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Case study | **CITYPARK**

# New CITYPARK Stadium Adds Evolv to Its Cutting Edge Technology Portfolio to Help Keep Fans Safer

# CITYPARK

**LOCATION:** St. Louis, MO

**MLS TEAM:** St. Louis CITY SC

**OPENED:** November 16, 2022

**EVENTS:** 17 regular season MLS matches, as well as tournaments, events and more

**CAPACITY:** 22,500

**WEBSITE:** [www.stlcitysc.com](http://www.stlcitysc.com)

## Solution Snapshot

### Goals

- Ensure seamless flow of fans through security screening and avoid queues of fans in security lines
- Achieve higher security accuracy without incurring high alarm rates
- Streamline security guard training on security screening technology and process
- Enable fans to get concessions, visit retail shops, and reach their seats before the start of the match
- Scale to support fluctuations in fan ingress flows
- Avoid intrusive, lengthy secondary screening checks
- Get 22,500 fans into the stadium in less than 90 minutes

### Solution

#### People

- Delivered onsite training to security guards during onboarding and deployment
- Provided online training to security staff through the Evolv Academy
- Evolv Customer Success Manager provided support and training for Evolv Insights®

#### Process

- Evolv Solutions Engineering worked with CITYPARK to configure and plan deployment of 11 Express Systems (19 lanes) at four stadium entrances
- Customer Success Manager collaborated with CITYPARK operations team to develop security screening processes into a ConOps playbook

#### Technology

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

## Outcomes



**Reduced** proposed security lane footprint by 63%—from what would have been around 50 metal detectors to 19 Express lanes (or 11 systems)



**Screened** up to 500 fans per minute at four stadium entrances



**Used Evolv Insights** to diagnose process bottlenecks at one entrance that avoided an additional system deployment at that entrance



**Achieved** lower nuisance alarm rate with Evolv compared to metal detectors



**Reduced** intrusive, time-consuming secondary security screening process



**Created** a safer environment for fans and stadium staff



**Got fans into the stadium** quickly so they can enjoy concessions and stadium amenities before the start of events



## New Stadium for MLS Expansion Team St. Louis CITY SC

**Joe Abernathy, VP of Operations, CITYPARK, has 25 years of experience in stadium operations.**

“Being involved with MLS’ newest expansion team, St. Louis CITY SC, was really exciting, especially since I grew up playing soccer in St. Louis.”

As part of this process, safety was a critical underpinning for the design and launch of CITYPARK. “Providing a safe, clean and friendly environment for our guests is our first priority,” Abernathy explains.

Prior to coming to St. Louis CITY SC and CITYPARK, Abernathy had spent 25-plus years in stadium management and saw a transition in how safety has been addressed over time. “Over time, walkthrough metal detectors became a mainstay for stadiums,” he says. “When it came time to evaluating the screening technology for CITYPARK, we were excited because options beyond legacy metal detectors were becoming available.”



**We wanted to ensure every little detail along the fan journey was addressed from a safety standpoint.”**

- Matt Sebek, Chief Experience Officer,  
St. Louis CITY SC



## Metal Detector Deficiencies Point CITYPARK to Explore Other Options

**As they had sufficient time before CITYPARK opened, Abernathy and the CITYPARK team embarked on a search to find something better than walkthrough metal detectors for screening guests entering the new stadium.**

In their experience, metal detectors weren't scalable or in line with a modern stadium and fans who expect great experiences. "While walkthrough metal detectors were an improvement over hand-held metal detectors, they deliver a poor guest experience," Abernathy describes. "They are designed to find metal items, which not only include guns but a host of other things as well. Guests must take everything out of their pockets and bags. It took a lot of searching—and work in some cases—to resolve the cause of an alarm. Security screening was inefficient and intrusive—and neither the security team nor the guests liked the experience."

Training the security staff on how to manage the secondary security search took time as well. "Training our guests also took time. They needed to learn what would set off alarms so they could leave those items in their car or at home," Abernathy says.

