

WHY COUNTIES MATTER!









NACo — BRINGING UNITY TO THE DIVERSITY OF AMERICA’S COUNTIES

The nation’s 3,069 county governments provide the essential services to create healthy, vibrant, and safe communities. Counties support and maintain public infrastructure, transportation and economic development assets; keep residents healthy; ensure public safety to protect our citizens; maintain public information and coordinate elections; and implement a broad array of federal, state and local programs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.







People depend on counties to provide services that build, maintain, and protect their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Counties are also an instrumental player in America’s intergovernmental system of federal, state, and local governments.

NACo members support state and federal policies and programs that provide the tools, resources, and solutions needed to spur job growth, improve the quality of life for all Americans, and increase the economic competitiveness of America’s counties and communities. To accomplish this, NACo adheres to a set of core principles through its core functions.

NACo’s CORE PRINCIPLES

-  Empower county leaders with new skills, resources and ideas
-  Assist counties with first-class, cost-effective services
-  Provide timely, informative and value-added data, knowledge and programs
-  Promote sound public policies that advance the interests of counties
-  Exercise sound stewardship and management of NACo's financial, intellectual, and human resources
-  Enhance the public's understanding of county government

NACo’s CORE FUNCTIONS

-  Legislative, regulatory, and judicial representation in the nation’s capital
-  Research
-  Education & technical assistance
-  Cost saving programs
-  Solutions for critical problems
-  Innovative programs that meet future county needs

THE DIVERSITY OF COUNTIES

No two counties are exactly the same. Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments were established in Virginia. Ever since, county governments continue to evolve and adapt to changing environments and populations, with Petersburg Borough, Alaska incorporating as recently as 2013. Counties are diverse in the way they are structured and how they deliver services to their communities. States decide counties' roles and responsibilities. States can allow counties to govern themselves by granting them home rule authority, which gives counties varying degrees of power to decide their own structural, functional and fiscal organization. Counties' demographic, geographic and economic characteristics dictate how they deliver services to their communities. The organization and structure of counties are tailored to fit their communities' needs and characteristics.



19,300

elected county board
members and elected
executives



\$482.1

BILLION
total expenditures
annually



3.3

MILLION
county employees



Service to

296

MILLION
county residents

- * Los Angeles County invests \$18.9 billion annually — or more than 23 of our state governments each year.
- * If Cook County, Ill., were a state, it would be bigger than 30 states in population.
- * Almost two-thirds of counties have less than 50,000 residents.
- * One in four acres of county land is federally owned. In the West, one in two acres of county land is federally owned.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation and infrastructure are critical components that support the economies of our counties and improve the standard of living for all Americans. By providing efficient transportation and transit options such as buses, trains, light rail and subway systems, counties are the driving force connecting communities. Counties invest in building the schools where students learn, the hospitals that treat and provide care to the community, and the jails that house and rehabilitate wrongdoers. From cleaning up storm debris and restoring safety to the community to cleaning the water we drink by maintaining reservoirs, purification plants and pumping stations, counties provide the basic services that are often taken for granted.

Services include:

- ★ Transit
- ★ Roads
- ★ Bridges
- ★ Airports
- ★ Construction of public facilities
- ★ Water and sewage systems
- ★ Solid waste management
- ★ Utilities like gas and electricity

COUNTIES INVEST

**\$52.2
BILLION**

in construction
of public facilities
annually

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED
IN THE OPERATION OF
30% of public
airports

COUNTIES OWN
228,238
bridges

COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN
45% of America's
roads

COUNTIES INVEST
\$106.3 BILLION
IN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE
AND MAINTAINING AND OPERATING
PUBLIC WORKS ANNUALLY

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED

in **27%**
of public
transit
systems

COUNTIES INVEST

\$18.6 BILLION
in sewage and solid
waste management
annually

HEALTHCARE

Counties create support systems to keep you healthy from the time you are born until the time you grow old. Many counties operate hospitals and health facilities that provide clinical services, cancer and cardiac care, and emergency and trauma care. County nursing homes offer restorative care and rehabilitation, and promote quality of life and wellness to the elderly. From preventative measures like administering flu shots to educating the public with health information, county health departments ensure the everyday health of their residents.

