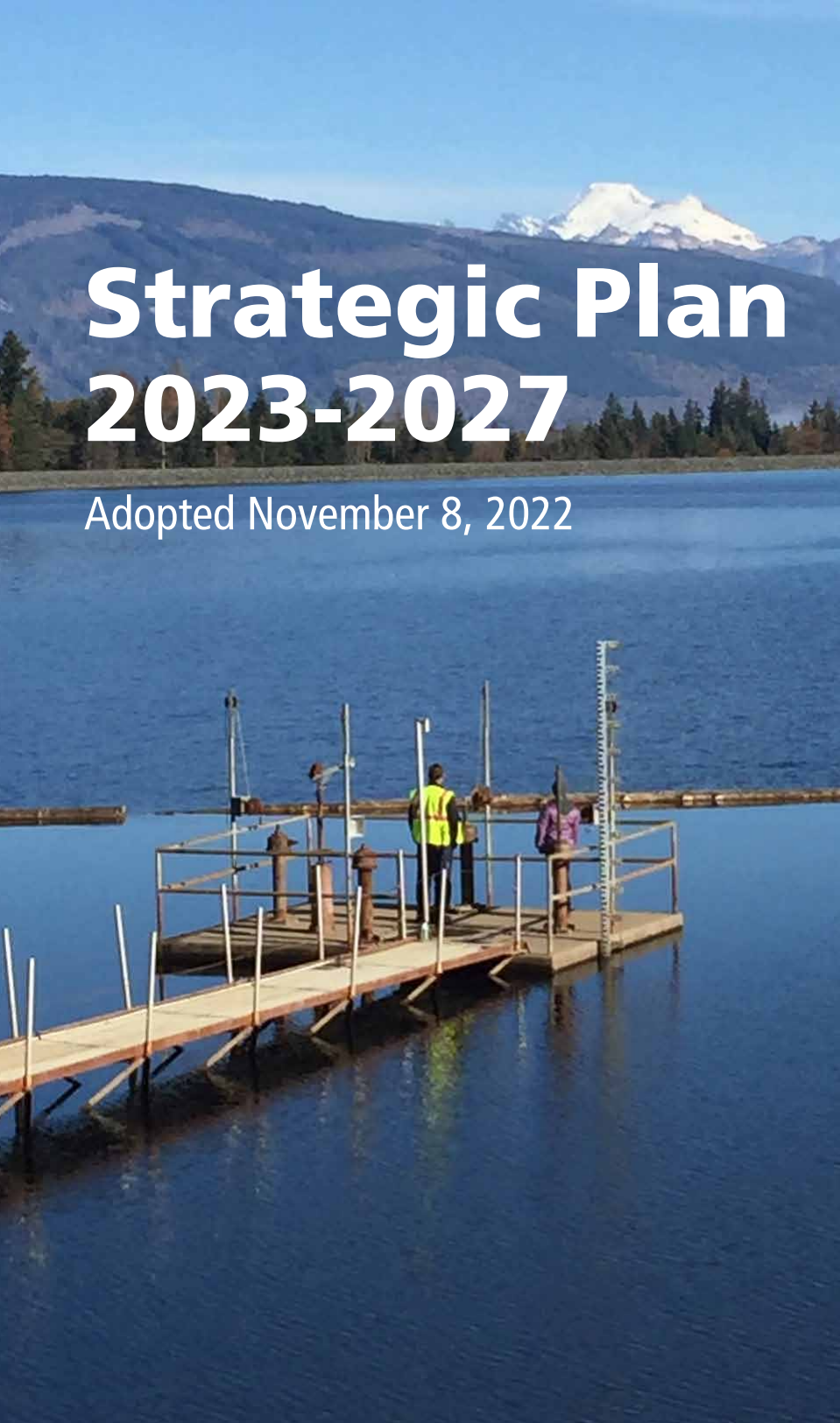


Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Adopted November 8, 2022



Skagit
PUD
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

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Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

Project Team

Brian Murphy · Project Manager

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Letter from Skagit PUD'S General Manager

Skagit Public Utility District operates the county's most extensive water system, and since 1936, has been committed to providing safe and reliable utility services to meet the needs of Skagit County residents. Along with our responsibility to serve our customers, we strive to be a responsible steward of the resources placed in our trust by deploying talented staff who are passionate about what they do, leveraging technology, practicing resource management, and encouraging conservation.

