

Roof Replacement Process: What Homeowners in Austin Need to Know Before Tearing Off Old Shingles

If you have owned a home in Austin for more than a decade, you already know the drill. The summer sun bakes the south-facing slope until the granules start collecting in the gutter. One hard storm later, a leak shows up in the bonus room ceiling. The roofer says you need a new roof, not a repair. That conversation marks the start of the roof replacement process, and it pays to understand what comes next before you sign anything.

I have seen too many homeowners confuse a new roof with a roof replacement. On a new construction house, the builder starts from bare decking and works upward. In a replacement, every layer gets stripped and rebuilt, and the decisions you make at each stage affect how long the roof lasts and how it handles Central Texas weather. The roof replacement process on an existing home in Austin involves tear-off, deck inspection, underlayment, flashing, and finally the shingles or metal panels. Each step has its own timeline, cost variables, and warranty implications.

Tear-Off: The Messy, Necessary First Step

Before anything else, the crew strips the old roof down to the structural deck. In Austin, many homes built before 2000 have two or three layers of asphalt shingles already. City code generally allows only one layer of new shingles over an existing layer, but once you hit that limit, a full tear-off is mandatory. The tear-off alone fills a sizable dumpster with debris, and it usually takes one to two days depending on roof complexity and slope.

During tear-off, the crew exposes the OSB decking or plywood beneath. This is the moment of truth. If the decking shows rot, soft spots, or water damage from old leaks, it has to be replaced before anything else goes on. I have seen jobs where a third of the decking needed replacement after years of undetected moisture. That adds cost, but skipping it guarantees future problems. The roofer should show you the bare deck and discuss any bad sections before moving forward.

Underlayment and Ice and Water Shield

Once the deck is sound, the next layer is the underlayment. In Austin, standard practice calls for a synthetic felt underlayment over the entire deck. But for valleys, eaves, and areas around chimneys or skylights, many contractors install an ice and water shield product. This rubberized membrane sticks directly to the deck and seals around nail heads. It is not cheap,

but in a climate where sudden downpours can overwhelm gutters, that extra protection at the vulnerable points is worth the money.

The underlayment also includes drip edge metal along the eaves and rake edges. The drip edge directs water away from the fascia and into the gutters, preventing wood rot at the roof edge. Some roofers skip it on lower-priced bids. Do not let them. A missing drip edge invites moisture behind the gutter, and that is a repair you will face sooner than you expect.

Flashing and Ventilation Details

Flashing is where a roof either keeps water out or fails. Around pipes, vents, and chimneys, the roofer installs metal flashing pieces that interlock with the shingles above and the wall material below. In a replacement, old flashing gets removed and replaced, not patched. That is non-negotiable. The same goes for ridge vent along the peak. A ridge vent allows hot attic air to escape, which reduces cooling costs in the summer and prevents moisture buildup in the winter. If your current roof has no ridge vent, a replacement is the perfect time to add one.

Some homeowners also opt for a starter strip at the eaves. That is a course of shingles that seals the first row and prevents wind-driven rain from getting under the shingles. It is a small detail, but it makes a real difference over the life of the roof.

Selecting the Right Shingles or Metal

Now you get to the visible part of the [roof replacement process](#): the shingles. The market in Austin offers several solid options. Class A asphalt shingles from manufacturers like GAF, Owens Corning, CertainTeed, and TAMKO are the most common. They carry standard 30-year warranties, though the actual lifespan depends on attic ventilation, roof slope, and sun exposure. A south-facing roof in Austin using dark shingles might need replacement in 20 years. A lighter color with good ventilation could hit 30.

Some homeowners prefer synthetic slate, which mimics the look of natural slate but weighs less and costs less. It is a premium product, but it holds up well in hail. Others go with standing seam metal, especially on modern or mid-century homes. Standing seam panels last 40 years or more and shed water efficiently, but they cost more upfront and require a specialized installer. If you have copper gutters, standing seam metal in a matching finish looks outstanding, though copper itself is expensive and rarely used on full roofs in this region.

Whatever material you choose, verify that the contractor uses a starter strip, proper flashing, and drip edge. The warranty from GAF or CertainTeed often requires that the roof be installed according to the manufacturer's specifications. If the roofer cuts corners on underlayment or flashing, the warranty can be voided. That 30-year warranty is only as good as the installation that supports it.

Permits and Austin Building and Development Services

In Austin, a roof replacement requires a permit from Austin Building and Development Services. The permit ensures that the work meets current building codes, including wind uplift resistance and proper fastening schedules. Some homeowners try to skip the permit to save time or money, but that is a mistake. If you sell the house later, an unpermitted roof can cause title issues or give buyers a reason to walk away. The permit fee is modest compared to the cost of the roof, and the inspection gives you peace of mind that the work was done right.

The permit process also triggers an inspection of the deck and underlayment before the shingles go on. That inspection protects you. If the roofer tries to bury bad decking or missing ice and water shield, the inspector will catch it. Do not let a contractor talk you out of pulling a permit.

Design-Build vs. Bid-Only Approach

Most roof replacements in Austin follow a traditional bid model: you get three quotes, pick a contractor, and they manage the job. But some companies offer a Design-Build approach, where the same firm handles both the design and the installation. That can streamline the roof replacement process because decisions about flashing, ventilation, and material selection happen with the same team that will install it. The downside is that you have less ability to compare prices on the design side. For a straightforward roof with asphalt shingles, a good bid from a reputable contractor works fine. For a complex roof with multiple valleys, skylights, or standing seam metal, Design-Build can reduce miscommunication and change orders.

Timelines and Costs Heading into 2026

As of late 2024, a typical roof replacement in Austin runs between seven and fourteen days from tear-off to final cleanup. That timeline can stretch if the deck needs extensive repairs or if weather delays the work. By 2026, material costs for OSB decking and asphalt shingles are expected to rise modestly, driven by demand and transportation costs. Copper and standing seam metal will likely see larger increases. Labor costs in Austin have risen steadily as the city grows, so waiting rarely saves money.

The roof replacement process on a 2,000-square-foot house with medium complexity usually costs between \$10,000 and \$18,000 for standard asphalt shingles. Standing seam metal can run \$25,000 or more. Add another \$1,500 to \$3,000 if you need significant deck replacement or premium underlayment. Those are rough numbers, but they give you a starting point.

Warranties and the Long View

A good roofing contractor offers a workmanship warranty of five to ten years, on top of the manufacturer's 30-year warranty on the shingles. Read both warranties carefully. The manufacturer warranty typically covers defects in the shingles themselves, not installation errors. The workmanship warranty covers leaks caused by improper nailing, missing flashing, or poor valley installation. If a roofer offers only a one-year warranty, that is a red flag.

One decision you only get once during a roof replacement is the chance to add ventilation, upgrade the underlayment, and correct flashing details that were wrong on the original roof. Once the new shingles are on, those opportunities are gone. Spend the time during the tear-off phase to walk the roof with your contractor, ask about the ice and water shield, and verify that the ridge vent and drip edge are in the scope of work. An extra thousand dollars spent on details now can save ten thousand in repairs later.

The roof over your head is a long-term investment. Understanding the roof replacement process before you start gives you control over the outcome, and that is worth more than any bid discount.