Services include:

- ★ Hospitals
- ★ Nursing homes
- ★ Behavioral and mental healthcare
- ★ Immunizations
- ★ Testing services
- ★ Indigent healthcare
- ★ Health code inspections
- ★ Health clinics
- ★ Public health

COUNTIES SUPPORT

960 HOSPITALS WITH A TOTAL
OF **96,228** BEDS
THAT SERVE MORE THAN
14 MILLION PATIENT DAYS

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED

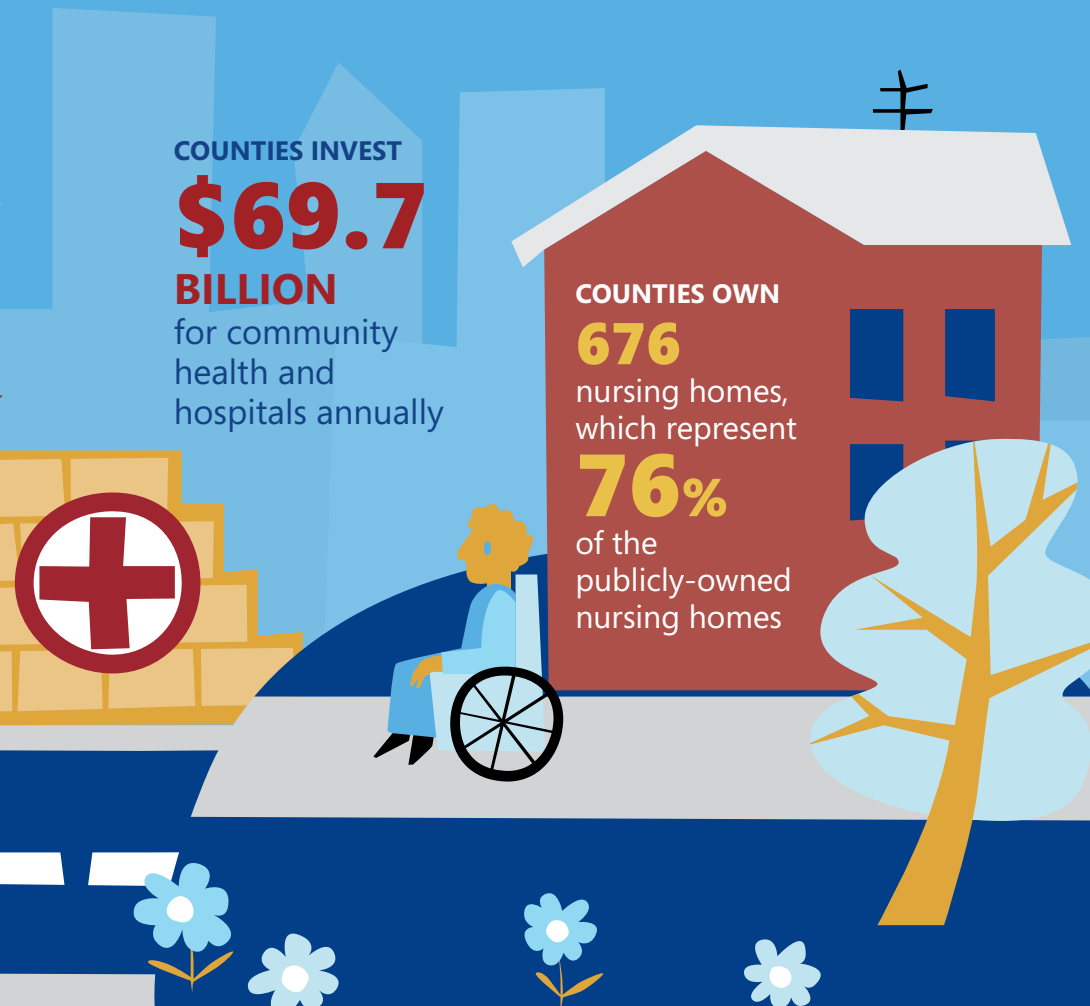
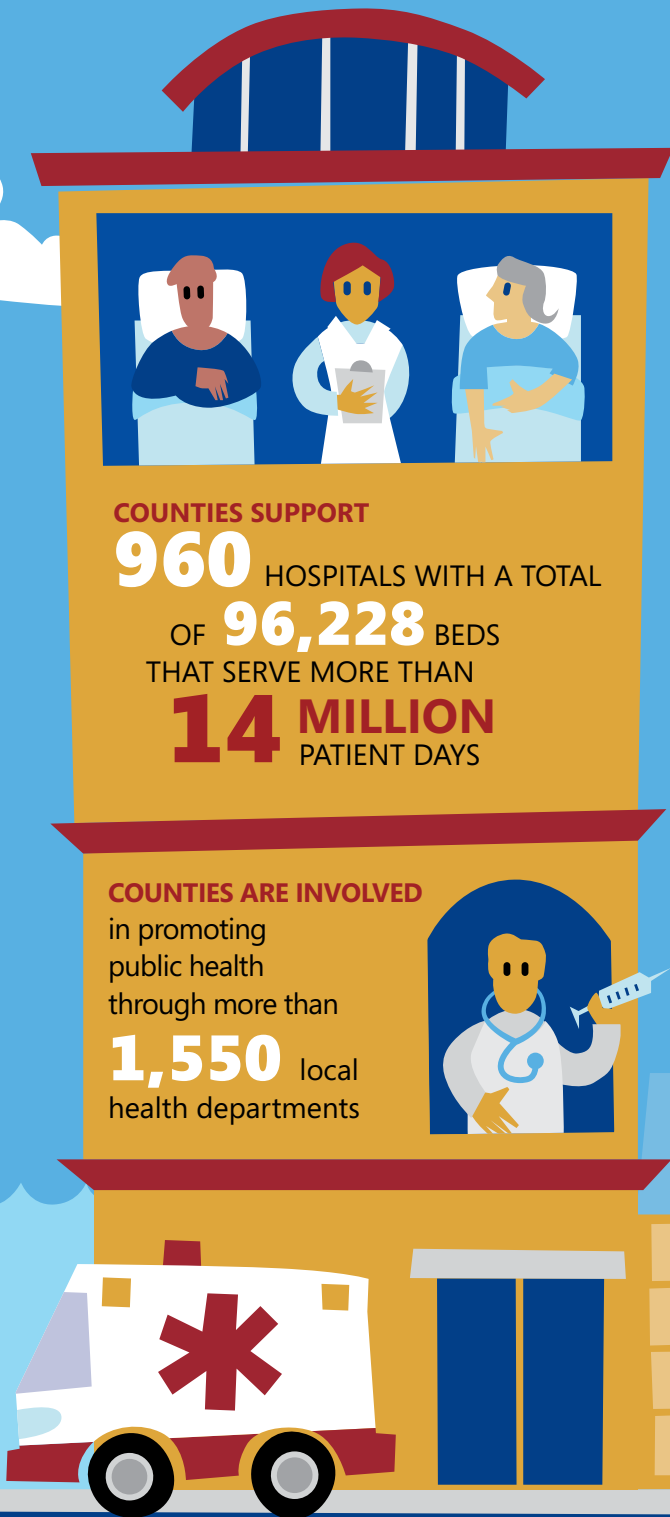
in promoting
public health
through more than
1,550 local
health departments

