



Case study



Storied Amusement Park Elych Gardens Delights Guests and Keeps Them Safe with the Evolv Express®

Snapshot of Organization

CUSTOMER: Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park

LOCATION: Denver, Colorado

CAMPUS: 65 Acres

TOTAL RIDES: Approximately 40

FIRST OPENED: 1890

NUMBER OF GUESTS ANNUALLY: Approximately 1 Million

PREVIOUS SECURITY SYSTEM: Magnetometers and Secondary Wand Screening

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Eliminate lengthy lines in front of 10 walkthrough metal detectors at the park entrance
- Scale to accommodate influxes (“waves”) of incoming guests
- Transform negative guest entrance experiences
- Eliminate the need for third-party security staffing firm
- Reposition portion of security staff at park entrances to other areas
- Redesign park entrance by recapturing space used by walkthrough metal detectors
- Reduce false positives to streamline the secondary security screening process

Solution

People

- Solutions Engineering Team: Deployment, Configuration, and Training

Process

- Migrated from 10 walkthrough metal detectors to one Evolv Express® systems
- ConOps Playbook
- Guard and Operations Training

Technology

- 1 Evolv Express Dual-lane System
- Evolv Cortex AI™
- Evolv Insights®

Outcomes



100% ROI by eliminating the need for third-party staffing firm



Reduced security staff at the entrance by 60%—from 10 to 4



Reallocated 6 security staff to other areas in the park



Eliminated 10 lengthy entrance security lines



Improved guest experience with touchless security screening



Supports both indoor & outdoor use cases

Assessing the Negative Toll of Walkthrough Metal Detectors

Few would say “Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park” when asked, “What organization in Denver has a 130-plus-year history and was home to the city’s first symphony orchestra, motion picture theater, and botanic garden?” But that is the correct answer.

The only downtown amusement park in the United States today, Elitch Gardens possesses a unique and storied history—one that has touched the lives of most Colorado residents throughout the years and formed fond memories.

But security at the entrance to the park was negatively impacting the guest experience. Lengthy lines would form in front of the entrance where the security team managed 10 walkthrough metal detectors. When ingress reached its peak, the wait to get through security was as long as an hour.

When parents with children passed through the metal detectors, logistical problems were bound to occur. “The children weren’t certain where to stand and often wanted parents to walk through with them,” Shapiro continues. “And then we needed to check every single bag. It was a very unpleasant guest experience. This simply did not align with our values and the experience we wanted guests to have when they came to the park.”

In addition to the long and uncomfortable waits to get through security screening, security staffing costs was a significant challenge. Each of the magnetometer units was managed by one security guard. “Recruiting security staff was a huge factor, and we had to supplement our security team with guards from a third-party security staffing firm,” Shapiro says. “We hire around 60 security personnel each season, and many of them were part-time workers.” It was simply impossible for Elitch Gardens to find enough of them, an issue that was exacerbated by the pandemic. “Beyond recruiting challenges, we had challenges retaining security staff, as standing in front of a walkthrough metal detector all day long can become tedious very quickly,” Shapiro adds. “All of these issues translated into a lot of costs.”

“ Our security staff are more polite and friendly rather than feeling exhausted and frustrated. Guests are happy because they no longer need to wait in a lengthy security line and go through intrusive screening to get into the park”

- Rachel Shapiro, Dir. of Operations and HR, Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park

Objective: Transform Guest Experience Without Impacting Security

Shapiro first worked for Elitch Gardens as an Operations Manager at the end of the 1990s and joined the team again in 2021.

Pre-9/11 security was much different than security afterward. Shortly after Shapiro rejoined the team, the GM saw an Evolv Express® unit at an event and returned excited about its possibilities at Elitch Gardens. Shapiro and others attended an Evolv informational session in Denver where they were able to get hands-on experience with an Express system.

Following this information session, Shapiro and the Elitch Gardens' security manager on her team visited another amusement park that was already using an Evolv Express unit for security screening. They returned with a decision in hand. "Elitch Gardens is very focused on guest experience," Shapiro says. "But this could not come at the sacrifice of security. Evolv checked both of these boxes."



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Achieving a Seamless Deployment

Also following the demo session, Evolv scheduled time with Shapiro for an Evolv Systems Engineer to come out to the park and observe and assess their ingress workflows and processes.

The Evolv Security Engineering evaluated guest flows at the park entrance and recommended the deployment of one dual-lane Express unit. The Elitch Gardens and Evolv teams were determined to deploy the unit at the start of the 2022 season.

“We opened the first weekend with our walkthrough metal detectors,” Shapiro says. “Then during the subsequent week, the Evolv team worked with us to set up the unit, train our security team, and integrate corresponding changes into our ConOps playbook. The security team was very enthusiastic and welcomed the changes and improvements brought by the Express system. The Evolv team made the entire process super easy and were very flexible in accommodating our needs.”

