
The library

From BobBeauchamp [REDACTED]
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To Planning <planning@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Greetings: This is a very sad situation, potentially. My experience in the architecture/contractor professions cause me some great concern about the hidden potential of very serious consequences that stem, not only from mold, but even more so from all the damage that moisture can do to a building. I'm sure that the library was built back in the day when relatively little was understood about this topic, yet they still went ahead and built buildings anyway. It was poor infiltration control at the time that tended to save the buildings from damage.

With our library in mind, I can easily imagine certain circumstances—the brick veneer serving as a reservoir for moisture, the interior wall surfaces covered with impermeable material (even paint will do this), the A/C thermostat making the spaces especially cold in the summer, inadequate (or none at all) insulation, etc.—all combining to become a nasty, moisture and water retaining assembly. The possibilities of a severe damage are high.

Fixing this, properly, will be extremely challenging. The subject of building science is a new one and there are many “expert” professionals who still do not fully understand its full range of realities. You run the great risk of commissioning a professional, and winding up with a result that still has flaws that can cause a repeat of today's situation. Unless this project is handled in ways that are fully aware of these many realities, these forces are so severe that we could see it needing to be demolished.

perhaps the cheapest, most risk-free strategy here would be to consider consulting with the source that is most knowledgeable on this subject. That would be Joe Lstiburek, c/o the Building Science Corp. Westford Mass. In 2020 he published a booklet “Moisture Control for Residential Buildings” for the US Dept. of Energy.

Best of luck,
Robert Beauchamp
Sebastopol, CA

PS please send copies to the city council members.