The challenges we face in Skagit County are similar to those facing water utilities throughout Washington state and the nation. Water system planning and investment, asset management, strong communications, customer engagement, organizational development, and resiliency are some of the nuanced issues we will address over this plan's time horizon.

Skagit PUD's updated Strategic Plan will guide the decisions that will define our organization and services for the coming five years by establishing our strategic objectives in three main areas:

I. Water Service

II. Communication with Community Members and Partners

III. Organizational Development

I want to recognize everyone who contributed to this planning process, and I am proud of the collaborative approach used. On behalf of the Board and Strategic Planning Committee, I extend our thanks to the many partners and staff participating in this effort. Our team is excited to take on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, just as we are eager to continue to improve as an organization, delivering the precious gift of water to the community we serve.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Sidhu". The signature is fluid and cursive.

George Sidhu, P.E.
General Manager



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Overarching Guidance

Vision, Mission, & Core Values

Our Vision is to be an outstanding regional leader and innovative utility provider.

Our Mission is to provide our customers with high-quality water services at an affordable price.

As we pursue our Vision and advance our Mission, we demonstrate and maintain balance among our **Core Values**:

- **Quality.** We seek to exceed customer expectations by providing exceptional service.
- **Environmental Stewardship.** We act to preserve our region's natural resources.
- **Financial Prudence.** We strive to keep our rates as low as possible while making wise capital investments and strategic business decisions.

Summary of Goals & Strategies

I. Water Service

- A. Make data-informed investments that ensure a sustainable and resilient water system.
- B. Be a steward of water resources.
- C. Connect critical assets with secure high-speed communications to support infrastructure management.

II. Communication with community members and Partners

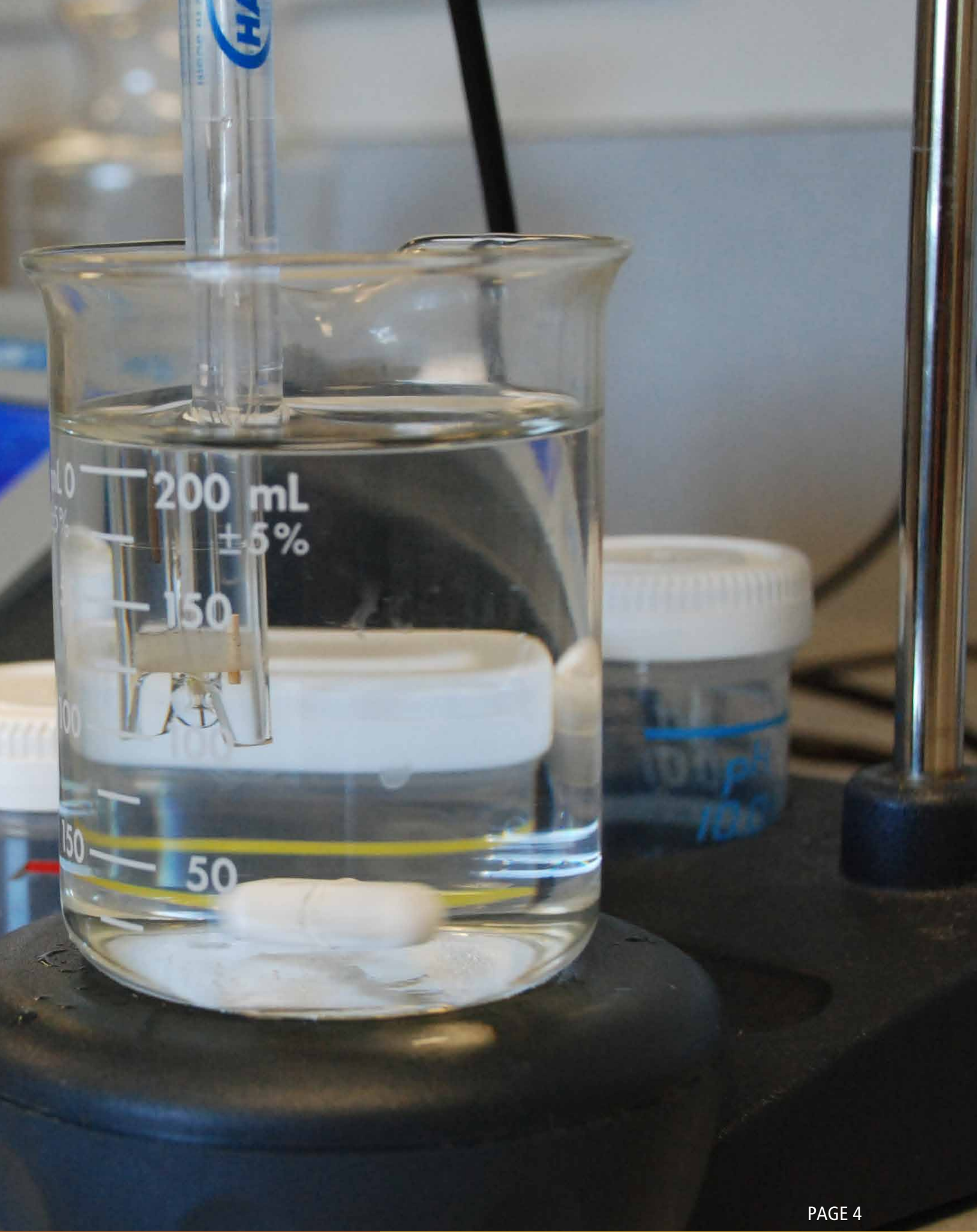
- A. Strengthen communications and engagement with customers.
- B. Seek opportunities to engage in water-related education.
- C. Ensure policy-setting and decision-making processes are transparent and easily accessible.
- D. Maintain commitment to providing high-quality customer service.
- E. Strengthen relationships with partners and stakeholders.