Though there have been a few issues with the Express unit since its deployment, the Evolv Support team has provided timely and expert assistance. “We’ve only had a couple of minor issues, but the Evolv Support team helped us diagnose and fix the issues very quickly,” Shapiro says.

“Previously, we had 10 separate lines in front of each metal detector that extended into the parking lot,” she recalls. “Now, we have one entrance with no queues in front of it.”

- Rachel Shapiro, Dir. of Operations and HR, Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park

Enjoying 100% ROI Due to Speed and Lower Costs

Big pushes typically occur at the park entrance from the beginning of the day into the afternoon.

“We get a big push in the morning when the park first opens,” Shapiro says. “But we also get waves throughout the day.” Previously, lengthy queues formed at the entrance as the walkthrough metal detectors did not have the scale to support these waves. “This is no longer an issue with the Express system,” Shapiro says. “Regardless of the time of day, lines completely disappeared due to Evolv.”

This has a dramatic impact on guest experience, who no longer need to wait for up to an hour in the heat to gain entrance into the park. It also makes the experience much easier for parents with small children. “Rather than separating young children from their parents, as was the case with the magnetometers, parents and children can walk through the Express unit side by side,” Shapiro notes.

Beyond removing wait queues to get into the park, Elitch Gardens was also able to eliminate the need for a third-party staffing firm. “This alone more than paid for the cost of the Express unit,” Shapiro says. “In addition, we went from a total of 10 walkthrough metal detectors to the one dual-lane Express system and 10 security staff managing ingress to just four.” Two of the security guards manage ingress for each lane, while the other two oversee secondary checks for each lane. The six security staff who no longer need to manage security screening at the park entrance were distributed elsewhere in the park. “We now have more staff roaming the park versus having them all tied up at the metal detectors,” Shapiro says. “This helps us improve our overall security posture.”



[Elimination of a third-party staffing firm] more than paid for the cost of the Express unit.”

- Rachel Shapiro, Dir. of Operations and HR, Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park



Making Everyone—Guest and Staff—Happier

Shapiro reports that everyone is happier—both guests and security staff.

“When guests must stand in line for an hour before getting into the park, they may be grumpy when they finally reach the ingress point. At the same time, the security guards are also a bit grumpy after standing in the same position checking guests all day. The Express unit changes this for both groups. Our security staff are more polite and friendly rather than feeling exhausted and frustrated. Guests are happy because they no longer need to wait in a lengthy security line and go through intrusive screening to get into the park.”

Although Elitch Gardens currently has the Express system just inside its covered entrance, they elected to go with an outdoor unit. “This gives us the flexibility to move the unit around in the event of changes to our entrance in the future or a decision to add another portal,” Shapiro relays. “The wireless setup and the ability to brand the Express towers are a plus, too. Most of our guests don’t even realize they are walking through security screening.”

From 10 Lines to None, Final Confirmation

As Shapiro reflects on the first day last spring when the Express unit went live, a smile is brought to her face.

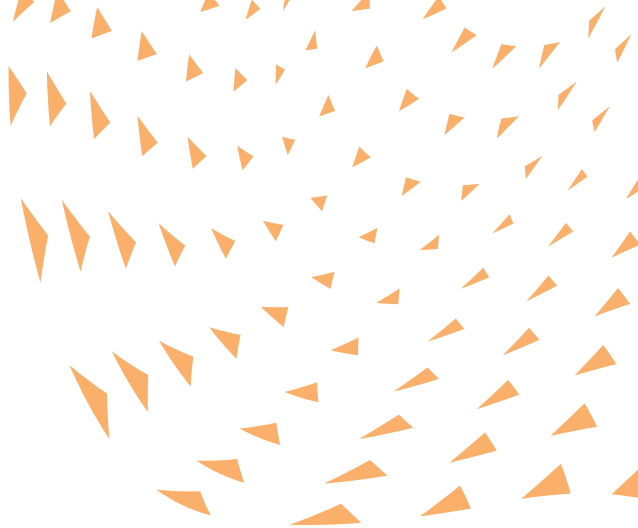
“Previously, we had 10 separate lines in front of each metal detector that extended into the parking lot,” she recalls. “Now, we sometimes have one entrance with no queues in front of it. When we first deployed, I admittedly was a little nervous, but that feeling was quickly vanquished. Seeing all

the guests walk through the Express lanes without standing in lines and needing to pass through an invasive screening process as well as our security guards watching and addressing threats that matter confirmed that we had made the right decision to go with Evolv.”

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Contact us to learn more about how to protect your workforce
and facilities with touchless security screening.

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