

Seattle is kind to trees, coffee drinkers, and people who love cool summers. It is not gentle on home exteriors. Between wind-driven rain off the Sound, long stretches of moisture, freeze-thaw swings in the foothills, and moss that colonizes anything porous, siding takes a beating here. I have walked enough jobs in Ballard, West Seattle, and up through Shoreline to see the pattern: a small failure at a window head or trim joint becomes a wet wall cavity, and then you are negotiating dry rot and a full facade replacement. This guide lays out how to think about siding replacement services in Seattle, WA, from material choices and sequencing to the quirks of local codes and what to expect from siding contractors in Seattle.

What Seattle's climate does to siding and trim

Moisture finds the path of least resistance. On older homes, that path is often an unflashed trim joint, a failed caulk bead at a corner board, or a siding nail that split the edge of a cedar plank. The rain here rarely falls straight down. It blows across the facade, repeatedly soaking the same [dry rot repair](#) elevations. Any material that wicked moisture yesterday will be wetter today. Over months and years, that creates the conditions for fungal decay. When you hear contractors talk about dry rot repair Seattle homeowners need, they are talking about decay fungi that thrive in damp, unventilated wood, then stay active even after the immediate moisture source goes away.

On the trim side, the weakest points are horizontal surfaces and end grain. House trim repair often starts where a windowsill meets a jamb or where a band board caps a foundation. Exterior trim repair in Seattle frequently reveals more than cosmetic issues. I have removed a 1 by 4 with a flaking paint line and found solid cedar for three feet, then a pocket of brown-crumble rot the size of a grapefruit where water sat behind a miter joint. Water travels. If you are calling for Seattle trim repair, ask the tech to probe beyond the visible damage. A good inspection saves you from closing up a wet cavity and hoping for the best.

When repair is enough, and when replacement is smarter

Light impact, isolated cracked siding, or a failed butt joint can be handled with Trim and siding repair. If the sheathing underneath is dry and the water management details around the area are sound, you can patch, back-prime, and move on. Siding repair Seattle homeowners request often includes small sections of lap siding near hose bibs or under decks where splashback is common. Replace a few boards, adjust the flashing, and the wall performs again.

Replacement becomes the better choice when you see repeated paint failure, swelling, or mushroomed nail heads across a field of wall, or when a Seattle dry rot inspection confirms compromised sheathing or studs. The other pivot point is age and maintenance history. If your wood lap siding from the 1980s has been repainted six times, has hairline checks everywhere, and shows cupping on the south elevation, stop chasing spot fixes. The labor to piece in repairs across every wall will get close to the cost of new cladding with a rainscreen, and you will still have legacy detailing that invites water back in.

The same logic applies to trim. Exterior trim repair is appropriate when the damage is limited to lengths that can be cleanly scarfed in, and the adjacent millwork has remaining life. If the entire water table is sponge-soft or every window head has swollen joints, full replacement with properly flashed assemblies is the safer move.

A quick word on dry rot: what it is, and why it spreads

The name is misleading. Dry rot needs moisture to start. In our climate, it usually starts with trapped water in unventilated cavities where the wood cannot dry between wetting cycles. Once established, the fungi digest the structural polymers in the wood and leave it brittle, brown, and easily crushed. A Dry rot repair contractor will remove not just the visibly soft wood, but also 8 to 12 inches beyond to reach clean, sound material. Seattle dry rot repair often includes swapping out sections of rim joist, corner studs, and window trimmers, not just the finish layers you see.

A thorough Seattle dry rot inspection should include moisture readings, probing, and opening small test areas. Infrared cameras help, but they do not replace a screwdriver and experience. If a contractor proposes closing up without tracing the moisture source, press for a plan: where did the water enter, how will the new assembly shed it, and how will trapped moisture escape?

Choosing a siding material that fits Seattle

Cedar looks right on many Seattle homes, especially prewar bungalows and midcentury houses in wooded neighborhoods. It is workable, beautiful, and forgiving to install. It demands consistent maintenance. If you paint cedar,

expect a repaint every 7 to 10 years, sooner on windward elevations. If you stain it, you will refresh more often, but you can keep the grain visible.