All of these processes with metal detectors sucked the fun out of arriving at a sporting event. "In contrast, when guests come to CITYPARK, we want it to be like a festival," says Matt Sebek, Chief Experience Officer, St. Louis CITY SC. "Needing to wait for the great music, great food, and great atmosphere due to cumbersome and lengthy security screening processes depleted fan energy. Independent of wins and losses on the field, CITYPARK and CITY SC are a critical part of building regional pride."

**“ Many teams struggle in understanding the difference between metal detectors and the Evolv technology. Whereas metal detectors assume everyone is guilty, Evolv assumes they are innocent.”**

- Yaniv Yaron, Customer Success Manager,  
Evolv Technology





## Searching for a Transformative Security Screening Solution

**St. Louis CITY SC was originally slated to begin MLS play in 2022, but the global pandemic pushed that start date a year.**

“As a result, we were able to take more time investigating how other stadiums were addressing concessions, ticketing, security, and staffing than normally would have been the case,” Sebek says. “We wanted to ensure every little detail along the fan journey was addressed from a safety standpoint.”

Sebek first saw Evolv when attending an event at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles. “I immediately placed a call to Joe Abernathy and told him about the Express and the experience I witnessed at the game,” he says.

Abernathy was already familiar with Evolv when Sebek contacted him. “We were speaking with members of industry groups, and Evolv was a name that kept coming up,” he remembers. “We looked at multiple solutions and Evolv met the vetting requirements better than every other vendor. Speed, ease of use, and AI kept coming up in those conversations. “We wanted to make the ingress experience seamless, smoother, and paperless. We wanted the guests to have time to take in the entire building and the different things it offers,” Abernathy says.

“

**The beauty of coming into a new building like CITYPARK is that we’re talking about entry in a matter of minutes. Rather than rushing to their seats or even missing the first part of a match, guests can now take in the new stadium—visiting concessions and the retail shops.”**

- Joe Abernathy, VP of Operations, CITYPARK

## Seamless Configuring and Onboarding of Evolv

**CITYPARK had its soft opening on November 16, 2022, hosting an international friendly between St. Louis CITY2 and Bayer 04 Leverkusen.**

An Evolv Solutions Engineer and the CITYPARK team collaborated to configure eight Evolv Express dual-lane systems and three single-lane systems at each of the stadium's entrances.

"The onboarding process with Evolv was great," Abernathy reports. "They were here the entire way—from assessing how many systems we would need, to their placement, to their configuration, to the training leading up to the launch, and then the launch itself."

Training the CITYPARK security team on the Evolv Express was seamless. "Evolv is very user friendly and our security guards were able to learn it quickly," Abernathy says. In addition to onsite training, the CITYPARK security team also took online training through the Evolv Academy.

Evolv's Customer Success Manager, Yaniv Yaron, worked alongside the CITYPARK team to ensure they were completely ready for the deployment on November 16, 2022. "Training is an important part of the onboarding process," he says. "Many teams struggle in understanding the difference between metal detectors and the Express. Whereas metal detectors assume everyone is guilty, Evolv assumes they are innocent. Teaching security teams this dichotomy is a crucial part of training." Yaron also collaborated with the CITYPARK team to include operational details of Evolv in CITYPARK's ConOps playbook.

**“While walkthrough metal detectors were an improvement over hand-held metal detectors, they deliver a poor guest experience. They are designed to find metal items, which not only include guns but a host of other things as well.”**

- Joe Abernathy, VP of Operations, CITYPARK





## Optimizing Screening Outcomes and Efficiencies with Evolv Insights®

One of the aspects Abernathy, Sebek, and others from the CITYPARK team like the most about Evolv was Evolv Insights.

“We’re very excited about the analytical capabilities in Evolv Insights,” Abernathy says. “We’re working with our Customer Success Manager to generate the reports we need to understand what we’re seeing in terms of traffic flow, nuisance alarms and what triggered them, and threats that were detected. We have 90 minutes to get 22,500 guests into the stadium and in their seats. We look at the data from Evolv Insights to understand when and if any issues were encountered.”

