



NORTHEAST TARRANT

This North Texas school is getting its own police substation. Here's why

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WESTLAKE — From the timing, it might seem like the plan to create a police substation on the campus of Westlake Academy is a response to the Feb. 14 shooting at a high school in Florida.

Actually, the plan — a joint project of the Westlake Academy school board, town staff and Keller police, who provide law enforcement to Westlake — began last fall and was given final approval by the Town Council a week before the Florida shooting.

Westlake Academy, a charter school operated by the town, has about 850 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

"There was no one particular incident that prompted this plan. The atrocities that occurred at Sandy Hook, and Columbine before that, confirm that horrific things can happen anywhere," said Laura Wheat, who is both the president of the Westlake Academy school board and mayor of Westlake.

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Since the Florida shooting, threats have been made, and in some cases, students have been arrested, in North Texas cities and towns including Arlington, Trophy Club and Krum.

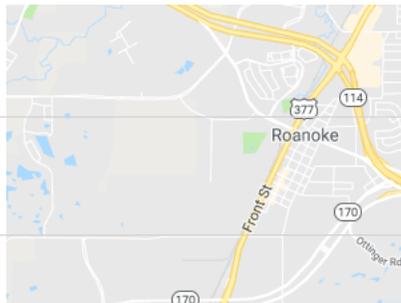
Parents and students, today a student brought a BB gun to school. We take all threats & violations seriously and disciplinary action will be taken. Please be assured that student safety and security are a priority for all of us. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

— Bowie High School (@JamesBowieHS) February 21, 2018

Keller Police Chief Michael Wilson, whose department has provided law enforcement service to Westlake since 2002, said the plan was inspired by "what we've seen throughout our country" along with the findings of security audits done for the unique campus.

"Westlake Academy is a very nontraditional campus. It's not built like a typical school; it's more like a corporate campus," Wilson said.

"We knew if we were going to try to close any potential security gaps, we couldn't do that with a traditional approach."



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Keller police officers responsible for the Westlake area will operate from the campus. Wilson said that staffing will vary but that his force supplies two patrol officers and two traffic officers to the town now.

Wheat said that while Keller police response times are "already impressive" in Westlake, the substation could improve on them.

"No longer will they need to run back to a station in Keller to complete a report or take care of other administrative duties," she said.

Wilson said that rather than constructing a new building, existing space will be re-purposed to accommodate the police station. Westlake communications manager Jon Sasser said that will cost the town about \$25,000.

Work on the substation is set to begin this month and is expected to be complete by the end of spring, according to a news release.



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students arrive at Leon High School in Tallahassee Tuesday night, Feb. 20, 2018 to huge crowds of students welcoming them. Students are preparing to flood the Capitol pushing to ban the assault-style rifle used to kill 17 people at their school. Emily Michot/Miami Herald Emily Michot — emichot@miamiherald.com

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