Engineered wood offers the warmth of wood without the same level of fuss. These products are factory-primed, sometimes factory-finished, and hold paint well. They are not rot-proof. Captured water will still break them down, though slower than softwood. The upside is predictable profiles and faster installs.

Fiber cement has become the default for many siding contractors in Seattle. It resists rot, insects, and fire, and it holds paint well. It also needs proper clearances above roofing and paving, stainless or hot-dip galvanized fasteners, and careful dust control during cutting. If you want a low-maintenance, long-lived cladding that looks like lap siding or shingles, fiber cement is a strong pick.

Vinyl exists in our market, but it rarely looks right on older Seattle architecture, and it does not protect the sheathing from impact. In more sheltered inland neighborhoods it can be a budget option, but against coastal wind and sideways rain, a rigid cladding with better detailing will serve you longer.

Metal panels are gaining momentum on modern infill and DADUs. They perform well if detailed for expansion and with a ventilated cavity. The aesthetic is crisp and intentional. If you choose painted steel or aluminum, verify the coating system and salt-spray performance, especially near the water.

The material is only half the story. The assembly behind it matters more. A rainscreen gap, even a modest 3/8 inch with furring strips or a drainage mat, transforms how well walls dry between storms. If you are investing in siding replacement services Seattle WA homeowners rely on, make sure the scope includes a continuous weather-resistive barrier, taped seams at sheathing, properly flashed penetrations, and that ventilation gap.

What a complete replacement project should include

The best experiences follow a clear sequence. Demolition shows you the truth. Plan for surprises. Once the old cladding is off, insist on a pause and a walkthrough. If the contractor finds decay or missing flashing, you want to see it before the wall is covered again. That is the moment to address dry rot repair and structural fixes, not three months later when a window leaks.

After framing repairs, the crew should install and integrate the weather-resistive barrier with window and door flashing. That means pan flashing at sills that laps over the WRB, side flashing that shingled-overlaps the pan, and head flashing with end dams. Corners should be reinforced with peel-and-stick, and the WRB must be lapped shingle-style. Seattle's wind pushes water up and sideways. The laps need to repel it.

With the WRB complete, furring establishes your rainscreen cavity. Even if the manufacturer allows direct-applied siding, the cavity is cheap insurance. At the base of the wall, use bug screen and weep paths. At the top, leave an exit so warm air can move behind the cladding.

Trim comes next. Pre-finish is your friend. I prefer to back-prime all cut ends of wood or engineered wood, then seal joints with high-quality sealant. On fiber cement, plan for manufactured joints or metal joiners where long runs exceed board length. House trim repair within a replacement scope often includes upgrading to PVC or fiber cement trim at high-exposure horizontals like water tables and belly bands.

Finally, siding goes on with proper fasteners, correct reveal, and manufacturer clearances. At roof-to-wall intersections, step flashing and kick-out flashing are mandatory. You would be amazed how many leaks start where a gutter dumps against a wall without a kick-out to push water into the gutter.

Painting or finishing should follow with the right conditions. Seattle does not give many dry, mild windows. Watch the forecast, and do not push paint in marginal weather. The first 48 hours matter.

Permits, HOA, and historic quirks

Seattle does not require a permit for like-for-like siding replacement on most one- and two-family homes when you are not altering structural elements or the building envelope in a way that changes energy compliance. That said, if you strip to sheathing and add continuous exterior insulation, you may trigger energy code details. Corner and trim changes in historic districts, like parts of Ballard Avenue or Queen Anne, may require approval. HOAs in townhome communities often specify colors, reveal, and materials. Start with a quick call to the city or a check of SDCI's permit portal. Good siding contractors in Seattle can tell you what applies to your address based on experience, but the homeowner is ultimately responsible.

Finding and vetting siding contractors Seattle WA homeowners can trust

Referrals carry weight, but not all referrals have the same value. Ask for projects that match your home's age and material. A contractor who shines on new fiber cement in Green Lake may not be the right fit for a 1910 cedar shingle Craftsman in Madrona.

