

Home Siding Choices

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Sooner or later every client faces the question of what type of home siding to use. Usually the choices come down to Vinyl, Hardi-Plank or Cedar Siding. Below is a discussion of cost, maintenance and durability of these choices.

As a price point question, the costs (low to high) are vinyl, hardi-plank, and cedar. But to be clear, the vinyl siding cost will not be substantially less than Hardi-Plank if the Azek exterior trim system is used. This exterior trim typically includes window surrounds, eaves; porch trim, etc. (see maintenance below).

On a standard (50x110) house, the prices for cedar siding are approximately double the hardi-plank costs (40k to 20k for siding only). The Azek package remains a constant (30-35k). If the entire house, including trim is vinyl, then the Azek is eliminated and the total siding price will be substantially less (22k all in). But the results are disappointing at best.

Most of our houses are cedar, some are hardi-plank. Very few are vinyl. And while the handi-plank is less money, sometimes we use it because it is the aesthetic we want. Hardi-plank also has a relatively new product on the market called Artisan. Field-finished only, it is essentially a thicker hardi-plank. It is substantial and more historically accurate. It is a cost upgrade (most of which occurs in thicker trim requirements).

As far as maintenance issues, it has to be said that the painting/peeling issues that we once had were mostly related to the trim package (eave, cornices, window trim, etc). With the advent of good synthetics, like Azek, that problem is in the past. And while I am sure I learned life-lessons scraping and painting exterior trim, it's no longer an issue. Assuming no maintenance on the trim, all that remains is the siding itself. Hardi-plank is probably the most durable (it is after all made of cement) and it holds the finish. It can be painted in the field, or prefinished from the manufacturer's standard colors.

Cedar siding offers a wide range of design and color options. The pre-stained color is a factory applied (double-dipped) solid stain. The color warranty is typically 10 years. Many clients opt for a more natural cedar appearance...one that will gray-out. For this we typically use a weathering-stain referred to as bleaching oil. It is a preservative intended to encourage a more uniform graying process. Often the bleaching oil is tinted with another light gray stain. The natural appearance may require power washing every few years depending on sun exposure and personal preference.

Within a reasonable price point, quality is of course the issue. These houses are intended to age well and have permanence about them...whereas the vinyl always seems temporary. Ironically, the only siding I've replaced in the last 15 years was vinyl (the product faded and the manufacturer replaced it). The success of the house lies in the detailing and the care with which it is built. And that pays dividends down the line in terms of property value and the simple joy of a thing done well. The cedar and hardi-plank sidings allow this to occur.

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