

Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois: Commercial Contractors

Companies’ relationship grows with latest joint venture between Plocher, The Mantle Group

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH
The latest venture in a growing relationship between Plocher Construction Co. and The Mantle Group has the pair partnering on a 55,000-square-foot, two-story structural steel office building at Scott Air Force Base.

The building will be a temporary structure used to relocate around 450 personnel now located in the Air Mobility Command Center, known as Building 1600, which will be going through a major renovation. -

The project contracted through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District is valued at \$14.7 million and is being constructed under Mantle-Plocher JV, a joint venture. It is the latest effort in a handful of projects the two companies have produced together.

Jenna Kampwerth, of Plocher, says the structure is comprised of 160 floor and ceiling frames that are each 12-feet wide by 60-feet long. Fabrication of the steel is being done by another company in Columbia, Mo., then the steel frames are transported to Plocher’s warehouse in Highland where they are infilled with wood joists and plywood sheathing. From there, the frames are then transported to SAFB. It’s an unusual arrangement brought on by space restrictions at the installation sight, just west of Building 1600.

“One of the biggest challenges along with a tight schedule, is the space constraints out at the air force base which is why we decided to build here at our warehouse,” Kampwerth said. The building is going up on what had been a parking lot.



Rendering of Scott Air Force Base office building

“We bid the project back in February 2020 and received the award in May. We started construction on May 29” said Margot Mantle, project manager and owner of The Mantle Group. This work represents the largest project ever undertaken by her Worden-based company.

Some 150 workers are expected to be used during construction, including subcontractors.

“The Corps and government designed the building 100 percent,” Mantle said. “They told us during bidding what size the steel frames were, what wood joists were going in. They detailed it down to the nth degree. The modular companies weren’t able to build a unit like they are accustomed to. That’s when we decided that it was going to be the most economical if we had a steel fabricator fabricate the frames, take those frames to Plocher’s yard and infill them with the wood joists and plywood and then bring them out to the jobsite to erect them like a conventional building.”

Kampwerth said the U.S. Army Corps’ of Engineers Quality Control Department has been very involved, making site visits to ensure that the quality of the frames was

to their standards.
The completion date of the project is scheduled as March 25, 2021, making it 300 calendar days for the work, and they are on schedule.

The amount of prefabrication and the method of construction is new for Mantle. “The finishes will be pretty standard construction but the process of erecting the building itself is new, at least on our side,” Mantle said.

Mantle got her start in residential and vertical concrete work in 2010. In 2018, she got her U.S. Small Business Administration Woman-Owned Small Business certification and teamed up with Plocher on a “mentor-protégé” partnership that allowed them to seek out larger contracts.

Mantle-Plocher JV allowed the company to pursue projects set aside by the government for awarding to small-businesses.

Since the beginning, the two have paired on several more projects.

In 2018, the company bid a project at Scott AFB to get into its small-business Multiple Award Contract Program. The venture was successful. Since then, the


venture has done four small projects.
In 2020, the company also was authorized to do small-business paving work at the Air Force base through the Multiple Award Paving Contract program, although it has not yet done work under that program.

Starting in 2018, the company partnered with Plocher on a 2019 project to replace the wastewater treatment plant at the Boulder camping ground at Carlyle Lake. Mantle held the contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.







“Plocher has been a big help to The Mantle Group. Being able to do such big commercial projects wouldn’t have been possible without the help and guidance of the Plocher Company,” Mantle said.

Kampwerth said another challenge that arose and had to be dealt with was procuring lumber for the project – a growing national problem.

“When the mills shut down due to the novel coronavirus it caused a ripple effect and contractors across the U.S. have found it difficult to procure lumber material. As you can imagine with the way supply and demand works, the prices for lumber have skyrocketed,” she said.







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