

Comparing Metal Roofing Options for Your Home

Why Metal Roofs Deserve a Second Look

When I started in the roofing trade back in the late 1990s, metal roofs were mostly found on barns and industrial buildings. A homeowner who wanted a metal roof was usually after a specific look - something modern or rural, depending on where they lived. Over the past two decades, that has changed dramatically. Today, I see residential metal roofs on houses in almost every neighborhood I work in, from mid-century ranches to new custom builds. The shift is driven by longevity, energy performance, and a growing appreciation for how these roofs handle the kind of weather we get here in Central Texas.

The phrase "metal roofing options" covers a lot of ground, and the choice you make touches everything from the building's structural load to its resale value. I have seen homeowners make excellent choices and a few costly mistakes, mostly because they did not understand how different materials behave in our climate. Let me walk through what I have learned over the years, so you can feel confident about the direction you choose.

Standing Seam Metal Roofing

Standing seam metal roofing is what most people picture when they think of a premium metal roof. The panels run vertically from the eave to the ridge, and the seams between them are raised above the plane of the roof. Those raised seams are not just a design detail; they keep the fasteners hidden from the weather and allow the panels to expand and contract with temperature changes. That is a big deal in Austin, where a summer afternoon can push a dark roof past 160 degrees Fahrenheit, and a winter night can drop below freezing. A standing seam system handles that thermal movement without buckling or leaking.

Most standing seam roofs I have installed use steel roofing or aluminum roofing with a factory-applied coating. The coating matters as much as the metal itself. The best ones I have worked with use Kynar 500 or another PVDF coating. These finishes resist chalking, fading, and chalking far longer than cheaper paints. If you are looking at a 40- to 70-year metal roof lifespan - which is realistic for a well-installed standing seam roof - the coating has to hold up for decades of Texas sun. I have seen Kynar 500 finished roofs that still look good after twenty years, provided the installation included proper metal roof underlayment and metal roof ventilation. Without ventilation, the underside of the metal can sweat, and no coating will fix that.

Corrugated Metal Roofing

Corrugated metal roofing is the other major category you will run into. It is the familiar ribbed panel you see on sheds, porches, and some modern homes. The profile is wavy, with alternating ridges and valleys that give the panel stiffness without needing thick metal. That makes corrugated lighter and generally less expensive than standing seam. But it also means the fasteners are exposed on the ridges, and the panels rely on the lap joints and sealants to stay watertight. In my experience, corrugated works well for roofs with simple shapes and moderate slopes, but it demands more maintenance over time because those exposed fasteners can loosen and the sealants can dry out.

One of the less obvious differences between standing seam and corrugated is how they handle thermal expansion. Standing seam panels have hidden sliding clips that let the metal move freely. Corrugated panels, being fastened directly to the deck or purlins, can only move so much before they start to cup or oil-can. That is why I usually recommend standing seam for the main roof on a house and corrugated for a carport or a patio cover, where the consequences of a small leak are lower and the budget is tighter. Both are valid [metal roofing options](#), but they serve different roles.

Materials: Steel, Aluminum, Copper, and Zinc

The metal you choose changes the roof's look, weight, and longevity. Steel roofing is the most common choice for residential work. It is strong, it holds coatings well, and it costs less than the non-ferrous metals. Galvalume is a specific type of steel roofing that has an aluminum-zinc alloy coating. I have used galvalume on several projects where the homeowner wanted the look of bare metal without the rust risk of old-school galvanized steel. Galvalume performs well in our climate, but it will not take paint the way a primed steel panel will.

Aluminum roofing is lighter than steel and does not rust. It begins to oxidize on the surface, forming a dull gray layer that protects the metal underneath. For coastal areas or places with high humidity, aluminum is a strong candidate. Here in Austin, where we are far from salt air, I see aluminum used more for trim and flashing than for full roofs, but it is a perfectly good choice if you want something that will never develop rust spots.

