



Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Subdividing Significant Historic Interior Spaces

Applicable Standards:

2. Retention of Historic Character
5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes, and Craftsmanship

Issue: It is often necessary as part of a rehabilitation project to subdivide a multi-story space in a historic building to meet requirements for the new use. Large, significant, character-defining interior spaces can be either formal spaces, such as those in churches, auditoriums, retail and department stores, or rougher, less finished spaces, such as those found in industrial or warehouse buildings, barns and gymnasiums. Subdivision of such spaces must preserve their character-defining aspects in order to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.



Left: This three-story building (shown after rehabilitation) was constructed in 1923 for use as a department store.



Prior to rehabilitation the one and one-half story space and mezzanine (above and below) were in poor condition after years of neglect.

Application (Compatible treatment): This three-story building, originally constructed in 1923 as a department store with retail and warehouse space, was rehabilitated for commercial and residential use. The upper floors



were converted into low- and moderate-income rental apartments and the first floor served as commercial and office space. The building featured a dramatic one- and one-half story open space on the first floor with a large staircase at the rear which led to a mezzanine that encircled the room. This space had served as the showroom for the former department store. Although the features and finishes of the space were quite deteriorated prior to rehabilitation, the space was still significant and crucial in defining the historic character of the building.



In order to adapt the space to accommodate the tenant's large staff, the project architect designed simple beaded board office cubicles with low walls, and open to the ceiling. The tops of the walls of the cubicles stop well below the bottom of the mezzanine, which permits the one and one-half story space to retain its openness. The low walls provide privacy for the staff yet still allow the space to be perceived in its entirety from the first floor as well as from the mezzanine. This treatment meets the Standards.



Although low-walled office cubicles were inserted on the first floor during the rehabilitation, the character-defining aspect of the space itself, as well as its principal features, the mezzanine and the grand staircase, are still clearly perceived (above and below).



Detail. Casters on the bottom of the cubicle partitions allow them to be moved around or removed from the space.