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What To Do With Your Roof?

A Capitol Hill Roofing Makeover

By TOM DANIEL

Since your roof is one of the most important investments in your home it's a good idea to know what to do when problems strike. Capitol Hill is filled with older, flat roofed homes. The snow and ice of this winter and the heavy rains and winds of this summer have caused significant roofing problems. Many of these roofs need to be repaired or replaced. Most homeowners can see what they need to repair or replace in their home, whether it's new kitchen cabinets, repairing your hardwood floors or plumbing fixtures. But how about your roof? Probably not! Yet what happens on the roof can have a major impact on the rest of your home. Hopefully, these examples will take some of the mystery out of roof work, what roofers do and serve as a guide to homeowners.

Case Study

Capitol Hill homeowner, Maryann, lives on G St., SE and has owned her home for over 15 years. "The storms of last winter were tough on my roof; there were leaks after the second or third blizzard. I last had it repaired 12-13 years ago when the roofer added a layer. I knew I couldn't add yet another layer so it was either a few patches or a whole new roof."

Should she repair or should she replace? These were the options. "I don't plan to move anytime soon so I really wanted to avoid a quick fix. If I just patched the worst spots, it seemed I would be facing more problems every time the weather got bad." So she had decided to replace the roof.

Questions & Choices

Here are a few of the questions Maryann and all homeowners in a similar situation are faced with.

What type of roof did she currently have? Would the new roof have to be made of the same materials? Was the roof in multiple layers (an older roof with a newer roof on top)?



Condition of roof before work began. Photo by Tom Daniel.



In the process of repairing the roof. Photo by Tom Daniel.

Would it need to be torn off or could a new roof be installed on top of the old roof? What about the removal of the debris of the old roof? Would the work impact her neighbor's roofs? Was a permit required from the D.C. government? Would the air conditioning and heating units on top of the roof be impacted by the roofing work? Was it time to replace the old skylight and hatch at the same time? What about the gutters and down spouts?

And More

What different types of roofs could she choose from? What were the benefits of each? What were the costs of each? Were warranties available on the work and the materials? Do new roofing systems include insulation (under the roof top) to assist in energy efficiency? Can the materials on top of the roof system increase energy efficiency?

Time For Answers

In the case of Maryann the roof was actually in multi-layers, an old "slag" roof on bottom (gravel and asphalt) and a membrane roof on top. Because there were two roofs, a "tear off" down to the wood foundation was required. The roof debris would have to carefully be taken off and hauled away. The new roof system would be installed from the bottom up.

She chose to have a new modified bitumen roofing installed (with a 15-year manufacturer's warranty on materials) which includes three layers of materials including a layer of insulation to assist in energy efficiency and a white granulated surface

N.E. They were faced with a similar situation to Maryann. However, Jeff said, "I had tried for a time to repair numerous leaks on the roof that were causing a significant amount of water to enter the interior. For a while I had some success, but over time I realized I needed to bring in a roofing contractor before the situation got out of hand." Jeff and Laurie had an old standing seam tin roof that was only one layer. They also chose a modified bitumen roof which could be installed directly over the tin roof once the standing seams were made flat. They decided on a complete roofing "makeover" which included a new skylight, hatch and gutter.



The final outcome of repairing the roof. Photo by Tom Daniel.

on the top to help reflect the sun and further increase energy efficiency. The other choice of a roofing system was a new metal roof of either tin, copper or stainless steel. These roofs are very long lasting but significantly more expensive than modified bitumen.

The AC/heating units would not be impacted by the roofing work (sometimes these units have to be disconnected and reconnected by a qualified professional before the work begins and after it is completed) and there would be no impact on the neighbor's roofs. She chose to retain the existing skylight, hatch, gutter and down spout.

And, yes, a permit was required by the D.C. government!

Another Case

Jeff and Laurie live on 5th St.

These actual case studies are very typical of what Capitol Hill homeowners must consider when their aging flat roof begins to show signs of stress and call out for a roofing makeover. It's not a bad idea to contact a roofing professional for guidance early on to avoid major potential problems to the interior of the house.

Tom Daniel is the owner of R. Thomas Daniel Roofing and specializes in working on flat roofs in Capitol Hill. He and his family have been in the roofing business on the Hill for three generations and nearly 90 years. He can be reached at 443-968-0311 (Maryland#) or by email at rtd80209@aol.com.

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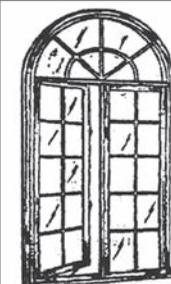
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