Walk around almost any older Huntington neighborhood and you will spot them: the kitchen bump-out added in the 1980s, the attached garage with a barely pitched lid, the dormer top that looks flat from the street. These low-slope sections are small, but they cause a disproportionate share of leaks. Here is how to think about replacing them.

Why Flat Roofs Are Different

A pitched shingle roof sheds water by gravity. A flat or low-slope roof has to be a continuous waterproof membrane, because water moves slowly and can sit in place. "Flat" roofs are never truly flat; they should have a slight slope toward a drain, scupper, or edge. When that slope is lost to sagging decking or poor original framing, water ponds and shortens the life of *roofing contractor Huntington NY* whatever sits on top.

Shingles are generally not suited to very low slopes. That is why additions and garages usually need a different system than the main house.

The Three Common Membrane Options

EPDM (Rubber)

EPDM is a synthetic rubber sheet, usually black, that comes in large rolls. It is flexible, familiar to many installers, and handles temperature swings well. Seams are typically glued or taped, and the quality of those seams and the flashing details matters a great deal.

TPO (Single-Ply Thermoplastic)

TPO is a white or light-colored sheet whose seams are heat-welded together. The light surface reflects sunlight, which can reduce heat buildup under an addition. Welded seams can be very strong when done properly.

Modified Bitumen

Modified bitumen is an asphalt-based, multi-layer product, often applied in sheets that are torched, heat-welded, or set in adhesive. It is a heavier, more traditional system with a rugged surface, and it is often chosen where foot traffic or debris is a concern.

Side-by-Side Comparison

The ranges below are approximate and typical for planning only. Actual cost and lifespan depend on installation quality, exposure, and maintenance.

Feature EPDM TPO Modified Bitumen Typical appearance Black rubber sheet White or light single-ply Gray or mineral-granule surface Approximate lifespan 20 to 30 years 15 to 25 years 15 to 25 years Relative cost Moderate Moderate Moderate to higher Seam method Adhesive or tape Heat-welded Heat or adhesive Good for Simple shapes, quick repairs Reflective, energy-minded roofs Tougher surfaces, traffic areas

No single material is best for every house. A good contractor will explain why a particular system suits your roof's shape, exposure, and budget.

What a Proper Flat Roof Replacement Includes

Replacing a membrane is more than rolling out new material. Ask whether the scope covers:

1. **Tear-off or recover:** Removing the old system, or in some cases installing over it. Hidden wet insulation is a good reason to tear off.
2. **Deck inspection:** Checking the plywood or boards underneath for rot, which is common beneath long-term leaks.
3. **Insulation:** Many flat roofs need rigid insulation, which also helps create or restore slope through tapered pieces.
4. **Drainage:** Confirming that drains, scuppers, and gutters are clear and positioned to actually move water off the roof.
5. **Edge metal:** Properly installed edge flashing keeps wind from peeling up the membrane.
6. **Wall and penetration flashing:** Where the flat section meets the main house wall, and around vents or skylights, is where most leaks begin.

Common Trouble Spots on Long Island Homes

Huntington-area weather is hard on low-slope roofs. Nor'easters drive rain sideways, and heavy snow can sit on a flat roof and melt slowly. Near the harbor in Cold Spring Harbor, Centerport, and Huntington Bay, salt air can corrode exposed metal edges and fasteners. Mature tree canopy in places like Greenlawn and Dix Hills drops leaves and branches that clog drains and puncture membranes.

If your garage or addition roof is surrounded by tall oaks, plan for regular cleaning. A clogged scupper can turn a minor rainstorm into a ceiling stain.

Signs It Is Time to Replace, Not Patch

- Ponding water that remains a day or more after rain.
- Blisters, cracks, or splitting at seams.
- Membrane pulling away from walls or edges.
- Repeated leaks in the same area after repairs.
- Soft or spongy feel underfoot, which suggests wet insulation or deck.

A small repair can make sense on a younger roof. On an aging one, repeated patching often costs more over time than a clean replacement.

Planning the Project

A trusted provider of **longislandexteriorco.com Long Island Exterior Co.** can inspect your flat sections along with the rest of the house, so the whole exterior is addressed in one plan. This is also a good time to coordinate gutters, trim, and any skylight work.

Before work begins, confirm permit requirements with the correct office. The Town of Huntington Building Department handles unincorporated hamlets like Huntington Station, Greenlawn, and Dix Hills, while incorporated villages such as Northport, Lloyd Harbor, and Huntington Bay have their own building departments. Also verify that your contractor holds a Suffolk County Consumer Affairs home improvement license and carries insurance.

Questions to Ask Before You Sign

- Which membrane do you recommend for this roof, and why?
- Will you remove the old system or install over it?
- How will you correct ponding or add slope?
- How are the seams and wall flashings handled?
- What does the workmanship warranty cover, and for how long?

Final Thought

Small roofs deserve the same care as big ones. Choosing the right membrane, fixing drainage, and detailing the flashing properly will do more for your addition or garage than any single product name.

About the Author

Marcus T. is a freelance writer who has spent more than a decade working alongside residential roofing crews on the East Coast. He writes plain-language guides that help homeowners understand flat roofs, flashing, and replacement decisions.