



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Sanders community celebrate grand opening expanding economic opportunity



Council Delegate Arbin Mitchell reflected on the continued investment in economic growth for the Nahata Dziil community.

SANDERS, Ariz. — On Friday, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council, community members, and representatives of the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise (NNHE) celebrated the grand opening of the Sanders Fuel Center and Sonic Drive-In. The event marked the completion of a project that transformed a vision established just over a year ago into a fully operational, Navajo-owned business employing more than 30 local residents.

The development reflects the Navajo Nation's continued investment in economic growth by creating jobs, expanding commercial services, and keeping revenue within the Nation. Leaders noted the project was financed through enterprise funding and commercial lending, demonstrating the ability of Navajo-owned enterprises to undertake major commercial investments. The Resources and Development Committee previously approved a limited waiver of sovereign immunity necessary to execute the Sonic franchise agreement, allowing the project to move forward while preserving the Navajo Nation's broader sovereign immunity.

Resources and Development Committee Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson, sponsor of the legislation, said the grand opening reflects the lasting impact of legislative action that supports Navajo-owned enterprises.

“This project demonstrates how sound legislation can create lasting economic opportunities for our communities. By supporting the partnership that made this facility possible, we have invested in local jobs, strengthened tribal commerce, and laid the foundation for additional business growth on the Navajo Nation,” said Vice Chair Johnson.

Council Delegate Arbin Mitchell, who represents the Sanders area, reflected on the years of planning that led to the project and the community’s vision for continued growth.

“Today’s grand opening is the result of years of planning and collaboration focused on bringing quality jobs and new opportunities to Sanders. This facility is only the beginning as we continue working to redevelop additional properties and create an economic future that benefits our families for generations to come.”

Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Chair Otto Tso emphasized the role of Navajo Nation enterprises in creating employment and reinvesting revenues into local communities.

“Navajo-owned enterprises exist to create jobs and build economic independence for our people. The Sanders Fuel Center demonstrates that when we invest in ourselves, we create opportunities that strengthen local communities, support Navajo families, and generate resources that can be reinvested throughout the Navajo Nation.”

Speakers also recognized the collaborative efforts of the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise Board, project partners, construction teams, chapter leadership, and local employees whose work brought the project to completion. The facility joins other recent investments in the Sanders area aimed at expanding housing, commercial services, and infrastructure to support long-term community growth.

The Sanders Fuel Center and Sonic are expected to serve both local residents and thousands of travelers along Interstate 40, strengthening the regional economy while highlighting the Navajo Nation’s continued commitment to sustainable economic development through tribally owned enterprises.

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