



are we safe?

From layout to the number of entries, it seems GJHS has numerous safety issues

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“If somebody is really hell-bent on causing harm, then they’re going to figure out a way,” Tim Leon, safety and security director, said. “I wake up and worry, is today the day?”

According to vox.com, school gun violence reached an all time high in 2018. It was reported that 55 people were killed due to school gun violence last year. Some schools have implemented certain precautions like panic buttons, metal detectors, and more cameras to increase security.

However, according to multiple sources that spoke to the Orange & Black, the current layout of GJHS poses security risks that are beyond repair. This was one of the many reasons GJHS applied for the BEST grant, a type of state funding to improve schools.

“It would take millions of dollars to get this school to a point where we could consider it safe,” Leon said. “It doesn’t make sense to retrofit an old building to accommodate safety and security needs.”

There are at least 25 entry points into the 123,562 sq ft main building of GJHS. Of those entrances, four are unlocked. Although a limited number of doors are unlocked to the outside, there is the possibility anyone, student or stranger, could walk into the building at anytime.

Tom LeFebre, dean of students, described the number of entry points on campus as “concerning, because it’s too easy for students to come and go, and too easy for people to come onto our campus without checking in at the main office.”

Grand Junction High School was built 63 years ago, when they didn’t have the same problems that we do today. With the present layout of the school, there’s nothing that can be done to fix the amount of entry points as of now. Along with the main entry points, there are 6 outbuildings, a gym, and auditorium with entrances as well.

“With Junction, the biggest issue is the multiple exterior buildings,” Leon said.

The BEST grant would cover a portion of the cost of the new

school, and the city would have to pass a bond that would pay for the rest. According to the GJHS Best Grant application, rebuilding GJHS would mean “the school can achieve its goal of having one main entry point that can be controlled by the administration and the opportunity for a closed campus. This would significantly improve the current campus conditions, which is lacking in safety and site security.”

Since 2014, there have been six lockdowns at GJHS with five of those occurring since 2016. In the most recent lockdown, it took police about four minutes to arrive on campus, according to Leon.

“That’s actually well under the national average,” Leon said. “Nationally, it takes anywhere from four to eight minutes for an officer to arrive on scene.”

While there are obvious safety issues at GJHS, they cannot be pinned on the police forces, but rather the layout of the school itself. At GJHS, we have two full-time resource officers on campus. From the excessive number of entries to the overall layout, GJHS needs to see a change.

“This school is very difficult to secure,” Tim Latzau, school resource officer said. “With the current culture that we live in, of people wanting to hurt kids in schools, it’s hard to keep it safe.”

Though there are many issues with the layout of GJHS, there are also some advantages of the current state of the main building.

“It has solid block walls, all solid doors, and if you had an active shooter in the building, bullets will not go through the walls or doors,” Leon said. “I always think worst case scenario.”

The right precautions need to be taken in order to ensure the safety of students. So far, we have had success with protecting each school in the district. D51 security and safety protocols have even been nationally recognized, according to Leon.

Still, this school is outdated and dangerous in today’s world. “A lot of the mechanical stuff is failing,” Leon said.

“This school is very hard to secure.”
Tim Latzau, school resource officer

Leon said GJHS is experiencing many of the problems that Orchard Mesa Middle School was, which is exactly why a new school was built.

“The problem is that we’re looking at \$80 million [to rebuild OMMS] versus \$140 million [to rebuild GJHS],” Leon said.

According to documents from the Colorado Department of Public Safety, many schools in D51 are receiving money to make security renovations. In this last year, almost every school in the district got a security update. FMHS and the Career Center received funding for substantial changes like an enclosed main entry or a security vestibule.

In the last year, GJHS received no funding for security improvements, despite the obvious need.

According to the GJHS BEST grant application, the current GJHS building is extremely unsafe. The application outlines the many problems we face, for example, “the security and safety of the facility is compromised because of the outdated interior doors, door hardware, and lack of site security risking GJHS students and staff safety in the event of an emergency or lockdown.”

