

Just 14 years after its construction, the troubled Orange Education Center could be demolished

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The Orange Education Center, owned by the Rancho Santiago Community College District, is no longer open to the public. Its landscape is dying and the building sits empty. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By [Jeong Park](#) |
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Just 14 years after its \$27 million construction, a Santiago Canyon College building in central Orange may be demolished this fall.

The Rancho Santiago Community College District is ready to hire a demolition company now that school board members recently approved tearing the building down. They have yet to

decide what, if anything, would replace the troubled Orange Education Center at 1465 N. Batavia St.

The building – which was once home to a daycare and continuing education programs – has been closed off for seven years. District officials discovered state architects had never certified the construction as required by law and upon further investigation that the building had several flaws, including potential toxins in the soil beneath, seismic issues and missing fire hydrants.

A lawsuit garnered the district a \$3.1 million settlement.

In 2015, the district explored [a \\$21 million renovation to get the building certified](#).

“We have so many more options if the building is gone,” board trustee Arianna Barrios said.

“Not only we had a building that wasn’t certified, we had a building that had some inherent problems,” she said, calling the building “a nightmare situation.”

District Chancellor Raul Rodriguez said the intention is to build a new structure that can again be used for continuing education. The district has been using a smaller, temporary site at 1937 W. Chapman Ave.

Finding funding for such a project remains a hurdle. The district has set aside \$34 million for the demolition and construction, but the new building could cost \$40 million to \$50 million, Rodriguez said.

Barrios is upset about how much the district has and will spend on the property, but said she hopes the district can use the demolition to create a fresh start for the property.

“Fixing that building was never going to be cost-effective,” she said. “So let’s take it down and start from scratch.”

Rodriguez, who is retiring June 30, said he hopes the district can discuss plans for the new building later this year or early next year, and have the construction done by 2022 or 2023.