III. Organizational Development

- A. Increase alignment across the organization through a "One Skagit" approach.
- B. Attract, retain, and develop a high-quality workforce.
- C. Grow regional- and industry-leading system resiliency and emergency preparedness.

I. WATER SERVICE

Water is Skagit PUD's primary service focus. To provide the safest, most sustainable, and most dependable water service, Skagit PUD will make data-informed investments, be a wise steward of water resources, and connect its critical infrastructure with a high-speed communications network.



Desired Outcomes

- Safe, sustainable, and dependable service.
- Accommodation for future growth.
- Transparent and equitable rate structure.
- Efficient use of financial and water resources.

A. Make data-informed investments that ensure a sustainable and resilient water system.

- Develop a 10-year Water System Plan to inform the Capital Improvement Plan and rate studies.
- Create a water system metric for measuring service dependability and durability.
- Improve long-range demand forecast methods and models.
- Analyze water storage infrastructure and identify investment needs.
- Update the water system's hydraulic model.

B. Be a steward of water resources.

- Execute a robust leak detection and repair program.
- Offer water efficiency strategies to commercial customers.
- Invest in technologies that improve the efficiency of infrastructure.

C. Connect critical assets with secure high-speed communications to support infrastructure management.

- Maintain commitment to SkagitNet.
- Create a shared vision with the Port of Skagit for SkagitNet's strategic direction.





A group of people, including children and adults, are gathered around a water measurement station on a riverbank. The station features a wooden platform with a vertical scale and a horizontal beam. One person is pointing towards the scale. The background shows a wide river reflecting the sky, with a dense forest of evergreen trees and mountains in the distance. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

II. COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS & PARTNERS

Strong communication is essential to building a trusting relationship with Skagit PUD's partners and members of the community. Skagit PUD aims to bolster communications and engagement with customers, actively engage in water-related education, transparently share policy and decision processes, provide excellent customer service, and strengthen relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Desired Outcomes

- Community and partner understanding of the PUD's role and the value it provides.
- Strong community and partner support.

A. Strengthen communications and engagement with customers.

- Maximize the potential of newer technology, website, and social media tools.
- Actively participate in special events and activities that bring community members into direct contact with the PUD's services and programs.
- Establish strategic sponsorships that gain visibility and respect among community members and align with the PUD's Mission.