One of the ways CITYPARK ensures fans have a great experience is through the use of its Net Promotor Score (NPS). “Our NPS surveys help us pinpoint gaps in the fan experience journey,” Sebek comments. “We want to know where we’re excelling and where we’re struggling—whether it be parking, ingress, ticketing, food and beverage, or retail. We measure as much as we can, and our gate scores—for ticketing and security screening—are incredible. It is a magical experience to see fans walking through the Express lanes with smiles on their faces and not needing to stop and take items out of their pockets or bags.”

Beyond using NPS scores to pinpoint potential issues with fan experience, CITYPARK relies on Evolv Insights analytics to gauge how to best deploy security personnel. “We can pinpoint instances where a backup might be occurring by analyzing traffic flow and reallocate more staff or reconfigure our Express deployment,” Sebek says.

Yaron comments on the process: “The analytics from Evolv Insights are available within 10 minutes after a game. The CITYPARK team can see ingress levels, alarm rates, threats detected, and traffic flows. Then we work with them to identify actionable insights contained within it.”

Recently, CITYPARK used Evolv Insights to optimize traffic flow through the premium entrance. “We had one Express system there and looked at the numbers,” Abernathy explains. “It was one of our slowest entry points and lines were forming. Our team initially thought that we needed another system there. But this entrance was only screening 200 or 250 guests per minute. Our other entrances were screening 500 or more per minute, and we were confident that we could screen up to 800 per minute. We concluded that the low-traffic rate was the result of something else and worked with our Evolv Customer Success Manager to diagnose the issue. By reconfiguring the location of the Express system, we were able to avoid moving another system to the area.”

“I became a huge believer in the Evolv Express within the first 15 minutes of turning it on and we were able to get 5,000 guests into the stadium. Then, in the next 20 minutes, we had another 7,000 guests in the stadium.”

– Joe Abernathy, VP of Operations, CITYPARK

## Fans Quickly Adapt to Evolv

**The CITYPARK team was impressed with Evolv almost immediately.**

“The fans caught onto Evolv Express very quickly,” Sebek says. “For the first couple matches, we had fans walk through the Express lanes and ask if they needed to do anything else. It was absolutely great to see their reaction.”

Abernathy was also impressed with Evolv’s speed and fan experience. “I became a huge believer in the Evolv technology within the first 15 minutes of turning it on and we were able to get 5,000 guests into the stadium,” Abernathy relates. “Then, in the next 20 minutes, we had another 7,000 guests in the stadium. You could walk right up to the entrance, and proceed through the Express lane to ticketing. We were thrilled. It worked exactly as promised.”

## Quick and Easy CITYPARK Ingress

**The CITYPARK team wanted to ensure that fans weren’t stuck in security screening lines at the start of a match and unable to get concessions and visit retail shops beforehand.**

“The start of a soccer match is really important,” Sebek relates. “To deliver this experience we need advanced technology like Evolv to get all of the fans through the entrances and into the stadium quickly and safely.”

Even before fans arrive at CITYPARK, the objective of Sebek and his team is to deliver a personalized experience. “Speed and personalization are critical elements around our fan experience,” he comments. “But our personalization efforts are moot without speed—namely, the ability to get fans into the stadium safely and quickly. Our fans’ first interaction at the entrances is huge. Unlike metal detectors, Evolv ensures that we have dramatically fewer lines and that fans get into the stadium as fast as possible.”

Abernathy indicates the reaction from fans was very positive from the very start. “Unless they have been to the stadium already, guests expect a metal detector experience and are amazed that they can walk side-by-side through the Express,” he reports.



**“ We have 90 minutes to get 22,500 guests into the stadium and in their seats. We look at the data from Evolv Insights to understand when and if any issues were encountered.”**

- Joe Abernathy, VP of Operations, CITYPARK



## Evolv Makes For a Much Smaller Security Screening Footprint

Abernathy explains that had CITYPARK gone with traditional walkthrough metal detectors they would have needed around 50 systems to accommodate the crowds and unpredictable ingress fluctuations “But with Evolv, CITYPARK was able to reduce this estimated footprint down to a total of 19 Express lanes,” he explains. “This is a huge difference.”

