

Well kept property landscape first

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Recently, I inspected a 30 year's old detached house in South Surrey. After addressed results to the client, the agent asked me if there were any major issues. I said no. The client was not happy with my answer and believed the shrinkage crack, efflorescence and moisture stain (Figure 1) which we found on the foundation wall were critical. We totally understood the thought and initiative of the buyer. But to respect and be responsible to the building we cannot say major defects for the age of the building which cannot be evaluated by new building code unless there were



existing issues jeopardizing the safety of inhabitants and the stability of the building.

However, we again explained to the client the condition of the foundation. What we had seen is concrete shrinkage crack normally shown on foundation wall especially on old buildings, which should not

have any effects on the structure stability. The visible condition on this 30 year building was acceptable. But in order to avoid moisture intrusion, we suggest reconditioning the exterior grade slope to make sure the ground water flow away from building foundation. Also we found big-O underground drain tile around building foundation, which is not applicable on new construction for their inherent defects. Therefore monitoring the drainage is essential and cleaning or replacing drain tile if necessary. These are the methods to keep the foundation not susceptible to moisture damage. Of course, the crack can be filled with some repairing stuff to reduce the water entrance but this is only a temporary fix and won't last long.

Consequently, we remind homeowners taking care of the lot grade and landscape. We prefer the ground water can flow away from the building foundation by gravity.

Unfortunately, we are living in a hilly area. The buildings have to

be built accordingly. A lot of buildings have the negative grade slope towards them. In this case the area drain (Figure 3) and French drain are the only way to keep the water flow away. At this stage, it is necessary to keep the drain clear without any clog.



The home owners usually plant the flowers or shrub around the building, which decorate the gardens and clean the environment to some extent. But there are 2 potential hazards. One is the vegetation is encroaching to the foundation and siding, which could cause the mechanical damage to the siding and cause the premature failure especially on wood siding and stucco for their holding the moisture; the other is the elevated soil which could cause wood and soil contact not only leading the siding rotten but offering the insect access to wall system.

Moreover, we should pay attention to the trees closely next to the foundation. This has to be removed to avoid the root clogging the drain tile. Once the trees are not in your property line, the application to the city is necessary. To regularly trim the trees is important to control the over grown which could scrub the roof and siding materials.