Copper roofing and zinc roofing are the premium options. Copper develops a green patina over time, which many people find beautiful. It also lasts longer than almost any other roofing material, often exceeding 100 years. The catch is cost: copper can run three to four times the price of a steel standing seam roof. Zinc roofing is similar in price and longevity but weathers to a soft gray that blends well with stone and wood exteriors. I have only installed a couple of copper roofs in Austin, and both were on high-end custom homes where the owner planned to stay for decades. For most homeowners, steel or aluminum with a good coating gives you the best balance of performance and cost.

Understanding Metal Roof Cost

Let me be direct about metal roof cost. A standing seam steel roof will typically cost more than asphalt shingles or concrete tile, but less than slate or copper. The price varies with the complexity of the roof, the gauge of the metal, and the type of coating. A simple gable roof with a moderate slope is the most economical. A roof with multiple valleys, dormers, or penetrations will cost more because each detail takes time to flash and seal properly. I have seen estimates range from about \$7 per square foot for a basic corrugated steel roof to \$15 or more per square foot for a standing seam roof with a premium coating, including the underlayment and flashing.

What surprises some homeowners is that the metal roof cost includes several layers that are not visible. A good metal roof installation includes a high-quality metal roof underlayment, which acts as a secondary water barrier in case of ice dams or wind-driven rain. It also includes metal roof insulation, which is often a foam or fiberglass layer placed between the roof deck and the interior ceiling. Proper insulation stops the roof from turning your attic into an oven and prevents condensation from forming on the underside of the metal. And you need metal roof ventilation, usually through ridge vents and soffit vents, to keep the air moving under the panels. Skip those details, and you will pay for them later in repairs and shorter lifespan.

What Makes a Metal Roof Last 40 to 70 Years

The metal roof lifespan you can expect depends on three things: the material, the coating, and the quality of the installation. A steel roof with a good PVDF coating, installed over proper underlayment with adequate ventilation, should last at least 40 years before it needs any major attention. Aluminum and galvalume can push that to 50 or 60 years. Copper and zinc can go well past 70. But I have also seen steel roofs fail in under 20 years because they were installed without any allowance for thermal movement, or because the contractor used cheap fasteners that corroded and stained the panels.

Snow guards are a small but important detail here. Even though we do not get heavy snow in Austin, a metal roof can still shed ice and debris in sheets. Snow guards break up that sliding mass, protecting gutters and anything below the roofline. I include them on any metal roof where the slope is steep enough to let the material slide. Roof flashing is another critical component. Every penetration, every valley, every wall intersection needs flashing that is compatible with the metal panels. Using dissimilar metals can cause galvanic corrosion, where one metal eats away the other. A good roofer knows how to isolate different metals with gaskets or coatings.

Making Your Choice

If you are considering metal roofing options for your home, I recommend starting with the roof's shape and slope. A simple steep roof is a good candidate for standing seam. A low-slope roof may need a different approach, because metal panels rely on slope to shed water. Next, think about your climate. In hot, sunny areas like Austin, a lighter color with a reflective coating will keep the house cooler and reduce thermal stress on the panels. Dark colors look sharp but absorb more heat, which can shorten the life of the coating and increase cooling costs.

Finally, work with a contractor who has experience in metal roof installation Austin. Metal roofs are not forgiving. A mistake in the attachment method or the flashing detail can show up as a leak years later, and finding the source of a leak in a metal roof is harder than on a shingle roof. I have seen too many homeowners buy beautiful metal roof panels and then hire the lowest bidder to install them. The results are almost always disappointing.

Residential metal roofs are a long-term investment. They offer durability, fire resistance, and a clean look that ages well when done right. The upfront cost is higher than some other materials, but the lifespan and low maintenance can offset that over time. Whether you lean toward standing seam or corrugated, steel or copper, the key is understanding how each choice affects the roof's performance in your specific situation. Talk to a few local contractors, ask about the underlayment and ventilation they use, and look at their past metal roof work. That kind of due diligence pays off for decades.