

Why New Construction Roofing Differs From Replacement in Austin: What Homeowners Need to Know

If you are building a house in the city of Austin, the roof is not just the top layer. It is a structural system that has to work with the whole building envelope, and the decisions you make during new construction roofing are fundamentally different from what happens during a tear-off and re-cover. I have worked on both sides of that line for years, and the single biggest mistake I see is treating new construction like a bigger version of a replacement. It is not. The timeline, the permitting, the material choices, and even the way you think about warranties change completely.

When you are building from the ground up, you have access to the roof deck before anything else is in the way. That changes how you sequence the work and what you can do with the structure itself. On a replacement, you are working around an existing house, existing HVAC supports, and often an attic full of ductwork. With new construction, you can design the roof deck to handle the loads you want from the start. That is a luxury you only get once.

Permits and Codes: Not a Checklist Exercise

The city of Austin has some of the stricter building codes in Texas, and they apply differently to new construction than to re-roofs. For new construction, you are subject to the full energy code, which means your roof assembly must meet specific insulation values, air-sealing requirements, and sometimes cool roof coating standards if you are in a zone that demands it. I have seen plans get held up because the architect assumed a standard asphalt shingles product would pass the thermal calculations, but it did not. The city of Austin has its own energy code amendments on top of the state code, and they are not forgiving.

Floodplain regulations also come into play more often than people expect. Even if your lot is not in a mapped floodplain, the city may require drainage calculations that affect how much water your roof can shed and where it goes. Kick-out flashing is not just a good practice here; it is often required by the building code on new construction to prevent water from being channeled behind the siding at the roof-to-wall intersection. That is a detail that rarely gets enforced on a replacement, but on [new construction roofing](#), the inspector will look for it.

Material Choices You Only Get Once

One of the hardest conversations I have with homeowners is about why they cannot just use the same materials on new construction that they used on their last replacement. With new

construction, you are choosing a roof system that will be integrated into the house for decades. The deck, the underlayment, the flashing details, and the primary membrane all have to work together. You have options that simply do not exist on a replacement because the structural support is already in place.

For example, standing seam metal roof is a common choice for new homes in Austin because of its longevity and its ability to handle the thermal movement of the Gulf Coast climate. But standing seam requires a specific deck preparation and often a continuous structural substrate that is hard to retrofit. On a replacement, you are usually stuck with what is there. On new construction, you can design the roof deck to accept standing seam from the start, and that changes the whole cost and performance picture.

Single-ply membranes like TPO and EPDM are also more common in new construction than in replacements here, because they allow for larger sheets, fewer seams, and better integration with rooftop equipment. Duro-Last and Firestone both make systems that are factory-fabricated to reduce field seams, and that matters when you are trying to get a roof that will last through Austin summers without leaking. But those systems require a clean, dry deck and a schedule that does not conflict with other trades. On new construction, you control the schedule. On a replacement, you are at the mercy of the weather and the existing structure.

I have also seen more homeowners ask about cool roof coating on new builds, especially after the 2023 code updates that pushed reflectance requirements higher. A cool roof coating can reduce the surface temperature by 30 degrees or more, which cuts cooling load and helps with Austin Energy rebates. But it has to be specified early because it affects the membrane choice. Not all TPO membranes are rated for the same reflectivity, and some manufacturers like GAF and Owens Corning have specific products that qualify for the highest tiers.

Timelines and Trade Coordination

New construction roofing follows a different calendar than replacement work. In a replacement, the roofers show up after the old roof is torn off, and they are usually the only trade on site that day. In new construction, the roofers are one of several trades working simultaneously. The framing crew finishes the roof deck, then the mechanical crew puts in the HVAC supports, then the roofers come, and then the solar guys want to mount panels on top. If the sequencing is off, you end up with patched membranes and compromised warranties.

I have been on jobs where the sky lights were ordered late, and the roofer had to cut holes in a finished TPO membrane and flash them in after the fact. That is not ideal. On a replacement, you would never have that problem because the sky lights are already there or you are not adding them. On new construction, you have to plan every penetration before the membrane goes down. That includes the ice and water shield underlayment, which is a self-adhering

membrane that goes on the deck before the primary roof. If you miss a detail, you are cutting into that underlayment and compromising the whole system.