Look for proof of rain-screened assemblies in their portfolio, not just pretty paint. Ask how they approach dry rot repair. A thoughtful answer describes investigation, controlled demolition, and line-item allowances for discovered conditions. Beware of bids that assume zero rot on a 30-year-old home in a wet microclimate.

Visit an active site if possible. You can learn a lot from the state of a job: capped tarps at day's end, labeled flashing tapes, cut stations with dust control, and a tidy yard tell you how they will treat your property.

Ask about crew composition. Many excellent outfits run with in-house carpenters for critical details and supplement with specialty subs for scaffolding or painting. What matters is quality control. Who signs off on flashing before siding covers it? How are photos and moisture readings documented?

On the paperwork side, verify licensing, bond, and insurance. Request a written scope with model numbers, flashing materials, and specifics like rainscreen thickness and fastener types. Product warranties are only as good as installation. Manufacturer affiliation programs can be helpful if they signal training, but they are not a substitute for jobsite craft.

Costs, allowances, and where the money goes

Siding replacement ranges widely. In Seattle, a straightforward two-story, 2,000 square-foot home with fiber cement lap siding and typical trim often falls in the mid-to-high five figures, sometimes reaching into low six figures with extensive trim, complex elevations, or access challenges. The price reflects scaffolding, disposal, WRB and flashing upgrades, rainscreen materials, carpentry, finish, and contingencies for dry rot repair.

Allowances matter. A realistic bid carries a line for discovered rot, often in the 5 to 15 percent of siding cost range, and a plan for unit pricing if replacement expands. If a contractor carries zero for Seattle dry rot repair on an older home, they will either come back with a painful change order or be tempted to bury marginal wood. Neither is good for you.

Expect to spend more on corners, window trims, belly bands, and decorative details. On modern homes with fewer breaks and more panels, you may spend more on metalwork and less on millwork. With cedar, budget for higher finish costs and ongoing maintenance. With fiber cement, watch for special trims and metal flashings that add durability but also dollars.

Scheduling around Seattle weather

You can replace siding year-round, but you cannot paint in a downpour or adhere flashing tape to soaked sheathing and expect it to stick. Good crews stage work to open and close manageable sections each day, especially in the rainy months. They run capillary breaks and temporary WRB to keep walls protected overnight. Ask about their wet weather protocol. If you hear vague assurances, dig deeper. When a forecast shifts, you want a plan that protects your home, not a hope that the storm passes.

Wind matters on waterfront homes from Magnolia to Alki. Gusts complicate tarp control and panel handling. Safety should trump schedule. Give your contractor room to pause on dangerous days without penalty.

The special case of windows and doors

Siding replacement is the best time to evaluate windows and doors. If your windows are at the end of their life, replacing them with the siding saves you from cutting new cladding later. If the windows are sound and relatively new, you can integrate them with proper flashing. The key is sequencing. Good practice uses pan flashing, side flashing <https://sparrowspestcontrol.com/identify-common-household-pests-washington/> that laps correctly, and head flashing tucked under the WRB. Caulk is not a primary defense in this climate. It is a secondary seal at best.

If a door threshold sits low, consider adding a back dam in the pan and improving exterior drainage. Many Seattle basements and entries sit close to grade. Water will find that low point. A small rework now cost less than ripping out a swollen jamb and rotten subfloor next winter.

Maintenance after a successful install

Even the best assembly benefits from periodic care. Walk the house each spring. Look for cracked caulk at penetrations, gaps at trim joints, peeling paint near downspouts, and signs of splashback. Keep plantings away from the siding so air can move. Adjust sprinklers so they do not drench walls. Clean gutters. A plugged downspout feeding a corner will undo your investment faster than anything else.

On wood and engineered wood, plan for paint touch-ups on high-exposure sides every few years and full repaint cycles in line with product warranties and real conditions. On fiber cement, paint cycles stretch longer, but sealants around penetrations still age. Replace brittle beads before water explores.

If you see localized swelling, soft spots, or persistent mildew that returns right after cleaning, call for an inspection. Early seattle dry rot repair is cheaper and less invasive than waiting for a large cavity to collapse.

