

Understanding the Difference Between New Roof and Replacement in Austin

If you own a home in Austin, you have probably stared up at your ceiling during a summer thunderstorm and wondered whether the roof above you will hold. That question leads to a bigger one: should you tear off what is there and start over, or are you actually building something the house never had? The difference between new roof and replacement is not just a matter of semantics. It changes everything from the permit you pull to the warranty you carry, and it affects how your house handles heat, rain, and the occasional cedar sleet storm.

I have spent years working with Austin roofers on projects across Travis County, and I can tell you that most homeowners use the two terms as if they mean the same thing. They do not. A roof replacement typically removes the existing covering and installs new material over the same structural decking. A new roof construction, on the other hand, involves reworking or building the roof sheathing, the structural decking, the underlayment, and often the framing itself. That distinction matters when you are looking at a 2026 budget, a City of Austin permit timeline, or the fine print on a workmanship warranty.

What a Roof Replacement Actually Covers

A standard roof replacement is what most people picture: the old shingles come off, the roofers inspect the OSB or plywood underneath, and they lay down new underlayment and shingles. If the sheathing is sound, the job moves fast. You are paying for labor, disposal, and materials, but you are not re-engineering anything. The roof system design stays the same. That is fine if your house already has a decent roof structure and you just need to stop leaks or improve curb appeal before selling.

But a replacement has limits. You cannot change the slope, you cannot add a ridge vent without cutting into the framing, and you generally cannot upgrade the roof load capacity unless you pull a separate structural permit. The manufacturer warranty on the new shingles will be standard, but it will not cover problems that come from the old decking underneath. If your OSB has moisture damage from years of attic condensation, a replacement will hide that problem until the shingles start cupping. That is why some Austin roofers recommend a full tear-off to the rafters rather than a simple overlay. It costs more upfront but saves the headache of a callback six months later.

New Roof Construction and What It Unlocks

New roof construction is a different animal. It means you are designing a roof system from the structural decking up. That could be because you are adding a second story, building a new

addition, or replacing a roof that was undersized from the start. In older Austin homes, especially those built before the 1980s, the roof sheathing is often 1x6 boards spaced an inch apart, not solid OSB. That setup cannot support modern architectural shingles or a solar-ready roof. If you want to go solar, you need solid sheathing, proper fasteners, and a roof load capacity that meets the current Austin Energy requirements for panel weight and wind uplift.

A new roof construction also lets you integrate things a replacement cannot. Skylight integration is easier when you are already cutting decking and can frame the curb properly. A cool roof coating or reflective underlayment can be specified from the start. You can add a ridge vent system that actually matches the ventilation design, not just a plastic vent cap slapped on after the fact. And if you are working with GAF or a comparable manufacturer, you can get a combined workmanship warranty and manufacturer warranty that covers both the materials and the installation for twenty years or more. That kind of coverage does not exist on a simple replacement because the decking is not warranted.

The [difference between new roof and replacement](#) becomes obvious when you talk to the City of Austin permit office. A replacement usually falls under an reroof permit, which is straightforward and often issued over the counter if the structural decking is not touched. A new roof construction requires a full building permit, structural calculations, and sometimes an energy compliance review. If you are working with TEXO or a local builder, they will tell you the timeline difference. A replacement permit might take a week. A new roof permit can take three to six weeks, depending on the scope. Plan for that if you are scheduling around the spring rain window.

Cost Differences and the 2026 Outlook

Nobody likes to talk about money until the estimate arrives. In Austin, a standard roof replacement on a 2,000-square-foot home runs somewhere between \$8,000 and \$14,000 in 2025, and that range will creep upward in 2026 as material costs rise and labor stays tight. New roof construction starts higher, often \$18,000 to \$30,000 for the same footprint, because you are paying for structural work, new sheathing, and the permit fees. But the value is not just in the price tag. A new roof construction adds to the resale value in a way a replacement does not. Buyers and appraisers look for the structural upgrade, especially if it includes solar-ready features or a cool roof that lowers attic temperatures.

