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Growth at Scott AFB drives ‘hundreds of millions’ in new construction



Scott Air Force Base has an annual economic impact of \$2 billion on the St. Louis metropolitan area, says Gen. Duncan McNabb, commander of the U.S. Transportation Command

Scott Air Force Base remains a hub of construction activity, even after the completion of more than \$233 million in projects over the past year. And just outside the base, a striking display of the planes that have called Scott home is taking shape after several years in the “hope and discuss” stage.

The largest construction project currently under way at the base is the U.S. Transportation Command facility, which has grown in the past year from an \$84 million project to a \$97 million job. The price tag has increased because the scope of the project has grown, too. It will now include a joint intelligence operations center, which was categorized as an optional addition when the project began.

The Transportation Command facility will be a three-story, 180,000-square-foot structure, and the intelligence operations center will be a two-story, 29,000-square-foot facility. The general contractor is River City Construction of Benton, Ill.

Cheryl Bievenue, chief of engineering for the 375th Civil Engineer Squadron, said the combined project is more than halfway completed. The project is on track to be fully

operational by September 2010, she said, and it will result in the eventual relocation of about 1,100 personnel to Scott from Fort Belvoir, Va.

The base has roughly 70 other projects under construction right now, including:

- A 23,000-square-foot Child Development Center, which will provide care for up to 305 children from ages 6 weeks to 5 years. The \$8 million project is scheduled to be finished in March 2010.
- A one-story, 35,000-square-foot Security Forces Complex that will house military police offices. This \$17 million project is roughly a quarter of the way finished, and it also is set to be wrapped up next March.

The Scott Alliance Inc., a joint venture based in Chicago, is contractor on both of those projects.

K&S Associates of St. Louis is working with Fairview Heights-based **Woolpert Inc.** on a Squadron Operations Facility for mission support and staffing for C-9 and C-40 aircraft. The two-story, 52,000-square-foot project totals \$15 million and is scheduled to be completed at year end.

A contract is expected to be awarded this month for work on a new Explosive Ordnance Disposal facility, Bievenue said. The 5,300-square-foot facility is expected to cost between \$500,000 to \$1 million.

All this activity provides a huge economic impact on the area, said Patrick McKeehan, executive director of the **Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois**, an economic development organization focused on Madison and St. Clair counties.

“There’s hundreds of millions of dollars in construction work here, with new positions relocating to our area,” he said.

Finished projects

Work was completed in December on construction of 608 new housing units and renovation of 932 existing housing units, a \$200 million project. El Paso, Texas-based **Hunt Development Group** did the work.

Robin Vaughn, Hunt executive vice president, said the new units are unattached and duplex structures with three or four bedrooms. They range in size from 1,600 to 2,500 square feet.

Vaughn said the existing units underwent a “whole house renovation,” including new floor coverings, wall coverings, appliances and countertops. Many of the existing two-bedroom homes were converted to four-bedroom units. A key feature of the renovation is the additional interior storage space, something military families especially appreciate because of frequent moves.

As part of the project, Hunt built two new community centers featuring indoor swimming pools, and the neighborhoods also have new parks, playgrounds and trails.

Other big projects that have been wrapped up in the past year include:

- A \$13 million, two-story, 33,000-square-foot Mobility Air Forces Logistics Support Center, on which K&S Associates was general contractor.
- A three-story coed dormitory housing 120 Air Force enlisted personnel. St. Louis-based **Korte Co.** was general contractor on the \$20 million project.

Outside the walls

Apart from the construction on the base, work is under way on the Scott Field Heritage Air Park just north of the installation's Shiloh Gate, near Interstate 64 and Route 158.

Groundbreaking for the park took place in June 2008, and the first two aircraft, a C-141 Starlifter and a C-9 Nightingale, were moved into place in September. A KC-135 Stratotanker and a C-140 Jetstar were added in March this year, and a C-130E Hercules joined the display in May. The final aircraft for the park will be a C-21A, a military version of the LearJet 35 Business Jet.

Holland Construction Services of Columbia, Ill., is construction manager for the project.

Larry Strube, former vice commander of the 375th Airlift Wing at Scott and chairman of the board of directors of the Scott Field Heritage Air Park Committee, said the idea for the air park was first discussed in the early 1990s, but budget problems delayed progress. By the late 1990s, civic and military leaders revived the project through the Belle-Scott Committee. The committee works to promote issues of mutual interest to the base and to the city of Belleville.

Phase one of the park includes locating the airplanes and building sidewalks. Cost of that portion will be about \$750,000, of which more than \$300,000 has been raised, Strube said.

Phase two will be construction of a visitor center. No timeline or price tag has been set for that. "Our grand vision is to add the air park to the overall tourism agenda of things people want to see when they come to this area," Strube said.