



Case study



Pittsburgh Cultural Trust Creates a Secure Digital Threshold That Bolsters Guest Experiences with Evolv Express® Systems

Organization Overview

LOCATION: 14-block Entertainment District in Downtown Pittsburgh

FOUNDED: 1984

NUMBER OF GUESTS ANNUALLY: 2+ Million

ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$303 Million Annually

EVENTS: 1,500+ Annually

SECURITY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STAFF: Around 30 Full and Part Time

PREVIOUS SECURITY SYSTEM: Magnetometers and Secondary Wand Screening

Solution Overview

Goals

- **Create** an unparalleled post-pandemic guest entry experience
- **Maintain** rigorous weapon detection standards
- **Recapture** entrance footprint used by security screening equipment
- **Reduce** screening queues that force guests to wait outside venues in inclement weather
- **Optimize** security and customer experience staff utilization

Solution

People

- Solutions Engineering Team: Deployment, Configuration, and Training

Process

- Implement 5 Evolv Express® systems
- ConOps Playbook
- Guard and Operations Training

Technology

- 3 Evolv Express® Dual-lane Systems
- 2 Evolv Express® Single-lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights®

Outcomes

- **Expected** to reallocate half of staff required to manage guest security screening
- **Recaptured** as much as 60% of venue entrance footprint
- **Reduced** outside queues that subjected guests to inclement weather
- **Transformed** security screening from entrance experience detractor to enabler
- **Optimize** staff resources by proactively predicting choke points
- **Easily** and quickly generate detailed security reports for board of trustees and executive staff



Paris Terrorist Acts Spur Organization to Action

Few can forget the images of terror that were broadcast around the world when terrorists struck the Bataclan theatre in Paris, leaving 130 people dead and 350 wounded. This served as a wake-up call for organizations around the world, prompting many to embark on assessments of their security protocols and systems.

► **“Magnetometers got the job done but they were very one-dimensional - they worked for the security of today, but they weren’t ready for the needs of tomorrow”**

**— Kevin C. Wilkes, Chief Security Officer,
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust**

With approximately two million guests visiting its various properties in a 14-block entertainment district, the board of trustees for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust (“Trust”) commissioned its executive team to assess security screening across its various properties. At the time, former Pittsburgh Police Detective Kevin C. Wilkes was serving as a security consultant for the Trust. Wilkes completed over 16 years of service in the Pittsburgh Police Department before commencing a career as a security practice consultant—leading a team of risk control consultants who worked with clients around the world. Thus, the Trust did not need to look very far to find someone who could oversee the transformation of its security systems and process.

New CSO Charged to Ensure Safety for 2 Million Annual Guests

After being named Chief Security Officer with responsibilities that include security operations as well as guest experience, Wilkes—along with other members of his team—evaluated several different security screening solutions.

“Before 2016, we didn’t screen guests entering our theaters, and this was something that we wanted to change,” Wilkes remembers. “To give you an idea of our scale, we host more visitors each year between all of our artistic events, performances, and festivals, than the Steelers, Pirates, and Penguins combined.”

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After completing a proof of concept, Wilkes and his team ultimately settled on a magnetometer-based solution. While the systems were effective in identifying weapons, they were resource-intensive to manage and did not provide guests with an experience the Trust wants to provide. “We had to hand-wand everyone and bag check anyone who was flagged,” Wilkes notes. “And while the team became quite proficient in processing incoming guests, we still had guests waiting in queues outside of our venues. As the weather in Pittsburgh can be quite harsh, this simply didn’t afford our guests with the experience we wanted.”





Security Charter Spans 14 Blocks and 5 Performance Venues

As the Trust owns numerous properties that comprise over one million square feet of space, the job of securing all of them is not an easy feat.

Nine different theaters and five visual art galleries are included in the properties Wilkes and his team oversees. For the prior magnetometer-based solution, the Trust installed and maintained numerous security lanes at each location and allocated significant staff to manage hand-held scanning and manual bag checks. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the three largest venues.

Property	Seating Capacity	Previous Security Requirements	Evolv Express
The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts	2,870	5 Security Lanes 2 Bag Check Tables 15 Security Staff	2 Dual-lane 1 Single-lane 1 Bag Check Table 7 Security Staff
Byham Theater	1,300	3 Security Lanes 2 Bag Check Tables 8 Security Staff	1 Dual-lane 1 Bag Check Table 4 Security Staff
O'Reilly Theater	650	1 Security Lane 1 Bag Check Table 4 Security Staff	1 Single-lane 1 Bag Check Table 2 Security Staff

Table 1. Previous magnetometer-based solution versus Evolv Express

Using the Pandemic to Reassess Security Screening Approach

All events at Trust properties were cancelled with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pause gave Wilkes and his team time to reassess their security screening systems and processes.

“Our guests aren’t the same as those at football, baseball, or hockey games,” Wilkes reflects. “While protecting our guests and ensuring their safety remains our number one priority, we also wanted something that would meet and exceed their expectations. Our guests have been away almost 18 months, and we wanted them to return to our venues with a completely new entry experience that greatly reduces any inconvenience on their part.”

Even though Wilkes’ security team was very adept at keeping queues moving with magnetometers and secondary wand screening, guests still had to stand while awaiting their turn. “I prayed for good weather every time we had a performance,” he jokes.