One thing I see homeowners miss is the warranty difference. A replacement comes with a workmanship warranty from the contractor, usually five to ten years, and a manufacturer warranty on the shingles that can run thirty years or more for GAF architectural shingles. But those two warranties do not overlap neatly. If a leak starts at a valley or a skylight curb, the manufacturer will say it is an installation issue, and the contractor will say it is a material defect. A new roof construction, when done through a single contract with a clear scope, can

carry a single-source warranty that covers the whole roof system design. That is rare, but it exists, and it is worth asking for.

Permits, Inspections, and Austin Energy

The City of Austin requires a roof permit for any work that replaces more than twenty-five percent of the roof area. That applies to both replacements and new construction, but the inspection points differ. For a replacement, the inspector checks the underlayment and the flashing. For a new roof construction, the inspection covers the structural decking, the fastening schedule, the ridge vent installation, and the overall roof load capacity. If you are adding a solar-ready roof, Austin Energy may require a separate review to ensure the roof can handle the additional dead load of panels and the wind uplift forces that come with the Hill Country gusts.

I have seen projects stall because the homeowner did not know that a new roof construction requires a load path analysis. That is a fancy way of saying the inspector wants to know how the weight of the roof transfers to the walls and foundation. If your house has trusses that were designed for lightweight asphalt shingles, you cannot just switch to heavy architectural shingles without checking the numbers. That is where a good contractor earns their fee. They will run the calculations, submit them with the permit, and save you from a red tag.

Design Decisions You Only Get Once

The biggest difference between new roof and replacement comes down to choices. With a replacement, you pick a color and a shingle profile. With a new roof construction, you pick the roof system design. You decide whether to include a ridge vent, where the skylight integration goes, whether the sheathing is OSB or plywood, and whether the underlayment is synthetic felt or a high-temp ice-and-water shield. You also decide how the roof ties into the existing structure, which matters if you are planning a future addition or a solar array.

Architectural shingles are a good example. They look better, they last longer, and they cost more. But they are heavier. A standard replacement cannot always handle the weight unless the decking is upgraded. A new roof construction can be designed for architectural shingles from the start, with a thicker OSB panel and a tighter fastener schedule. The same goes for a cool roof. A cool roof coating reflects more sunlight and keeps the attic cooler, which lowers cooling bills in the summer. But the coating only works if the roof sheathing is solid and the ventilation is correct. You cannot retrofit that into an old roof system reliably.

Practical Advice for Austin Homeowners

If your roof is more than twenty years old and you are seeing granules in the gutter or curling shingles at the edges, start by getting an inspection. Ask the inspector to tell you the condition of the structural decking, not just the shingles. If the decking is solid, a replacement might be the right call. If the decking is wet, rotted, or undersized, you are looking at new roof construction whether you planned for it or not. That is the moment to decide if you want to upgrade the whole system or just patch what is there.

Talk to your contractor about the workmanship warranty and the manufacturer warranty separately. Get both in writing. Ask whether the warranty covers the full roof system design or just the shingles. If you are working with a builder who belongs to TEXO, they will have access to training and standards that smaller crews might not. That matters for things like fastener placement and ridge vent alignment, which are the details that make a roof last thirty years instead of fifteen.

And do not forget the City of Austin permit. Pulling a permit is not just about avoiding a fine. It creates a record that protects you when you sell the house. A buyer's inspector will check for permits, and if your new roof does not have one, the sale can fall apart. It is a simple step that too many people skip because they want to save a few hundred dollars. That shortcut costs more in the long run.

The difference between new roof and replacement is not a technicality. It is a fork in the road that determines your budget, your timeline, your warranty, and the long-term performance of the biggest single assembly on your house. Understand which one you need before you sign a contract, and you will save yourself a lot of trouble when the next Texas storm rolls through.