COUNTIES INVEST

\$69.7
BILLION
for community
health and
hospitals annually

COUNTIES OWN

676
nursing homes,
which represent
76%
of the
publicly-owned
nursing homes



COUNTIES INVEST

\$70.2 BILLION

TOTAL in justice and public safety services annually of which ...

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Counties keep communities safe, by providing law enforcement and promoting crime prevention. From patrolling and policing the streets, to operating and maintaining county detention facilities, to serving as the arm of the county courts, county sheriffs and police departments are the linchpin of the criminal justice system. The other key players in the system are judges, district attorneys, public defenders, court clerks, jail directors and coroners.

Criminal justice components include:

- ★ Sheriff departments
- ★ County police departments
- ★ County court systems
- ★ Jails and corrections facilities
- ★ Juvenile detention and justice services
- ★ District attorneys
- ★ Public defenders
- ★ Coroners

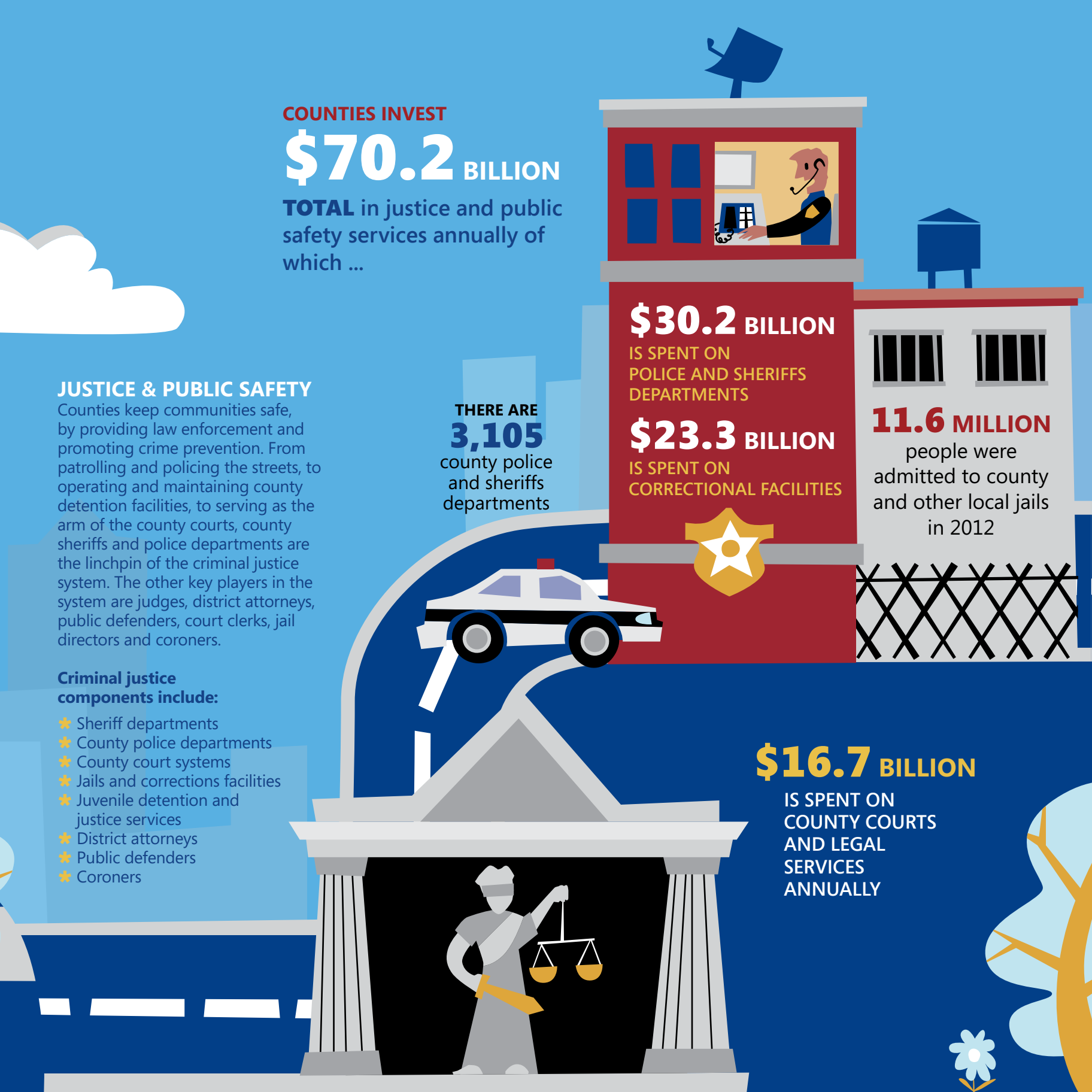
THERE ARE
3,105
county police
and sheriffs
departments

\$30.2 BILLION
IS SPENT ON
POLICE AND SHERIFFS
DEPARTMENTS

\$23.3 BILLION
IS SPENT ON
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

11.6 MILLION
people were
admitted to county
and other local jails
in 2012

\$16.7 BILLION
IS SPENT ON
COUNTY COURTS
AND LEGAL
SERVICES
ANNUALLY



COUNTY MANAGEMENT

Counties provide vital services to all Americans, from issuing birth certificates and marriage licenses to operating 911 call centers. Counties often build and maintain the parks, swimming pools, community centers and cultural centers where you spend time with family and friends. Counties are responsible for running elections, from Presidential to local. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure safe, healthy and resilient communities for their residents.