Another timing issue is the weather window. Austin has a rainy season in the spring and a scorching summer that limits working hours. On new construction, you can schedule the roof installation for the dry months and then let the interior work proceed under a dry shell. On a replacement, you are often racing the rain and hoping the ice and water shield holds until the shingles or membrane go on. That is a stress that new construction avoids if the schedule is managed well.

Warranties and Long-Term Performance

The warranty picture is also different. On a replacement, most manufacturers offer a standard warranty that covers the membrane for 20 or 30 years, but the coverage is limited to defects in the material. On new construction, you can often negotiate a system warranty that covers the membrane, the flashing, and the accessories as a package. Duro-Last, for example, offers a total system warranty on new construction that includes the edge metal and the sealants, which is harder to get on a retrofit.

But here is the catch: those warranties are only as good as the installation. I have seen new construction roofing jobs where the contractor did not follow the manufacturer's specifications for fastener spacing or seam overlap, and the warranty was voided before the homeowner moved in. The city of Austin requires permits for new construction roofing, and the inspector will check for code compliance, but they do not check for manufacturer-specific details. That is on you and your contractor.

One thing I tell every homeowner is to ask for the manufacturer's written installation requirements before the work starts. If the contractor says they have done it a hundred times and it is fine, ask them to show you the spec sheet. I have seen GAF and Owens Corning both deny claims because the contractor used a different fastener pattern than what was in the manual. That is a risk you do not want to take.

Design Decisions That Matter

New construction roofing gives you the chance to make design choices that affect how the house looks and performs for decades. The pitch of the roof, the type of decking, the color of the membrane, the placement of the sky lights, and the location of the HVAC supports are all decisions you make once. If you put the HVAC units on the roof without planning for the structural load and the flashing details, you will be dealing with leaks and sagging decking in ten years.

I have also seen homeowners choose a metal roof for the aesthetics and then realize they need to add solar panels later. Standing seam metal roof is great for solar attachments because there are no exposed fasteners, but you have to specify the seam profile to accept the clamps. That is a detail that the roofer needs to know before they order the panels. On a replacement, you are usually stuck with whatever system you can retrofit. On new construction, you can design it from the start.

Another detail that gets overlooked is the integration of the roof with the rest of the building envelope. The building codes in Austin require continuous air barriers and insulation that extends from the walls to the roof. If the roof deck has a different insulation value than the walls, you get thermal bridging and condensation problems. I have seen that happen with a TPO roof over a metal building where the insulation was not continuous, and the result was ice dams in winter and moisture in the roof cavity. That is a design issue that is much easier to fix on paper than after the roof is installed.

Costs and the 2026 Outlook

When people ask me about costs for new construction roofing in Austin, I tell them that 2026 will be interesting. Material prices have been volatile, and labor is tight. The cost of a standing seam metal roof is significantly higher than TPO or EPDM, but the lifespan is also longer. A metal roof can last 50 years with proper maintenance, while a TPO roof might need replacement in 25. The math changes depending on how long you plan to stay in the house.

Permit fees from the city of Austin are also going up, and the inspection process is getting more rigorous. I have seen plan review take six weeks for new construction roofing because the city wanted more detail on the flashing and the attachment of the roof deck to the walls. That is not a reason to avoid new construction, but it is a reason to start the permitting process early and to have a contractor who knows the local building codes.

One more thing: if you are building near the Gulf Coast, even though you are inland in Austin, the humidity and the potential for wind-driven rain mean that the roof system has to be detailed for water intrusion. Kick-out flashing, ice and water shield, and proper step flashing at the walls are not optional. They are the difference between a roof that lasts 30 years and one that leaks in five.

Final Thoughts

New construction roofing is not just a bigger version of a replacement. It is a different process with different opportunities and different risks. You get to design the roof from the ground up, choose the materials, and coordinate the trades in a way that a replacement cannot match. But

you also have to deal with the full weight of the building codes, the permitting process, and the need to get every detail right before the membrane goes down.

If you are building a new house in Austin, spend the time on the roof design. Talk to your contractor about the specific requirements of the city of Austin, the manufacturer warranties, and the sequencing of the work. And do not be afraid to ask for the spec sheets and the installation manuals. The roof is the most expensive system on the house, and it is the one that protects everything else. Getting it right on new construction is the only chance you will have.