Additional reporting by Kyla Dare

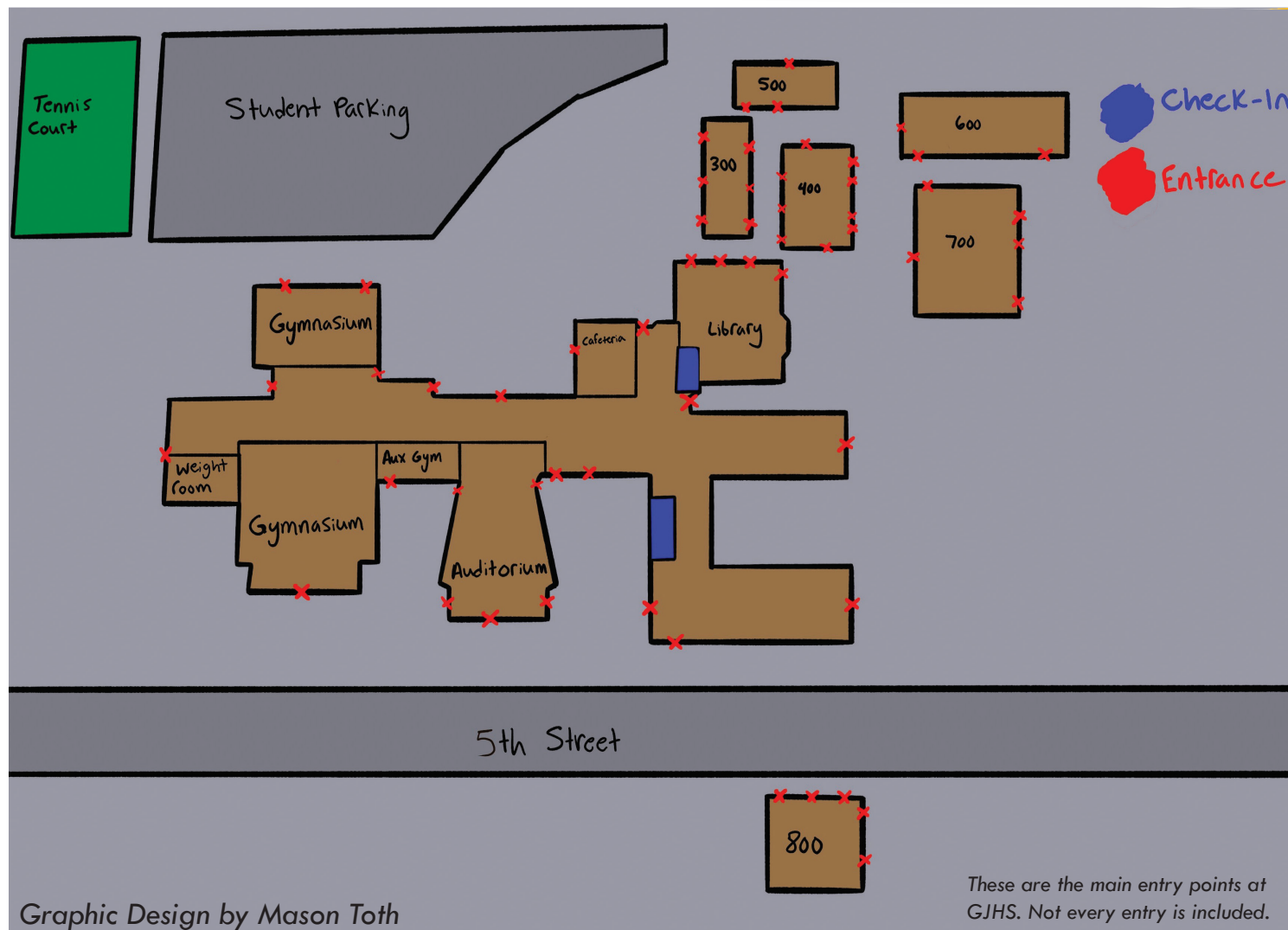
PROS OF AN OPEN CAMPUS

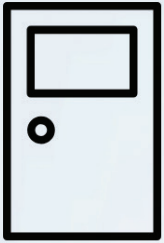
The location of Grand Junction High School is relatively close to several eating establishments. The quick access to fast-food like McDonald’s, Taco Bell, and Zoup! allow convenience to students who have an “open campus” lunch, but high school students are not the only ones attending these places, which means GJHS students are risking their personal safety to eat.

Students who stay on campus for lunch and do not have seating in the cafeteria have options of bringing their lunch to other parts of the building, to sit on the floor or in classrooms.

“If kids were responsible with open campus, then its fine,” LeFebre said. “But that goes back to structure, because we also don’t have a cafeteria that can feed 1,700 kids. So, right now we don’t have a way to keep everyone on campus [for lunch]”.

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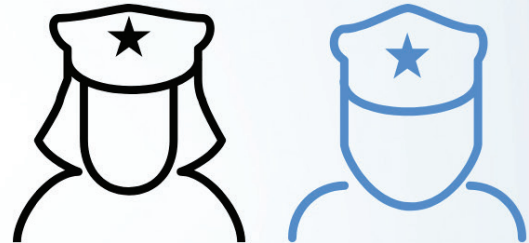


55 points of entry

7 total buildings with an open campus



2 FULL TIME SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS



In the most recent lockdown, on 1/18/19, it took police **4** minutes to arrive on campus.

 = lockdowns