Services include:

- ★ Record keeping
- ★ Tax assessments
- ★ 911 call centers
- ★ Elections and polling places
- ★ Recreation and parks
- ★ Arts programs
- ★ Housing, community and economic development



Every
TWO years ...

COUNTIES FUND AND
OVERSEE MORE THAN

114,000
polling places



THERE ARE MORE THAN

19,300

elected county board
members and elected
executives

711

are elected county
executives

AND COORDINATE
MORE THAN

692,000
poll workers

ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST

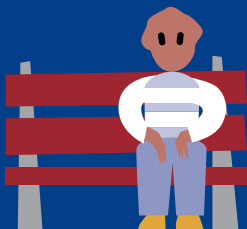
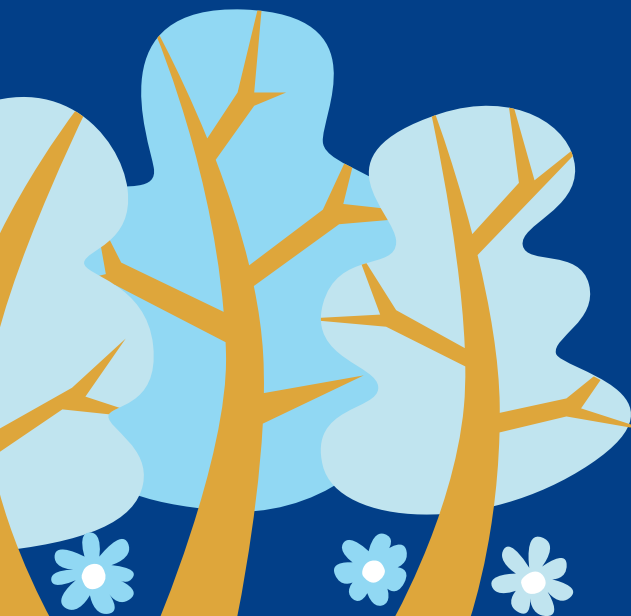
\$25.6 BILLION

into economic
development

COUNTIES INVEST

\$9.3 BILLION

to build and maintain parks
and recreational facilities
annually



NACo's VISION: **HEALTHY, VIBRANT, SAFE, AND RESILIENT COUNTIES** **ACROSS THE UNITED STATES**



NACo's MISSION

The National Association of Counties (NACo) assists America's counties in pursuing excellence in public service by advancing sound public policy, promoting peer learning and accountability, fostering intergovernmental and public-private collaboration, and providing value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money.

Founded in 1935, NACo provides the elected and appointed leaders from the nation's 3,069 counties with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to provide fiscally responsible, quality-driven, and results-oriented policies and services for healthy, vibrant, safe, and fiscally resilient counties.

SOURCES

The annual investments are 2007 figures. NACo Analysis of Census of Governments Data, 2007; NACo Data on county elected officials, June 2013; NACo Analysis of U.S. DOT Data, 2008; U.S. DOT, 2011; NACo Analysis of U.S. FTA Data, 2011; NACo Analysis of U.S. FAA Data, 2010; NACo Analysis of American Hospital Directory Data, 2011; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Data, 2013; National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2013; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013; NACo Analysis of County Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, 2008-2010; NACo Analysis of U.S. Election Commission Data, 2010; U.S. Census, Population Division, Vintage 2012.



25 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW | SUITE 500 | WASHINGTON, DC 20001 | P: 202.393.6226 F: 202.393.2630 | WWW.NACO.ORG



[FB.COM/NACODC](https://www.facebook.com/NACODC) | [TWITTER.COM/NACOTWEETS](https://twitter.com/NACOTWEETS) | [YOUTUBE.COM/NACOVideos](https://www.youtube.com/NACOVideos) | [LINKEDIN.COM/NACODC](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NACODC)