DENNEHOTSO—For one secluded Navajo community, the days of squeezing into cramped office conditions are finally over.

In the quiet Navajo community of Dennehotso, Ariz., a new multipurpose building rose from the desert floor in June 2011, to serve the ever-growing needs of the chapter.

Navajo Nation Division of Community Development Director Arbin Mitchell called the new building a major improvement in the quality of life for the chapter.

“Dennehotso has a central location for the community to gather and meet,” Mitchell said. “They also now have a sanitary and safe place for their senior citizens to live.”

George Hubbard, project manager with Design and Engineering Services (DES), said the total appropriation amount for the project was $1,975,998.87, which was completed in Sept. 2010. The architectural services for the project cost $224,640. The construction cost amounted to $1,751,358.87 for the building.

“The building went up wonderfully,” he said. “It was a fun project. The community was involved from day one.”

The pre-design phase of the project began in March 2006 and was completed in Sept. 2007. In Jan. 2008, the design phase began after the professional services contract was awarded to D. Sloan Architects of Albuquerque.

Hubbard said approximately 75 to 100 people were employed from the design phase through construction. The project was completed without a hitch, except for the six-month delay from the need to upgrade the power line from single-phase power to three-phase power.

“Because the facility required a higher amperage, that delayed the project by six-months or so,” he said.


The multipurpose facility has 8,000 square feet providing tribal office space, meeting facilities, senior citizens services and the community post office.
Carmelia Blackwater, community services coordinator for Dennehotso Chapter, said the improvement over their previous facility is tremendous.

“We went from 50 square feet of office space to 7,000 square feet. The community members really enjoy it,” Blackwater said.

She said the project originally began development as a senior citizens center in 1998. However, funding shortages and legal language in the proposal resulted in a project change to multi-purpose building, which increased leveraging opportunities.

Blackwater said the efforts of their council delegate, Katherine Benally, was instrumental in the completion of the project.

“One of the things that fueled this project was Katherine Benally and our chapter officials. The project originally started as a stand-alone senior citizens center. We learned it was better to leverage as a multipurpose building,” Blackwater said.


“This is just the first phase. For phase two, between the new building and the chapter house, we will have an atrium with an amphitheater and a place to cookout and picnic,” Blackwater said.

She said the chapter plans on developing the old chapter house into a youth center and fitness center. The new building is a boon to the community, especially since residents usually have to travel to Kayenta or Mexican Water for the nearest store or recreation.

“We are trying to accommodate the young and old,” Blackwater said.

The Dennehotso chapter is currently 92 percent energized. With the completion of their power line project under development, the entire community will have electricity.

Currently, 52 miles of waterline is under construction south of Dennehotso, near Baby Rocks.

“We’re going to service 124 homes. The project cost $5.2 million and is funded through Indian Health Services. The completion date is December 2013,” Blackwater said.

With all of these projects underway, she said the true goal for the chapter is to become Local Governance Act certified. Dennehotso is Community Land Use Planning certified and is currently planning for farming with their farm board.

“We identify ourselves as a team,” Blackwater said.

Information: www.nndcd.org