A realistic timeline from first call to last brushstroke

Homeowners often underestimate lead time. From first inquiry to contract can take a few weeks as you gather bids, verify references, and make material choices. Custom materials and pre-finished siding add lead time, especially in busy seasons. Once scheduled, a typical single-family project might run two to six weeks onsite depending on home size, detail complexity, and weather. Factor in a buffer for discovered repairs. If the contractor finds a rotten rim on the north wall, you want them to take the time to fix it right.

Communication smooths everything. Weekly check-ins, photo updates of hidden conditions, and clear change orders prevent surprises. Reputable siding contractors in Seattle will show you the issues, propose solutions, and document the fix. You should not have to guess what is happening behind fresh paint.

How to set your project up for success

The contractor provides skill and labor. The homeowner controls access, decisions, and a few key logistics. Clear the perimeter so crews can set ladders and scaffolding without trampling prized shrubs. Discuss temporary pet access and kid safety. Identify power sources and hose bibs. Confirm start times that respect neighbors. Make decisions on trim profiles and color early so materials arrive with the crew. If you are in an HOA, secure approvals before demo day. These small steps keep momentum and morale high.

If you work from home, know that siding replacement is noisy. Compressors, saws, nailers, and the thud of boards become your soundtrack. Plan key calls away from the site or coordinate quiet windows with the foreman. Crews will accommodate within reason, but progress depends on tools making noise.

Where trim choices elevate performance

Trim is not just decoration. Properly detailed trim is a water management system. At window heads, sloped head flashings with end dams eject water beyond the face of siding. At sills, subsills or sill pans collect and drain. Vertical trims should have capillary breaks where they meet siding. On belly bands, choose materials that will not wick water and install with a gap above lower siding so water and air can move.

In repairs, swap vulnerable horizontal wood trims for cellular PVC or fiber cement alternatives. Keep the aesthetics consistent with your home's era, but do not force old details that fail. You can maintain a historic look with modern materials and hidden improvements behind the paint. Seattle trim repair is your chance to stealth-upgrade without changing the face of the house.

Red flags during bids and construction

If a bid promises to "seal everything up with caulk" rather than describe flashing and WRB integration, walk away. If you do not see rainscreen details in the scope, ask why. If the contractor discourages you from an open-wall walkthrough after demo, that is an issue. During work, watch for reverse laps in WRB, missing kick-out flashing, and unsealed cut ends on wood products. Most homeowners will not spot every detail, nor should they have to, but common-sense questions keep everyone alert.

Another warning sign is a lowball proposal that excludes paint, gutters, or safe disposal of old materials. Those costs do not disappear. They show up later as change orders or deferred tasks that blunt the finish. Clear, complete scopes tend to produce happy endings.

How dry rot repair ties into resale and inspection reports

Buyers in Seattle are savvy about moisture. A pre-listing report that documents professional seattle dry rot repair with photos and receipts builds trust. Conversely, a home inspector will find spongy trim and swollen siding. If you are selling within a few years, consider tackling known trouble spots now. A small section of exterior trim repair that prevents a larger disclosure later is money well spent.

On the flip side, if you just bought and your inspection flagged elevated moisture in a corner, do not wait a year to see if it gets better. Moisture problems do not self-resolve. A timely call to a siding repair seattle contractor can keep a small issue from becoming a major one.

Final thoughts from the field

A well-executed siding replacement is less about a brand name on a box and more about the details you rarely see. In this climate, assemblies that allow water to leave and air to circulate outperform tight, sealed-up walls that trap moisture. Choose materials that fit your architecture and your appetite for maintenance. Choose a team that talks about sequence and water paths more than colors and caulk. Build in time and budget for discovery. Expect weather delays and plan around them. And once it is done, give your home a simple spring checkup each year. Small attention now keeps you out of the emergency lane later.

If you line up those pieces, the new skin on your Seattle home will not only look sharp on day one, it will still be standing proud after years of winter storms, sideways rain, and mossy mornings. That is the mark of good craft in a city that tests every joint.

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