B. Seek opportunities to engage in water-related education.

- Continue outreach to schools with tours of the Water Treatment Plant and source water intakes.
- Partner in community engagement activities involving environmental and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) resources in the Skagit Watershed.
- Explore opportunities to have a presence and offer internships at regional higher educational institutions, expanding partnerships over time.

C. Ensure policy-setting and decision-making processes are transparent and easily accessible.

- Continue to make materials and meetings easily accessible online.
- Use social media, short-format videos, and visualization techniques to communicate complex information.

D. Maintain commitment to providing high-quality customer service.

- Conduct regular evaluations of customer satisfaction and adapt to changing needs.
- Explore ways to provide helpful information to new customers.

E. Strengthen relationships with partners and stakeholders.

- Enhance efforts in Tribal outreach and engagement around shared interests.
- Strengthen relationships with Skagit County and municipal partners, including an effort to clarify the limits of what the PUD can do regarding water availability for rural landowners.
- Develop relationships with state and federal partners/leaders to acquire funding and advocate for legislation that is in the PUD's interests.
- Further relationships with educational partners and the agriculture industry.



III. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Skagit PUD's overall success and ability to serve its customers is highly dependent its team and internal systems. The District will align around a "One Skagit" approach, attract and retain a high quality workforce, and enhance the resiliency of its systems and infrastructure.



Desired Outcomes

- Employee pride founded in a positive PUD workplace culture.
- Status as a regional and industry employer of choice.
- Highly efficient, dependable, and resilient internal systems.

A. Increase alignment across the organization through a “One Skagit” approach.

- Make decisions and operational changes with the overall organizational benefit in mind and ensure the impact on all departments is considered.
- Strengthen the consistency and transparency of internal and external communications.
- Strengthen internal communication:
 - Increase information flow about ongoing projects and tasks.
 - Share information through regular communications from the general manager.
- Explore platforms that staff can use for internal information sharing.

- Effectively manage the use of and changes to technology by:
 - Communicating the benefits to staff for greater support and buy-in.
 - Prioritizing the use of existing technologies before introducing new ones.
- Establish a culture of change and cultivate staff capacity to adapt.
- Use investment in the new administration building to improve internal communication and collaboration and to facilitate employees working remotely.

B. Attract, retain, and develop a high-quality workforce.

- Conduct department- and PUD-level analyses of anticipated roles and competencies to inform shifting or adding capacity to advance critical and strategic activities.
- Focus PUD-wide efforts on training, compensation reviews, and recruitment strategies to ensure we attract and retain the best possible team.
- Use data analytics to inform departmental hiring, professional development, and succession management.



C. Grow regional- and industry-leading system resiliency and emergency preparedness.

- Improve cyber-security using strategies considering internal users, external customers, and vendors.
- Prioritize strengthening facility and infrastructure resilience to enhance damage prevention, post-emergency operations, and recovery.
- Use investments in new facilities to upgrade resilience measures and the ability to maintain infrastructure.
- Conduct regular, ongoing resilience assessments.
- Be proactive in strengthening emergency response plans through strategic partnerships.
- Improve employee response to rapidly developing emergencies.
- Look for outside funding sources to support investments in resilience.



Implementation Framework

The general manager will provide the Board with an overall summary of progress made implementing the Strategic Plan twice per year. Department managers will report progress on their departmental goals through quarterly updates to the Board and there will be ongoing progress reports to staff and the public as needed.

Our annual process will include the following steps:

February. The general manager provides a mid-year update.

August. The general manager provides an end-of-year update that reviews and reports on the prior year's progress.

September. Each department develops draft goals and a proposed work plan to advance the Strategic Plan in the coming year. Departmental goals and work plans, as well as performance evaluations conducted in July, will inform employee goals also developed in September.

October/November. The annual budget development process and final budget adopted in November will be used to inform final departmental goals and work plans for the following year.





Want to learn more?

Skagit PUD welcomes the opportunity to share our plan with you.

Visit our website at SkagitPUD.org or call (360) 424-7104.