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‘The Top Golf of shooting’ transforms vacant Sanford movie theater into immersive attraction

Decision Tactical trains law enforcement and the public and provides unique entertainment options



Decision Tactical Partner David Gabbai shoots at targets in the facility’s obstacle course using a real Glock handgun modified to shoot bursts of air from a CO2 cartridge. (Willie J. Allen Jr./Orlando Sentinel)



An ownership group recently repurposed a vacant movie theater in Sanford into a one-of-a-kind shooting attraction that offers state-of-the-art training facilities for law enforcement as well as immersive shooting experiences for the public.

[Decision Tactical](#), located in a nearly 42,000-square-foot building at 430 Towne Center Cir., opened in January in a former 10-room United Artists Theater and offers an example of how to repurpose obsolete movie venues. Decision Tactical first began operations in 2018 in a 3,000-square-foot facility in Longwood but moved into the new building as it grew the concept. The owners purchased the current building in 2022 for \$4.1 million.

The facility doesn't use live ammunition. Instead, employees use a proprietary method on-site to modify Glock handguns that shoot bursts of air from a CO2 cartridge, simulating real bullets. This allows law enforcement and members of the public to improve shooting skills and acumen in a realistic yet safe setting.

Many local law enforcement agencies — including Sanford, Seminole County, Altamonte Springs, and Orlando use the training facility, as do federal agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration. In its current configuration, Decision Tactical offers a target shooting range, an obstacle course with targets, and three interactive scenarios.

These include a “home scenario” that shows what it's like to handle a domestic dispute or a home invasion in a residential unit, a “street terror scenario” that simulates a terrorist attack, and an “active shooter scenario” that places a gunman or multiple gunmen in a mall. These lifelike scenarios offer law enforcement officers more realistic training than the more typical virtual reality headset and prepare them for high-stress, real-life situations that require split-second decisions.

Each simulation room is controlled by an employee in a command center on the second floor of the facility. Screens in the rooms can portray countless scenarios and introduce different twists to keep trainees guessing. Because an employee monitors each scenario, the simulations can respond quickly to the actions of the participants. For example, if two people are going through a simulation room and split up, the fictional characters on the screen can react to those movements.

One room includes a sparring floor for jiu-jitsu so that officers can practice situations in which they may need to wrestle someone to the ground or keep an assailant from reaching their weapon. Additionally, law enforcement agencies can station trainers in front of a green screen to act out situations that are then reflected on the screens in the simulation rooms in real-time. For example, a police chief can hold a weapon in different positions to teach recruits when it is and isn't permissible to use lethal force, or an actor can simulate holding another individual hostage.

However, Decision Tactical is much more than a police training facility. The ownership group refers to the public aspect of its concept as "the Top Golf of shooting." It allows patrons to experience what it is like to be an officer in a high-intensity scenario or refine their skills at the shooting range. There is one obstacle course open already, and the owners plan to open two similar competition courses for the public soon. Decision Tactical also offers self-defense classes utilizing Krav Maga, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and other non-lethal self-defense techniques.

Since the facility doesn't use real guns, the business is allowed to sell alcohol in a dining and entertainment area that offers a sports bar feel with seating, large television monitors, electronic darts, and cornhole. Groups can rent out a meeting room for parties and gatherings, and can also go through the simulations and obstacle courses as team-building activities. For example, some corporate teams have undertaken simulations where the boss was taken hostage and needed to be rescued by team members.

"We're collaborating with some companies that do big corporate team-building events to come in and create a program like that," said Decision Tactical CEO Remo Eyal.

The owners also organize events such as college football viewing parties and motorcycle showcases.

“By having more people come through [the facility], it helps cover the overhead so that we can provide more affordable training for police that they don’t get today anywhere else,” Eyal explained.

Obsolete movie theaters are good targets for Decision Tactical because they offer soundproof rooms and built-in food and dining areas. There were challenges in the remodeling, such as removing all of the seats and leveling out previously sloped floors, but Decision Tactical Partner David Gabbai said the effort provides an example to other businesses who want to redevelop an aging movie theater. Ultimately, he hopes to expand the approach to other cities across the country.

“Many of these old theaters that were built back in the 90’s are dying. They can be repurposed for something like this,” he said.

The training scenarios were built with technology from [Full Sail University](#), and almost all of the employees in the control room are students or graduates from the school. The technology can offer participants feedback on their performance, such as their accuracy, how quickly they got off a series of shots, or the time it took to complete an obstacle course or simulation. It also provides analytics to perfect a shooter’s technique and will soon provide feedback on how individuals are pulling the trigger. All of this is meant to improve performance and the participant’s shooting technique.

“The technology is what sets us apart,” Gabbai said. “We took a lot of agencies through it and asked, ‘What did you guys think? Are we on the right track?’ And we got some good reviews. They were saying that they really need this.”

Friction between police departments and their communities isn’t new, but tensions have grown in recent years due to police encounters that critics say point to systemic issues such as racial bias in policing. Local police departments believe that Decision Tactical’s realistic training and technology provide preparation for real-life, high-intensity situations in ways that could save lives and improve relations with the public.

“It’s such a unique opportunity for training where, instead of being on a live gun range, officers can be put in stressful situations and we can see how they react during those situations,” Sanford Police Chief Cecil Smith said, explaining that just about everyone in his department has undergone Decision Tactical’s training.

Seminole County Sheriff Dennis Lemma said that his officers can’t find this level of training anywhere else.

“It is a modern and effective tool to ensure that all of our folks that are going through these simulations can identify scenarios like people suffering from a mental health condition and try to talk people down,” Lemma explained. “I don’t know of any other facility that offers this level of opportunity and training.”

Have a tip about Central Florida development? Contact me at (407)607-8160 or TyWilliams@GrowthSpotter.com. Follow GrowthSpotter on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Originally Published: September 9, 2024 at 7:05 p.m.

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