

Keys to Selecting the Proper Roofing for Your Community

In the last part of our series on what to consider when replacing capital items, we are going to look at roofing. Again, some communities might have very small areas of roofing if there are no or few amenities. Others, such as townhome communities or condominiums or communities with an extensive clubhouse area or out buildings will have a significant investment in this item. Nevertheless, we all own something with a roof on it and this information can just be educational for your own purposes.

Next to your roads, the roof is the second capital item with a longer life. An asphalt shingle roof is expected to last between 17 and 25 years, and a slate or tile roof will last even longer. There are many different types of roofing material these days. It could be a composite material, cedar shake, a single-ply membrane, built up tar and gravel. All of these roofs provide a fairly long life. There are some events, however, that may affect the life of the roof, such as leaks, damage from hail or other weather conditions. Whatever the material, replacement is not inexpensive. With longevity comes increased cost although many higher priced options are better values. Architectural composition shingles are very affordable and carry a 30 to 50 year warranty. For flat roofs, rubberized membranes offer better durability and ease of repair than traditional hot tar varieties.

Preparation: While improvements in roofing materials are great for consumers, the best roof invented can be your worst nightmare if it's not installed properly. Installing a roof is a technical exercise that requires special training and attention to detail. Since roofs are intended to last many years, selecting a roofing company that will likely be around for years is also extremely important. Here's how to get ready for a proper roof job:

*Hire only licensed roofing contractors that specialize in the kind of roof you want. If you have a multiple year roofing repair schedule, it's very important to use the same roofing company even if it costs a bit more money. When different contractors are used, sorting out repairs, maintenance, and warranties gets to be almost impossible.

*Get at least 3 bids from qualified contractors

*Check contractor licensing with the appropriate state agency. Most states keep licensing and insurance information plus a history of complaints made.

*Call at least 3 references from each of your bidders to inquire about performance.

Bid Specifications. Unless the roofing job is straightforward (remove and replace with no repairs), invest in a roofing consultant (not a contractor) to prepare detailed specifications which can be bid by the contractors. Those specifications should include:

- removal and disposal of existing roof
- repair of damaged sheathing (wood decking under felt paper)
- protection of landscaping, decks, etc.
- properly installed sheathing if required
- proper underlayment (felt or tar paper installed over sheathing)
- proper attic ventilation
- adequate insulation, if applicable
- selection of the right roof system
- proper flashing
- gutters and downspouts, if necessary
- rain protection during the course of work
- regular debris clean up

There are building code and product specifications that need to be considered. It is always recommended to remove the existing roof system so the roof deck can be properly inspected and repaired. Also, some manufacturers will not warrant their product when it is installed over an existing roof. Finally, a roof installed over another never lays down properly and detracts from curb appeal. If a new type of roofing is being considered that is heavier than the original, like tile or slate, a structural engineer should calculate the weight load requirements. It may require structural enhancements to carry the additional load.

Since a roofing project is always costly, it is worth hiring an attorney to prepare the contract which includes the manufacturer's installation specification. Besides getting the work done properly, getting it done within a certain time frame is important. This is done by including a per day dollar penalty for non-weather related delays.

The payment schedule is extremely important. Do not enter into an agreement that requires prepayment for labor or materials. This is a red flag for a contractor that is financially strapped or using your money to pay for other bills. Making several progress payments is normal but the payments should be based on the actual work completed. Of course, never tender final payment until all work is completed and the contractor provides a properly executed lien waiver. Finally, assemble a roofing file which includes the contract, product information and warranty.

Right Roofing

There are a number of things to consider when selecting the right roof for your association. Cost and durability head the list, but aesthetics are important too. The right roof is one that balances all of these considerations:

Asphalt shingles hold an overwhelming share of the U.S. roofing market. Most asphalt shingles are fiberglass reinforced which consist of a fiberglass mat with a top and bottom layer of asphalt and mineral granules. Zinc or copper granules are applied to asphalt shingles to protect against algae growth. While 3-tab style shingles have been very popular, "architectural" style (mimics wood shake look) has become increasingly popular. Asphalt shingles are available in 25-50 year warranties depending on the thickness. Most roofing materials are categorized as UL Class A, B or C with A being the most fire resistant followed by B and C. Most fiberglass shingles have a Class A fire rating.

Wood shingles and shakes are made from cedar, redwood, southern pine and other woods. Shingles are machine-sawn; shakes are hand-hewn and rougher looking. Their natural look is popular in California, the Northwest and Midwest. Things to consider: they have a UL fire rating of Class B or C or none at all and they should be treated with a preservative every 3 to 5 years to prevent decay. In other words, they are high maintenance.

Clay or concrete tile is a durable but fairly expensive roofing material. "Mission-style" and "Spanish" round-topped tiles are widely used in the Southwest and Florida, and flat styles are also available to create French and English looks. Tile is available in a variety of colors and finishes. Note: Tile is heavy so if you are replacing lighter roofing with tile, you will need to verify that the structure will support the load.

Slate is quarried in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Canada. It comes in different colors and grades, depending on its origin. While extremely durable, it is more expensive than other roofing materials and its application requires skill and experience. Many old homes in the Northeast still are protected by this long-lasting roofing material.

Metal roofing is a normally commercial roofing material that works in some residential settings. Some metal shingles are constructed to simulate traditional roofs like wood shakes, shingles and tile. Apart from the longevity of metal roofing, metal shingles are relatively lightweight,

typically have a Class A fire rating, have a greater resistance to adverse weather and can be quite aesthetically pleasing.

Synthetic roofing simulates slate, wood shingles and shakes. Visit a building that is roofed with that product before making a buying decision.

Aside from other product choices, the roofer's experience level is critical to the installation. Check references and the product warranty carefully. Product warranties often have "loopholes" for installation problems. If possible, use an installer that is certified by the manufacturer. This way, no matter what the problem, you're covered. Choose the right roofing weighing aesthetics, cost, durability, warranty and maintenance. The last thing you want is your residents singing "Raindrops are falling on my head."

Make sure your contract provides the Association with the greatest protection. Hire professionals both to do the job and to oversee the job, if needed. Make sure all applicable permits are pulled as required by your local municipality. If the job is \$2500 or more, make sure that a Notice of Commencement is filed by the Association. A pinch of prevention is worth a pound of cure.