Abernathy indicates that for walkthrough metal detectors, three security personnel would have been needed per machine, or upwards of 150 security guards. But with the smaller footprint with Evolv, this number is fewer than 60 security personnel—with one for Flow Control, one for Threat Resolution, and another one to manage traffic flow. “This enables us to bolster our security presence elsewhere in the stadium.”

## Much Lower Nuisance Alarm Rate with Evolv Express®

Evolv’s nuisance alarm rate is lower than what it would have been with metal detectors.

“Metal detectors typically generate a 50% alarm rate or higher,” Abernathy says. “Evolv’s Cortex AI enables us to share the cause of nuisance alarms with Evolv, which results in improved accuracy over time. This advanced technology isn’t available in other security screening solutions on the market.”

Resolution of the cause of an alarm is faster, easier, and unintrusive, according to Abernathy. “When an alarm does occur, because the Evolv technology pinpoints the area where the potential threat was detected with a red box, we can quickly resolve secondary checks in less than two minutes,” he relates. “This makes a really big difference when we’re talking about guest experience. Most guests expect to have a ‘metal detector experience’ and have been very positive when we need to conduct a secondary check on them.”



## When Speed Matters, Evolv Delivers

**The scale and speed of the Express has impressed Abernathy and Sebek.**

“The throughput on the Express is absolutely amazing,” Sebek says. “We’re getting analytics from Evolv Insights that show we’re scanning over 500 fans per minute across all four of our gates.”

Abernathy explains that in the past, the bottleneck for getting into a public stadium or venue was security screening and not ticketing. “But this is all flipped with Evolv,” he says. “Now security screening is faster than the ticketing scanners.”

For a new stadium like CITYPARK focused on fan experience and personalization, this is a big deal. “The beauty of coming into a new building like CITYPARK is that we’re talking about entry in a matter of minutes,” Abernathy explains. “Rather than rushing to their seats or even missing the first part of a match, guests can now take in the new stadium—visiting concessions and the retail shops.”

Evolv has also scaled to handle the unpredictability of fan arrivals. “We have crowds of guests that arrive early for a match and crowds that arrive late,” Abernathy reflects. “Evolv handles those fluctuations with little to no trouble at all.”

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– Matt Sebek, Chief Experience Officer, St. Louis CITY SC





## CITYPARK Delivers Safety and a Great Fan Experience

The CITYPARK team is very excited about the relationship they have developed with Evolv and are looking forward to maintaining a high level of safety and fan experience as the relationship matures even further.

Abernathy notes that “St. Louis is a big soccer town, and the social and political barriers that divide guests are broken down when they attend a match. Evolv fits our ecosystem tremendously well. We wanted technology to be a critical enabler for us in delivering an unparalleled guest experience. What’s nice about Evolv is that we can focus on interacting with our guests rather than managing the technology. Technology cannot do everything that we want to accomplish when it comes to guest experience. Evolv enables us to overlay technology and the human element for an optimal experience.”

Sebek adds, “St. Louis has a rich soccer history, and the opportunity to introduce the 29th Major League Soccer franchise here was both a chance to be excellent on the field as well as to showcase all the great things going on in the city. Evolv will enable us to do so safely but with a great experience.”

Abernathy sums up the decision, “With Evolv, we have the right combination of security and guest experience that makes it seamless to get into the stadium while ensuring we are keeping threats out of the building,” Abernathy notes. “For a new stadium like CITYPARK and new MLS team like CITY SC, you couldn’t ask for any better.”

“When guests come to CITYPARK, we want it to be like a festival. Needing to wait for the great music, great food, and great atmosphere due to cumbersome and lengthy security screening processes depleted fan energy.”

- Matt Sebek, Chief Experience Officer, St. Louis CITY SC

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

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