While the magnetometers were effective at ensuring the security of guests, the long queues and additional wandering were at odds with the increasing expectations of guests. “Magnetometers got the job done but they were very one-dimensional,” Wilkes says. “They worked for the security of today, but they weren’t ready for the needs of tomorrow”

Wilkes didn’t need to look very far for a solution. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra had moved its security screening to Evolv Express™ systems, and Wilkes and several members of his staff had visited them in late 2019. “Our search to evolve beyond our previous security screening solution actually began before the pandemic hit,” he says. “We literally walked a few blocks down the street and were able to get hands-on experience and put the Evolv Express to the test. What really impressed us is guests had no idea they were going through security screening. It was a fabulous experience.”

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Results of a POC, a Few Blocks Down the Street

Rather than setting up a proof-of-concept deployment in one of the Trust's venues, Wilkes and his team were able to use the one at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra for testing.

"I walked through the system with handguns of different sizes and concealed in any number of ways, and it caught them every single time," he recalls. "I am a very finicky buyer and have a reputation of not buying something unless I am completely convinced. We aren't a price-point buyer, but rather make purchase decisions based on quality."

► **"We've come a long way from when our properties were the blight of downtown. Security plays an important role in helping the Trust remain a national model of renovation through the arts—and our investment in Evolv is an important part of that equation."**

— Kevin C. Wilkes, Chief Security Officer, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

Following the proof of concept, Wilkes was convinced that the Trust needed to move its security screening to the Evolv Express. Five different Express systems were purchased for usage across the Trust's performance properties. "While metal-detection devices are great for today's threats, we believe Evolv gives us the scale to address our requirements into the future," Wilkes says. "With the help of the Evolv solution engineers, we were able to have the systems configured and running before performances recommence."

Assessing the Anticipated Benefits

The footprint previously taken up by the security lanes and bag check tables in each of the Trust's properties diminished guest experience.

"These venues simply weren't designed and built with the need for security screening in mind," Wilkes explains. "Cramming the security lanes and tables into those small spaces was unappealing in terms of aesthetics." But this all changes with the Express systems. "We're getting back a ton of real estate by moving to the dual lanes," he observes. "The entrances to our properties provide guests with a much better experience."

Evolv Cortex AI™ affords the Trust with a sensor network that literally captures millions of data points on weapons in real time. "We like the fact that our systems are made more intelligent and effective from the breadth of Evolv's customer base," Wilkes comments. "Our intelligence is not simply based on what we're observing but Evolv's total customer base."

get from data, the better I can do my job and ensure the safety of our guests." Wilkes also sees the reporting being useful for quarterly board of trustee meetings. "The board wants to know how many firearms were prevented from coming into our venues," he says. "This helps me educate them on the threats that exist and justify our technology investments."

The security team isn't the only team that is excited about the Express system deployment. "Our CISO wants to connect the Express systems directly into our security operations center [SOC]," Wilkes reports. "We see future opportunities to integrate physical and cyber security and Evolv is ahead of the game when it comes to extending APIs [application programming interfaces] to enable forward-thinking. Unlike our previous magnetometer-based solution, we see our investments in the Evolv as a long-term strategy."

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The analytical reporting in Evolv Insights™ analytics is also something Wilkes is excited to leverage. "Based on analytics for past events, we can make better staffing decisions—from the number needed to predicting when surges will occur," he says. "Knowledge is power and the more I can



Planning for the Future with a “Digital Threshold”

In addition to coordinating with Wilkes when configuring and activating the Express systems, solution engineers from Evolv are dedicated to onsite training for the Trust’s full and part-time security staff.

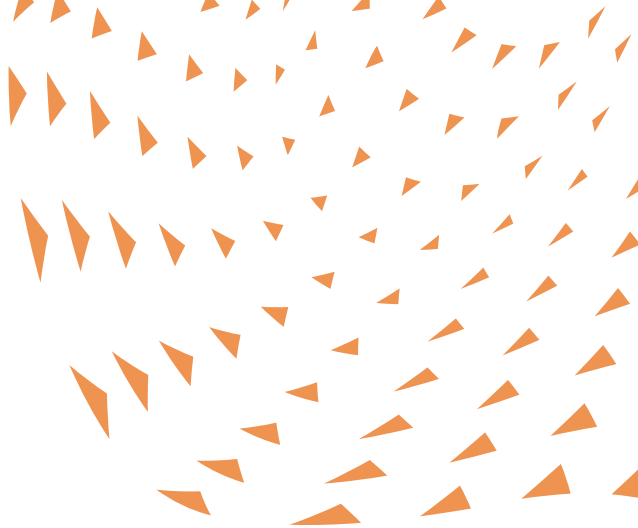
“Our sales support was outstanding, and we’re very excited about our ongoing services and training support that Evolv is providing,” Wilkes says. The ability to welcome back its guests following the pandemic with a “digital threshold” that minimizes

the friction guests previously experienced is a huge plus for Wilkes. “We go from a security screening process that diminished guest experience to one that enhances it,” he conveys.

Because of Evolv’s focus on constant innovation, Wilkes sees further enhancements on the horizon. “We take our jobs very seriously in protecting the guests and legacy of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,” he concludes. “We’ve come a long way from when our properties were the blight of downtown. Security plays an important role in helping the Trust remain a national model of renovation through the arts—and our investment in Evolv is an important part of that equation.”

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Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work, or play.

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