

Siding gives home a whole new look

While there are other ways to improve the appearance of a house, few enhancements provide as great a transformation as new siding.

Siding serves two functions: it defends the house from the elements, insects and rodents and it adds beauty and style to the exterior.

Siding can be made of wood, vinyl or aluminum. At one time, wood was the most common material used. Then aluminum briefly became most popular. Since the 1990s, though, vinyl has been the siding product of choice. Leading manufacturers include CertainTeed and Revere.

"Siding is the skin of the house," said Jeff Durocher of Jeff Durocher Roofing, Siding and General Contracting, Little Falls (973-812-0614). "(Vinyl) offers the homeowner style and durability and it's also easy to maintain."

"Siding is smooth, straight and makes a house look the way it's supposed to look," added Dave Goscinski of JJED Remodeling, Dumont (jjedremodeling.com).

Between them, Durocher and Goscinski have more than 40 years of experience in renovation projects, with siding among their specialties. They offer nearly identical advice to homeowners when it comes to siding questions:

What are the advantages to vinyl siding? Vinyl's ability to withstand extreme climatic conditions for decades makes it extremely durable. It is also cost-effective, especially when compared to painting, which tends to require regular re-paintings, stripping, power washing and touchups.

Vinyl color lasts longer than paint color and retains deep tones much longer because it permeates the material. Also, vinyl doesn't attract insects or mildew and doesn't rot or flake. Insulated siding keeps the house warm and heating bills down.

How much does new siding cost? Most contractors charge by the square (10 by 10 feet). Rates typically run from



Cement fiber siding offers a new, higher-end alternative to vinyl. This product by CertainTeed includes 50 percent recycled content and also resists wood-boring insects, decay, mold and fire.

\$350 to \$500 per square for the body of the house. The exact amount varies and can grow based on the number of windows, overhangs, trim and brackets.

How long does the installation take? Depending on the size of the job, anywhere from two to five days. An extremely complicated project could take

HAS YOUR SIDING HAD IT?

It is important to inspect your siding yearly because, sooner or later, it will need some maintenance or repair.

As you walk around your house, look at all surfaces — especially those areas most likely to develop problems, such as:

- the corners near the roof
- areas abutting the door or windows
- the section that mates with the foundation.

Signs that it may be time to replace your siding:

- It's separating at the seams
- The caulking is failing
- The panels are swelling
- The boards no longer lay flat.

two weeks.

What kind of maintenance is required? Hardly any, aside from occasional cleaning. Most manufacturers recommend washing vinyl siding at least twice a year to remove dirt and grime. A power washer gets the best results, but often a forceful spray from the garden hose is enough. Areas with thick accumulations of grime may have to be scrubbed with a brush and a cleaning agent.

Does siding increase the resale value of a home? In today's resale market, a beautiful, low-maintenance finish can greatly enhance the value of a home.

Is vinyl siding environmentally friendly? It is a sustainable material with a long lifespan. It's use helps to conserve
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PHOTO COURTESY OF NAPS

The Heritage Cedar shake product, from Variform by Ply Gem, demonstrates that advanced polymeric materials in natural-looking shapes and styles are almost indistinguishable from natural siding materials.



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wood and other natural resources often used in home construction. It never needs to be painted, thereby reducing the amount of paint, stain, caulk and other maintenance-related substances entering the waste stream.

What else should a homeowner know about siding? That installation is a lot more involved than most people think.

"So many people ask me to come by when they're not home and just throw an estimate into the mail box," Goscinski said.

"It doesn't work that way. I don't simply measure and then tack up the siding.

"That is why we have conversations with our customers and make sure they get what they want. We explain the advantages of different materials and help the homeowner select the best product to meet their needs."

Durocher added, "Choosing the right product and finding a reliable installer can be difficult. We offer a wide range of choices for all budgets."

— DOUG SCANCARELLA